



Jürgen Baier, Körting Hanover, (left) and Günter Ettinger, Brose, discussing with another congress participant. Photos: Messe Frankfurt / Manfred Gillert

## A community meets

To let practitioners talk to practitioners and sound out the trends in the trade fair business: That is the aim of the Expobusiness Congress, an annual platform by exhibitors for exhibitors for benchmarking and sharing experience.

Trade fairs are under attack as an expensive marketing tool. The costs, the role of the stand staff, and involvement of new media not just for preparation and follow-up work but also during the event itself were the most talked about topics at the Expobusiness Congress in Nuremberg on September 8 and 9, 2010. The organisers of the Expobusiness Congress, the Akademie der Messe Frankfurt and m+a Verlag, also in Frankfurt, had arranged a varied, multi-faceted and high-calibre conference programme. Trade fair appearances outside Germany were addressed, as were trade fairs and the media, trade fair contracting/design or the (new) customer dialogue at trade fairs. "Exhibition stand tuning", "visitor marketing", "storytelling for more success at the booth" or "trade fair controlling with balanced scorecards"

were all workshop topics. A trade fair think-tank dealt with "social media". The professionals running the intensive workshop programmes included Jörg Christian Meßwarb, consultant, trainer and coach, and Ralph E. Hartleben, professor of international marketing and management.

### The next big trend will be mobile communication

Both experts are convinced proponents of the trade fair as a marketing tool but see room for optimisation in the allocation of trade fair funds and a need for exhibitors to improve in this respect.

By exhibitors for exhibitors: Rudolf Sommer, Corporate Head of Events, Fairs and

Promotions at EnBW, competently hosted the programme of the two-day conference, which the organisers had mottoed "Trade Fairs:Event.Experience.Success". Jutta Jakobi, Marketing & Communications, IBM Germany, clearly laid out in her introductory statement how important trade fairs are for marketing to decision-makers but also said that the aim is not just to "stand there but to come up with results". Even when budgets are not so tight, Ralf Claußen, Director Communication/Advertising, Ependorf, thinks ideas trump budgets. "We look for the value added through ideas". Barter instead of cash payment is his motto. "Coping with costs requires more than controlling; it demands ideas."

Even though you cannot download personal conversations, the next big trend at trade fairs will be mobile communications. Claus Fesel, head of central marketing at Datev, makes out a "growing trend towards live communications through social media". It is an inexpensive and appealing way of making strong leads out of weak leads. "For us, it is a tool for nurturing relationships and a path to the future." No tour round an exhibition without an intelligent