



This year saw the first ever Expo to be based in New Zealand, held in the North Shore City suburb of Takapuna.

The year 2010 will be remembered as not only the first time that the CEDIA Australia Expo co-located with DesignBuild, but also the year that New Zealand stood its ground and held the first ever Expo across the ditch.

In general, the exhibitors as well as the NZ Committee Board Members weren't expecting much. Initially it was set to be a 12-booth show with, maybe, 50-100 attendees. That was all that was being asked for to deem the show a success. But that's not how it played out.

NZ Expo chairman Brendon Reid explains that after just one hour of its launch, six stands had already sold. By the end of the week all 12 were booked. So the show expanded to 24 booths.

"After we sold the first six stands in an hour, I knew we were on to a winner," Brendon says. "And then when we opened registration to attendees, I thought 100-150 would be a good number." The final number of pre-registrations was 329.

This may not seem like a large number to anyone who has attended the Australian show, let alone the US one. But put in perspective the population of NZ, the size of the market, and the fact that the show was essentially organised in five weeks, the turnout was phenomenal.

CEDIA Asia Pacific executive director Stephen Miller was one attendee who was pleasantly surprised at the success of the show: "Based on the number of people we have seen flow through these doors over the past two days, this show has been an extraordinary success.

"In the past, the only Expo in our region was held in Australia. Now similar events are happening in New Zealand, with China and Japan set to follow. Also, in the next couple of weeks we'll be heading over to Indonesia to talk to them. "So the New Zealand show is really marking the beginning of the expansion of CEDIA Asia Pacific into the global market. "At present there are just 20 members in New Zealand, but when you see over 300 people coming through the door it really shows that we have a lot of work to do. A lot of these guys have been totally under the radar, we didn't even know they existed. And in speaking to a lot of the exhibitors here, I have found that they didn't know they existed either, so this event has brought a lot of people out of the woodwork to present new opportunities in the market for all the exhibitors.

"And that's what CEDIA is all about. It's not just about the Expo; it's an ongoing exercise in training and business development. There's networking opportunities – in this room there are several companies that are direct competitors with each other that have been brought together with the purpose of building the industry.

"CEDIA is about the big picture and I think that's a huge benefit and these guys now feel like they're part of the global industry; a lot of them have for a long time been sitting on the fence, so this event helps them get off the fence and get involved in the industry again."

CEDIA NZ treasurer Caroline Speedy, also the general manager of AVD (local distributor of Middle Atlantic, SpeakerCraft, Universal Remote Control, Lutron and LuxSound), says that she was sceptical of whether the show could come together so quickly.

“Brendon was very much the driving force behind this show. I’ll be the first to admit that I thought there’d be no way he could pull this off in such a short space of time, but he went out and got the support and here we are.”

Among the attendees, it appears that the education and training on offer was a primary motivator for people to come along to the show.

Stephan Goodhue of Liquid Automation takes care of training and education in New Zealand.

“There has been an absolutely amazing turnout to the training sessions on offer,” he says. “A few presenters have said it has been the largest turnout they have had in months and months, even more than attended at the CEDIA Expo in Australia.

“Obviously the numbers speak for themselves, this is the first time these people have had a proper chance to get education in this field.”

Stephan explains that there are a lot of cowboys out there, especially with electricians coming into the field and not doing education. This is why it is important to offer ongoing training and support to the industry.

But why become a CEDIA member?

AVD managing director Charles Speedy says, “I think it shows a commitment to the industry to show that you’re here for the long run, and to be a better installer and provide better service to your clients.

“I think it’s all important for all parties in the industry to be the best they can be, and the industry isn’t an easy one to be in – there are so many facets to being a good businessperson apart from the actual installation, you have to look at project management, being able to cost projects, and receive payments while conducting business in a professional, sustainable way.”

The future of CEDIA looks bright in NZ, with discussions about next year’s show already underway.

NZ Board Member Philip Beardsmore of Sound Group Holdings says, “I think further growth in this market is guaranteed, and this will be reflected in the next Expo. There are a number of key suppliers in our market that couldn’t attend this year for a number of reasons, but that should change for next year.”

Brendon, for one, is optimistic. But, he says, there are some questions that need to be answered before they push ahead with CEDIA NZ Expo 2011.

“We need to figure out if we time it with the Australian show or co-locate it with another show. The size will definitely be increased, I’m personally hoping for 50 booths and 600 attendees.” ■

CEDIA Asia Pacific