

Michael Payne discusses Americas' tenacious outlook post show cancelation

There is no denying the travel industry has taken a hit in recent months as COVID-19 continues to be the source of airline passenger traffic plunging, effecting thousands of industry workers. On the heels of both Summit of the Americas in Orlando and TFWA Asia Pacific in Singapore canceling major tradeshow, it's important to focus on reassurance as the industry weathers another storm.

Americas Duty Free Spoke to IAADFS President and CEO Michael Payne to understand the process behind the decision to cancel the Americas tradeshow and why it's crucial to focus on moving forward.

"Essentially all of the feedback after the announcement has been supportive. For many it came as a relief because they were in a limbo. Many companies said it was a smart thing to do as they are now faced with a travel ban," shares Payne.

On the notion of postponing the show, Payne highlights that due to the tradeshow pattern of the travel retail industry, it would be hard to reschedule. April and May were not viable times as that's when the Singapore show is, followed by the summer holidays, at which time the focus shifts to the global TFWA WE, Cannes tradeshow. "Postponing was not a viable way of doing it. COVID-19 is also volatile and fast moving, so no one knew what it was going to be in two months. People acted in a very positive and supportive way when they heard about the cancelation news," says Payne.

The process of making the decision was highly calculated and thoughtfully executed. Payne and board members had numerous formal and informal conversations with exhibitors, suppliers and industry colleagues. They also evaluated research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and the Florida State Department of Health, before agreeing on the resulting decision.

Americas has proven time and time again that it is resilient. Says Payne: "The travel industry as a whole is resilient. In our case, if you have more of a global footprint, these issues affect one region more than another. The Americas are resilient in part because many of the companies are global in nature and are able to spread the impact a bit from region to region. The virus makes that harder but still should help many companies. Over all the industry does a great job trying to maintain itself."

He continues: "The cruise industry may have a bit of an imagery challenge. The Caribbean was doing well in part because of all the booming cruise business. There is likely to be some impact on that. The cruise business is a key contributor to growth and expansion in the Caribbean market in South America.

Focus on the future

Payne is excited about the future of the show. The 2021 Summit of the Americas show will be held at Palm Beach Convention Centre located in West Palm Beach. The area around Convention Centre and hotels has lots of shopping, great restaurants and entertainment.

The new location is also closer to Miami, giving local delegate the ease and flexibility of travel.

"The travel industry is resilient," concludes Payne. "I think people will continue to travel. However, luxury travel and corporate travel is crucial. I don't think the need or desire to travel will go away. The

question is what do you do to survive? We will have to weather the storm.”