

Trade fairs: *Biotechnica goes on the offensive*

## A Shot in the Dark?

The Biotechnica trade fair for biotechnology will take place annually with immediate effect.

The industry, however, is sceptical.

There is a natural law for trade fairs: After the event, it has always been a smasher. At least in the jubilant press releases of the event's organiser.

Take, as an example, BioAnalytica. Does anybody remember this event? When this Munich-based "1st International Trade Fair and Conference" came to an end on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2003, the organiser (Munich Trade Fairs International, MMI) praised it in their press releases as "one of the biggest and most important European conventions of its manner", that was "extremely successful" and, in this respect, "met expectations" (according to Klaus Dittrich, Managing Director MMI).

Successful, eh? Talking with exhibitors and attendees, who were in general pretty disappointed by this poorly-attended event, one would have formed a completely different impression. This suspicion was confirmed two years later, when MMI sheepishly retreated because they did "not see sufficient potential for BioAnalytica 2005" and therefore decided "not to hold the BioAnalytica trade show."

### Biotechnica takes a chance

Unfortunately, the same story is likely to unfold in Hannover, 600 kilometres north of Munich. On May 21<sup>st</sup>, the Deutsche Messe AG, Hannover, proclaimed that "Europe's biggest biotechnology trade fair", Biotechnica, will now be taking place every year,

"to move the event to an annual timeslot", according to the organiser. "The industry wants to have a major European trade fair every year, rather than a succession of smaller events", claim Biotechnica's organisers.



Arnd Dankesreiter (Geneart) favours symposia for acquiring customers.

Good luck! The biotechnological community is highly sceptical about the decision, as Arnd Dankesreiter, Sales Manager for Central Europe at Geneart, a DNA engineering and processing company attests. Dankesreiter holds that the previous, biennial cycle was adequate. He fears that an

annual cycle will involve additional effort without better returns.

### Too many events in the calendar

Arno Wouters, Export Manager at Kojair Tech Oy, a Finnish manufacturer of microbiological safety cabinets and clean-air devices, has similar concerns: "There are too many trade fairs", he says and quotes as an example the year 2006 when the Achema and Analytica events both took place: "There

was considerable free space in the exhibition halls in Frankfurt and also in Munich." Kojair is a regular exhibitor at events such as Biotechnica, Achema and Analytica as well as at Imac in Basel, and Scanlab in Stockholm. But, as Wouters highlights, "such events are getting more and more dispensable".

Carsten

Lanwert, Marketing & Sales Manager at the German subsidiary of New England Biolabs, has made similar observations: "We suffer from an agglomeration

of trade fairs. In my opinion, it's not reasonable to arrange Biotechnica every year." For New England Biolabs, he states, events such as Biotechnica are primarily useful as a meeting place, to get in touch with customers and present new products. But for this purpose, the previous cycle is already sufficient since they also exhibit at other fairs and congresses. "We won't take part annually", Lanwert says.

### Scaling down exhibitions as a new trend?

Michael Ehret, Managing Director at Biocat, a provider of research reagents located in Heidelberg, Germany, agrees: "Initiating new business contacts has shifted. We make more and more deals by telephone and by our field staff." Thus, the co-founder of Biocat is considering scaling down his participation in trade fairs in the future, preferring instead to invest in additional sales personnel.



Michael Ehret (Biocat) focuses on his own sales force.

In the light of these statements, exhibition organisers should be alarmed. Andreas Gruchow, Managing Director at the Deutsche Messe AG, is setting his priorities increasingly in favour of scientific support programmes such as 'Biotechnica Conferences' and related partnering events and award shows (see interview on opposite page). Such specialized events, however, have still to prove their value. At the moment, they are seen as a kind of decorative padding, as Michael Ehret from Biocat complains: "You cannot compare such a poorly attended trade fair meeting with a wholehearted scientific conference."

In the light of this, it could well be that Biotechnica's major initiative becomes a shot in the dark or even a complete waste of effort.

WINFRIED KOEPELLE



Biotechnica duplicates itself: The German trade fair wants to be an "annual timeslot" for the international biotech industry.

Photos: wk (2); private (2)



Arno Wouters (Kojair) says that trade fairs have lost their importance.

Interview with Andreas Gruchow,  
Deutsche Messe AG, Hannover

## “Need for Interaction”

Andreas Gruchow, Head of Business Area at the Biotechnica Trade Fair, talks about consolidation, tradition, and the proper use of taxpayers' money.



**D**r. Gruchow, *Biotechnica* started out in 1985 as a trade fair. Since then, it has been augmented by a programme of international conferences and now includes a partnering event as well. Despite this, the key parameters for 2007 are expected to be below the results for 2003. How do you account for this?

**Andreas Gruchow:** In 2003, we had reached a decisive watershed in Germany. The biotech branch had become firmly established with respect to the number of companies and the size of the industry. This period of consolidation was reflected by the event.

What distinguishes *Biotechnica* from other trade fairs?

**Gruchow:** Very often these events are simply exhibitions where products are showcased. In biotechnology it is not always the case that products are tangible or tactile objects. Companies frequently offer something more complex and intangible: sophisticated technologies or services. It's not like rummaging a bargain basement where products can be looked at, felt and tried out to see how they work. The very complexity of the technology makes things more complicated. Furthermore, the calibre of the trade visitors is very high. Due to the level of expertise attracted to the event, *Biotechnica* must – of necessity – feature elements that one would not expect to find at other fairs.

For example?

**Gruchow:** As it is not always possible to exhibit actual objects, there is greater demand for information, interaction and

communication. Such demands cannot be met simply by presenting trade fair stands. More sophisticated means of communication are necessary. That is why we attach such significance to our program of conferences. Our visitors attach much more importance to this aspect than is the case at other fairs.

*This year's Biotechnica marks the launch of a new dedicated Partnering event. What is significant about this new module?*

**Gruchow:** The Partnering event allows companies to meet potential partners directly at the event. We offer a series of short time slots for company presentations, when interested parties or companies can meet at short notice. Then there is the opportunity for bilateral discussion – it's a kind of contact exchange. This is a completely new element in the *Biotechnica* program.

*What do exhibitors expect to gain by taking part in Biotechnica?*

**Gruchow:** At other trade fairs business is conducted between exhibitors and visitors in the traditional way. Our event is more multi-faceted. At *Biotechnica* many of the participants attach great importance to a dialogue between exhibitors. A large proportion of the really relevant business contacts made during the event are actually between exhibiting companies, and not just among visitors.

*For many years one of the leading laboratory equipment suppliers, Qiagen, was not represented at Biotechnica. Why*

**“There is greater demand for information, interaction and communication. Such demands cannot be met simply by presenting trade fair stands.”**

is it that some big companies do not have huge stands at the trade fair?

**Gruchow:** Qiagen has played a constructive role in our Advisory Committee for many years now and also exhibits on a regular basis. The company is closely involved in the development of Biotechnica. Incidentally, such companies also play an important role as visitors.

*At the same time, more and more of the stands at Biotechnica are not staged by companies, but are sponsored by regional and state governments. Isn't that a misuse of taxpayers' money?*

**Gruchow:** Not in the least. The core of Germany's biotechnology and life sciences industry comprises a myriad of tiny companies, each employing a small staff and with limited capital. These companies often do not have the resources and infrastructure required to organize large trade show stands. Help comes in the form of joint

support these companies would simply not have had the opportunity to take part in trade fairs.

*Apart from Biotechnica, there are a number of other major biotech events in Germany alone, for example, Analytica and Achema [see page 45]. Do you think that this small industry has been overwhelmed by sheer numbers?*

**Gruchow:** Yes, I do. There are far too many events for the industry to cope with and there is an overriding wish to concentrate activities. There is a desire for one big European platform.

*Yet Biotechnica will be taking place every year in future, as opposed to the previous two-yearly schedule. Won't this fragment the events market even more instead of achieving the desired concentration?*

**Gruchow:** We adopted a two-yearly schedule in the past and to a certain extent this reflected deliberate restraint on our part. However, we have seen a substantial growth in the competition. There are many, in fact far too many, events and as soon as there appears to be a gap in the calendar program, there's a trade fair organizer trying to fill it. In other words, the modest, restrained approach of Biotechnica has not led to the desired concentration but to a proliferation of events – and this has strengthened the desire of the industry for increased concentration.

*Does this strategy indicate that you are aiming to assume the role of a leading European event?*

**Gruchow:** Absolutely. However, there are other reasons for holding the event annually. With biennial events you always have the problem of maintaining contact with companies, exhibitors and visitors, as well as difficulty in following trends and developments in the industry with the necessary dedication.

*Do you believe that the key parameters of the present Biotechnica can be maintained on an annual basis?*

**Gruchow:** The exhibitors have a huge interest in its value as a platform for communication and networking. The aim is not so much having a vast exhibition area occupied as enabling the industry to meet and

interact, for example during the trade fair, at the stands or in other areas and on different occasions throughout the event – even at the Award Ceremony or during the opening event. The conferences provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and talk shop, as well as catch up on trends and developments. There are also ample opportunities to initiate concrete business partnerships too. We're placing more emphasis on networking, in particular. Networking is much more relevant to biotechnology than it is in other business sectors.

*The question is, why hasn't there been a major event before – such as BIO in America?*

**Gruchow:** One contributory factor is that different national interests still play a big part in Europe. Biotechnology is an industry that is much more influenced by politics than others.

*Along the lines of "the competition doesn't sleep", do you expect other big German events such as Analytika to follow your example and adopt an annual schedule?*

**Gruchow:** I would dare to maintain: no. Analytika covers different core themes to those covered by Biotechnica. We are not really competing with this event. On the contrary, there is an open exchange between the organizers of the respective events.

*You will be launching Biotechnica in the USA, but doesn't America already have several established events, in particular, the gigantic BIO?*

**Gruchow:** Irrespective of the market selected, you will always encounter competition. We have analyzed this market. There is what appears to be an all-powerful BIO, but there is also a plethora of other events in America devoted to biotechnology. It would be presumptuous to think that one event could serve an entire continent. We have found an experienced and competent partner in Reed Exhibitions. Among their many events, they organize Interphex, which coincides with the needs of the target groups of interest to Biotechnica. So both events will take place in Philadelphia at the same venue and at the same time. The aim of this collaboration is to use these synergies and make a contribution towards the concentration of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries in the USA.

MIRIAM RUHENSTROTH



Andreas Gruchow,  
Deutsche Messe AG

Photos (c): Deutsche Messe AG

displays, for example BioPro from Baden-Württemberg or BioRegion from Lower Saxony. These bio-regions encourage companies from their respective areas to take part in the joint display. Stand assembly, organization, logistics and publicity are all organized centrally, thus allowing the company to focus on the products and product presentation. Without this organizational

## Biotechnology trade fairs

## The Most Important Twelve

Around the world, there are hundreds of trade fairs arranged which are, more or less, focused on biotechnology. Which ones are worth visiting? We present the most important twelve as follows.

### Achema

May 11-15, 2009, Frankfurt a. M. (GER)

➔ Chemical engineering, environmental protection, biotechnology.

➔ 3,900 exhibitors, 180,000 attendees.

[www.achema.de](http://www.achema.de)

### Analytica

April 1-4, 2008, Munich (GER)

➔ Analysis, lab technology, life science.

➔ 900 exhibitors, 26,000 attendees.

[www.analytica-world.com](http://www.analytica-world.com)

### ASME

October 1-5, 2007, San Diego (USA)

➔ Bioprocessing, pharmaceutical and healthcare industries.

[www.asme.org](http://www.asme.org)

### Arablab

February 10-13, 2008, Dubai

➔ Lab & instrumentation industry in medical research, life & environmental sciences, petrochemical industry.

➔ 700 exhibitors, 9,200 attendees.

[www.arablab.com](http://www.arablab.com)



### BIO International Convention

June 17-20, 2008, San Diego (USA)

➔ Biotechnology industry.

➔ 1,900 exhibitors, 22,000 attendees.

[www.bio.org](http://www.bio.org)

### Biotechnica

October 9-11, 2007, Hannover (GER)

➔ Biotechnology research, equipment, bioinformatics, services to application.

➔ 900 exhibitors, 13,000 attendees.

[www.biotechnica.de](http://www.biotechnica.de)

### EuroBiO

September 26-28, 2007, Lille (F)

➔ Bioscience and bio-industry (health sector, biotechnology, etc.).

➔ 250 exhibitors, 4,700 attendees.

[www.eurobio-event.com](http://www.eurobio-event.com)

### ILMAC

September 25-28, 2007, Basel (CH)

➔ R&D, Environmental and Process Technology in Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Biotechnology.

➔ 513 exhibitors, 15,300 attendees.

[www.ilmac.ch](http://www.ilmac.ch)



### Interphex

February 14-15, 2008, San Juan (Puerto Rico)

➔ Pharmaceutical and biotech manufacturing.

➔ 1,000 exhibitors.

[www.interphex.com](http://www.interphex.com)

### L.A.B.

October 2-4 2007, London (UK)

➔ Analysis, bio & lab equipment.

[www.lab-uk.de](http://www.lab-uk.de)

### Medica

Nov 14-17 2007, Duesseldorf (GER)

➔ Medicine, healthcare.

➔ 4.100 exhibitors, 137.500 attendees.

[www.medica.de](http://www.medica.de)

### Pittcon

March 1-7, 2008, New Orleans (USA)

➔ Analytical chemistry, applied spectroscopy, laboratory science.

➔ 1,000 exhibitors, 25,000 attendees.

[www.pittcon.org](http://www.pittcon.org)