

The Bizarre World of Healthcare (4)

Look out – Politicians on the Way!

Trade fairs are the perfect way to promote your business. There is, however, one thing certain to test your patience at the stands: Politicians.

Want to meet honest and pleasant people and to develop your business? Then visit prestigious trade fairs like the U.S. mega-event *BIO International Convention*, the upcoming, Dubai-based *Arablab* or the German classic *Biotechnica* coming in October this year.

Plenty of amazing opportunities await the participants at such events. One person will seize golden opportunities to talk to potential customers, another will identify scores of new business partners. Finally, you can put a face to the name of the kind hotline person who saved your last experiment. Or you enjoy a chance reunion of university classmates.

As is known, *Lab Times* readers are mostly scientific masterminds overflowing with ingenious ideas. At trade fairs, they are presented with the ideal opportunity to showcase their brainwaves to generous financiers. At the very least you can take the first step towards founding your very own prosperous business enterprise whilst strengthening your network within the biotechnological community.

In short, trade fairs hold unlimited opportunities, and when business is done and you are all knocked out, you can roam across to neighbouring stands for a jovial chat and a soothing cup of coffee.

Yes, at trade fairs you meet all kinds: the pleasant and helpful as well as, less frequently, annoying timewasters. You even meet a certain kind of person that you never, under any circumstances, wish to meet, at exhibitions or elsewhere. You meet politicians.

Politicians.

Of course, there are people who dream of meeting real politicians. Perhaps they are the same kind of person who reads high-impact journals such as *Take a Break* (“Her husband ran off - now she is a single mum with 13 kids”) and *That's Life* (“A possum diagnosed my cancer”). People like this brim over with enthusiasm when meeting Jerry Sanders, the Mayor of San Diego, at the BIO



Convention Center, or when breathing the same air as the Honorable Muhammed bin Raschid, the Ruler of Dubai. Possibly, there are even people who dream of slipstreaming behind the Honorable Fernando Nebbia, Undersecretary of Agriculture and Food Policy, Argentina, or of meeting Queen Noor of Jordan (both were at the BIO Convention 2007).

Unfortunately, there is a fundamental problem. People who would give anything to meet Sanders and Queen Noor, typically don't visit biotechnology trade fairs (or indeed don't visit trade fairs at all).

On the other hand, you can be sure of the following: Those who visit BIO, Biotechnica or similar trade fairs, typically avoid running into politicians and their entourages at all costs (in fact, most scientists aren't seriously keen on meeting politicians).

To confirm this, I can provide you with a little anecdote.

It happened two years ago at Biotechnica in Hannover. Your *Lab Times* reporter was hurrying through a densely-populated pavilion en route to a work-related meeting when suddenly a small gathering attracted his attention. Maybe twenty well-dressed people, surrounded by a flurry of flashbulbs and some tall, grave looking bruisers with brush cuts and a spiral wire behind one ear, were approaching.

“A celebrity, maybe a Nobel prize-winner”, he guessed. Then, as the crowd edged nearer, he noticed a polished, middle-sized, middle-aged city slicker in the centre of the gathering – a face that wasn't familiar to your correspondent.

Then another thing attracted his attention: There were some hundred visitors in the exhibition hall, sauntering around and looking at the stands. But the immediate vicinity of the unknown city-slicker and his entourage was completely deserted. Everyone was avoiding him like the plague.

The next day, the local newspaper, *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, reported that Christian Wulff, Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, had visited Biotechnica 2005.

WINFRIED KOEPELLE

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