Triennial show emphasizes technology - and selling.

BAUMA Showcases Zeppelin, Caterpillar

BAUMA Fair in Munich, Germany - held every three years - is the world's largest construction equipment show, and a prime selling opportunity for German dealer Zeppelin-Metallwerke.

BAUMA is a team effort between Zeppelin and Caterpillar, with Zeppelin management historically providing leadership and the majority of show personnel. Heading the Zeppelin effort were Promotion Manager Hans Knäusel and his assistant Ulli Fellner, along with Ulrich von Witzendorff.

Unlike such shows in North America, the emphasis at BAUMA is on selling, and large exhibits are designed accordingly. The exhibit included 28 machines and five engines, along with modules featuring Zeppelin capabilities. Zeppelin and Caterpillar occupied all of one exhibit hall, a 5,000 square-meter (54,000 square-foot) area that reflected the "Technology Live" BAUMA theme.

Four technology modules illustrated the Zeppelin and Caterpillar partnership. Those modules showcased Caterpillar advanced technology in guidance systems, engine ceramics, track development and service technology. An area devoted to the Self-Guided Vehicle stressed the potential construction equipment application of navigational systems.

"The chief value of the show is the opportunity to strengthen images of both Caterpillar and Zeppelin," observed Knäusel. But at the same time, Zeppelin salesmen were able to "capitalize on their opportunities and close sales." And they closed sales at a record rate. By the time the week-long show ended, Zeppelin sold 155 Cat machines and 22 engines.

Zeppelin's show strategy is simple: most customer contacts are prepared in advance, and sales personnel meet their customers as they arrive at the show. A catered restaurant and exhibit lounge allow sales people to entertain customers. Closing rooms in the exhibit provide a place for serious business discussion.

Knäusel believes Zeppelin's participation in BAUMA has other advantages. "In other parts of the world, a show is more of an exhibit," he noted. "Here, it's more of a meeting event. It's also a family event."

Knäusel, who's had responsibility for Zeppelin's BAUMA participation since 1964, "starts thinking about the next show right after the last." The real "hands on" work begins about 18 months before showtime; and by six months prior to the show, Knäusel devotes the majority of his time to final preparations and details.

Part of that preparation is an extensive training program for all personnel associated with the show. Zeppelin uses a scale model of the exhibit to plan and rehearse - sales people, show office staff, the recep-
tion area personnel, everyone.

Once the show begins, dealer personnel meet every morning before opening time to cover news, "what was wrong yesterday," and sales results. Special recognition goes to the salesman with the best results.

The 1989 show featured nearly 1,300 exhibitors from 30 countries in a 380,000-square-meter (4.1-million-square-foot) indoor and outdoor facility. More than 250,000 visitors from 163 countries attended, including an estimated 4,500 customers escorted by 28 COSA dealers. Dealers from the United States and Brazil and a Soviet delegation also attended.

Was the show a success? "All our people are happy," summarized Knkusel. Or to repeat the thought of a visiting journalist: "If there were no BAUMA, it would still make sense to come and see the Zeppelin and Caterpillar exhibits."