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DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Making time for lunch!

Marketing manager Grace Allwright is based in Brighton at the UK offices of event organiser Diversified Business Communications. Under her leadership, lunch!, the UK's leading trade show for the food-to-go market, won Best Marketing Campaign of the Year at the Association of Event Organisers' Awards in 2012 (having already scooped two best trade show accolades in both 2010 and 2011). This year's lunch! returns to the Business Design Centre in Islington, London, on 26-27 September. This is her day...

8.40am

I've been working on lunch! for nearly five years now – during which time the show has almost tripled in size, moved venues, and won an award or two – but still nothing quite prepares me for the hectic month that is September. My usual morning routine of a leisurely stroll through Brighton, past

the world-famous pavilion, to our office seems to become more of a race the closer the show gets! Yet, somehow, I always manage to find time to grab a croissant from a great local café I know, called Lucky 13, to eat at my desk (it's no wonder we're getting more breakfast suppliers exhibiting every year!).



26-27 September 2013
Business Design Centre | London



9.00am

I've got a busy day ahead of me and it all starts with checking lunch!'s visitor pre-registration data. From the moment reg goes live (usually around May) it's the same every morning. It's not just about the figures (although it's always satisfying to see the numbers spike when a mailing hits) but keeping an eye on the quality of our prospective attendees.

I'm sure I'm not the only event marketing manager to admit this but tracking new pre-reg additions can be addictive (read obsessive!). Especially when you see that key buyers from companies that you know are on your exhibitors' wish list – like Pret, BaxterStorey, M&S, EAT., Gate Gourmet, Sodexo, and Waitrose, for example – are responding to your campaign and making time for lunch! in their diaries. (I must admit that one of the most rewarding aspects of my job actually comes after the show has closed when I spot some of the delicious products that were first exhibited at lunch! in my local supermarket, or in one of Brighton's many wonderful cafés. It's great to know that, albeit in a very small way, I helped that happen.)

For a relatively new show (this is only our 6th edition) our conversion rate for lunch! is pretty high (around half usually pre-register and attend) so it looks like lunch! 2013 could very well smash our 2012 record of 4,403 attendees and be our busiest show yet.

9.30am

My job is definitely a juggling act. And September is when everything has to come together at exactly the right time. For me, it's all in the details (and spreadsheets!).

Contra deals form the basis of a lot of the marketing that we do for lunch! to ensure that we reach as wide – and influential – an audience as possible. Whilst the campaign starts as early as six months before the show, it's August and September that the deadlines really start to fall thick and fast. We're currently working with around 15 media partners and they all require differing amounts of editorials and adverts that our in-house designers Roger Denyer, Dan Reeves and Ross Harris, and PR Manager Emma-Louise Jones, work hard to fulfill.



Today it's the turn of Simon Ambrose, editor of International Sandwich & Snack News. He's putting together a lunch! preview for the September issue, so I give him a quick call to run over what's new at the show.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference for 2013 is the extension of exhibition space into a new upper feature level; making room for around 60 more companies and taking lunch!'s exhibitor list to an unprecedented 290. It's a testament to the continuing success and growing appeal of the show that the lunch! sales team (group event manager Chris Brazier and Derek MacHale, who joined Diversified earlier this year) actually sold out of all but a handful of stands last month.

This new upper feature level is now also home to The Innovation Zone, Innovation Challenge Showcase and the Working lunch! Theatre (sponsored by Magrini). The popular British Smoothie Championship and the Innovation Challenge Live! are both back on the menu for 2013 – and we've got some big name Keynote speakers lined up. Among them are Manaaz Akhtar, head of marketing at Subway; Elliot Cantrell, Adelle Food Group's senior food technologist and current British Sandwich Designer of the Year; Andrew Sherick – former senior buyer with M&S Foods; and Andrew Walker, former MD of Pret a Manger.

11.00am

If I'm not careful, meetings can have the habit of swallowing up much of my day, but with the show so close it's essential to stay on top of on-site

preparations. So, once I've responded to a few urgent exhibitor emails asking me about everything from their show guide entries to VIP invitations, I'm off to the board room to discuss signage arrangements with Chris and Helen Milton (the show's head of operations). Given that the show covers three floors and we've made some alterations to the floor plan since last year, it's vital that we ensure our visitors don't have any opportunity to get lost!

Some buildings' architecture just lends itself to enhancing the atmosphere of exhibitions held within them. The Business Design Centre is definitely one of them. The vibrant look and feel of lunch! has always been one of its most commented upon features so it's important that the signage we use complements its surrounding whilst helping to direct our visitors around the show. For example, the new upper feature level now boasts a dedicated VIP Lounge and a Giveaway Zone (where the first 300 visitors to lunch! each day can claim an exclusive free gift!).

Also on the agenda is The Innovation Challenge Showcase. Already a huge draw for many buyers familiar with the show – we've decided to make it even more interactive for 2013. The new format will see visitors to the show on day one now get to vote for their favourite new product, equipment, packaging or technological innovation. The 15 finalists with the highest votes then get to pitch their ideas to industry judges in the Innovation Challenge Live! on the Friday. I can't wait to see what innovations our exhibitors are planning to unveil – it's sure to make for some exciting viewing!

12.30am

And then back to my inbox. I've just received some updates from the Welsh Assembly Government on their new Welsh Pavilion at the show, which I flag to use in our next visitor email.

This year there are over 140 new companies exhibiting at the show (some of whom have never exhibited anywhere before) so there's often quite a lot of emailing and telephone chasing to ensure that they all take advantage of the marketing and PR opportunities that we have to offer – such as the exhibitor show highlights

DAY IN THE LIFE OF...



(which offers visitors a sneak preview of all the fantastic new launches that they can see at the show), the show preview advertising, and, of course, the all-important show guide. Whilst we try to ensure that the deadline for the latter is as close to the show as possible, we still have to ensure there's plenty of time to proof it (it's going to around 100 pages this year), get it printed and delivered directly to the venue for opening day.

1.00pm

Brighton is blessed with a dazzling array of great independent café and coffee shops. So come lunch time my colleagues and I are spoilt for choice. Right now though, it's a fantastic new Burrito Bar (called Bang Bang Burrito) that's just opened around the corner that keeps calling my name! I'm nearly out through the door (and thinking about what filling's going to tempt me today) when our head designer Roger gives me the proof of this year's visitor badge.

Now, we never realised until last year's show, exactly how collectable some of our visitors were going to find our button badges. So there's been a certain amount of pressure on making sure our latest slogan lives up

to the 'I love lunch!' and 'It's lunch! time' of previous years. Our head designer Roger Denyer has done another fantastic job though. It's no mean feat to keep the marketing materials looking so fresh year after year when you've got such a distinctive brand style already in place. Let's hope our new 'Out for lunch!' badges (available in the entrance of the show) are as hotly received!

3.00pm

The next meeting of the day is a quick catch-up with Hannah Jennings (Diversified's marketing executive) about the new VIP programme that we are running this year. It's important that our exhibitors help to market their presence at the show just as much as we do. It's a team effort, which helps us both in the run up to the show as there are simply thousands of visitors that we cannot reach alone.

Hannah's been collating VIP nominations from our exhibitors, and we're both pleased by the quality of names on our list so far. We've got a final mailing planned for a few days time, so we both return to our desks to start sifting through the data.

Sorting our recipients into job specific categories takes time but its vital to ensure that each VIP receives the right tailored message on how visiting lunch! can benefit their business (otherwise all our hard work runs the risk of being binned without even a glance – and Roger would go on strike!).

6.00pm

No two days are ever the same in event organising. As a company, Diversified UK is renowned for its attention to detail and the hours we put in on our exhibitor's behalf. And I think that's reflected by the visitor experience we create year after year. As always, my work day draws to a close with some final exhibitor promotion – updating our twitter (@lunchexhibition), facebook and LinkedIn accounts with some links to their latest company news.

As for me, I'm off to a spin class at my local gym, thanks to that Burrito! Finding the energy can be hard around this time of year but somehow (don't ask me!) it does help me to relax. Of course, I may lose my will by the time I get there and settle for the latest episode of Dexter on the sofa with my husband Chris...