

Expert Questions to
Ulrike Kähler, Project Director of GALLERY SHOES,
on the "Sectoral REPORT on Shoe Fashion in 2017"

1) At IGEDO they know very well that trade shows do not have an unlimited shelf life. Because even IGEDO – once THE ultimate German fashion trade show – has had to reinvent itself from time to time. What experiences are useful to you today for Gallery Shoes?

1. The humility and understanding that everything is subject to change – however successful it was. 2. The willingness to let go of the old to look ahead with a sense of liberation and innovation. 3. Courage and continuity combined with the ability to not sideline yourself or be sidelined but to set out for a new future with fresh and visionary transforming vigour. 4. Recognition of your own experience that is a valuable asset making life a lasting gift of maturity over the course of time. All of this together provided a rich treasure trove that we have used to set up a new shoe trade show in Düsseldorf as an international order platform.

2) You have to reach and satisfy two target groups: suppliers and retailers. What adjustments have to be made to meet the needs of both target groups?

Everything hinges on the exhibitor portfolio: the skill lies in attracting exhibitors and allowing them to attract each other in a relative short space of time to then form an exciting, pulsating and expert event that exudes global appeal for both national and international trade visitors. One of the adjustments is scheduling flexibility with suitable adaptation in line with the main ordering phase – which as a component of the relatively rigid calendar of a trade show was quite hard to achieve. It is also very important to work in a new, exciting location which, in the case of Areal Böhler with its elegant industrial design, conveys an entirely new spirit and fresh feeling.

3) Apart from externalities what distinguishes Gallery Shoes from GDS? What strategic change of course are you undertaking?

GALLERY SHOES can better tap into the current zeitgeist than GDS was able to. In our fast-paced online age the general mindset focuses primarily on having: "everything very fast at once, and without having to move much ourselves". Translated into long hand this means that a curated range is not merely a pleasant sounding PR phrase but a real necessity for a new trade show platform on the part of the sector itself. Both exhibitors and trade visitors will mutually benefit most if the portfolio is sharpened, compressed and competently assembled to a maximum. The premises only determine the external need for this. Though ultimately, what the market wants from a platform is utmost perfection offering the greatest speed from a variety of angles. In addition to tapping into the zeitgeist it is also particularly the smaller, independent specialist retail shoe trade that is offered a pragmatic platform here where much less time is required to find defining brands from the European sector at a glance. Though major key accounts and definitive central buyers also appreciate this service that saves time and expense.

4) With a space limit of 150m² or 35m² in the Concept Areas Gallery Shoes quite justifiably loses the name trade show. How are exhibitors reacting to this limitation?

Very well! Because this aspect also goes in the same direction. It is not a coincidence at this point that I use the image of the breath-taking shoe departments of international department stores where the entire spectrum of the market is reflected in its essence: from the big key players through to small, innovative and exclusive brands. Size does not necessarily convey class. At GALLERY SHOES any brand can exhibit freely and innovatively without being accompanied by negative interpretations due to the given size dimensions. At GDS it would have been impossible for a major brand to suddenly stage itself in "boutique style". At GALLERY SHOES this is possible. Apart from this, total costs are reduced with smaller stands – something which is in keeping with the times for everyone.

5) The sourcing segment is no longer reflected at Gallery Shoes. Who will take on this legacy?

Sourcing was a perfect match for the GDS concept. We do not know who will take on this legacy, detached from a trade show or as part of an already existing one. This is part of the process of letting go and focusing on new things with all your energy.

6) According to our current sales forecast, by 2025 the market share of the footwear retail trade could drop in a worst case scenario from today's 52% to just 41%. What do you expect for the future and how are you preparing for it?

Well I did not throw in the term 'online' in the context of the rigid mindset of our times for nothing. Obviously, we have to adapt to these developments. This makes it all the more important in future to have a platform that does not need to fill large capacities to remain competent, relevant and attractive while maintaining continuity and consistency.

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