

Client/Product: ELSPA – EGN
Media: MCV
Circ/Audience: 15,000
Publication Date: 10th September 2004

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SHOW ANALYSIS: EGN 2004

A show of promise

It had some minor glitches, but the overriding opinion seems to be that European Games Network ticked all the right boxes in its first year. **Samantha Loveday** walked the show floor to find out what both the exhibitors and visitors thought...



COMPARED to shows gone by, European Games Network was a very quiet affair.

There was no loud music, the stands were small and functional rather than brash and glitzy, there were no dance mats, karaoke singers, bright lights or huge, white pod-like stands with no air con and, seemingly, no entrance or exit, as Virgin Interactive favoured in the late 1990s at Olympia.

But the major difference was that business was being done, and lots of it too. Yes, it was quiet; in fact I think that independent retailer event SCoRE back in February was noisier, but these were ideal conditions to strike deals with distributors in new territories, show off titles that were still in the early stages of development and network.

EGN was quiet, but these were ideal conditions to strike deals, show early code and network.

EGN was the show of an industry which has finally matured, according to a number of visitors, putting business first.

"I like it, I think it's a really relaxing atmosphere and you can see people are networking,"

said Stephen Hey, director of Headfirst. "The good thing is, people can network, but they can also choose to go and see the product as well over at Game Stars Live. Last year's ECTS seemed to be half way in-between this, but this is doing it right and is certainly the way forward in my opinion."

"Other industries' trade events outside of games are like this, that's what it is all about. It's a sign of a maturing industry. I don't think it's anything to be ashamed of – it's cool."

Colin Bell, MD of Juice Games, added: "The no-nonsense approach to the stands meant that there was no chest beating and meetings could be held in a business-like fashion."

Trevor Williams, MD of fellow developer Swordfish,

agreed: "The style of venue suited us really well, we had less foot traffic, but pretty much all of our meetings turned up. It was very focused."

One area which did raise concern, however, was that a



The stands at EGN were praised for being uniform and functional, allowing business meetings to take place in a quiet environment

number of independent retailers seemingly chose to stay away. With the exception of super indies such as CHIPS, Eclipse Entertainment, The Software Store et al, the sector as a whole was certainly under represented, a fact which didn't go unnoticed by some exhibitors.

"I think we were expecting more people and more flow-through to be honest," said Mike Trup, MD of Interactive Ideas on the Wednesday.

Pete Mortimer, boss of Telegames, admitted that he was also expecting the show to be busier, although the quality of the visitors made up for it.

Trup, too, was pleased with the quality of the people who were shipping up to his stand: "I like the fact that people are talking and presenting product, rather than having to show how big they are as a company. It certainly is more serious."



ExCeL as a venue received the usual mixed reception. While everyone seemed in agreement that having the trade offering alongside a consumer event is the way forward, the EGN registration process drew some criticism, while the meeting planner system, a good idea on paper, confused some in practice. And those exhibitors finding themselves in the upper level Waterfront rooms must have felt rather isolated.

The praise that will probably have LEC and ELSPA really smiling though is having EGN described as "a cute little version of E3" by Adam Doree of games site *Kikizo*. EGN has a long way to go to become as established as the LA show, and Leipzig's rising star could also yet be a thorn in the side, but for now it can only be judged on its first showing and this, it appears, has been a success.

THE INDUSTRY'S VERDICT...

Simon Phillips, *Gusto Games*
"It had a nice buzz. Generally the type of people roaming EGN were useful to talk to and plenty of decent contacts were made."

John Pirie, *Cosmi Europe*
"The opportunity to combine both a trade show and a public event is long overdue and the location proved itself."

Nicholas Lovell, *Lodestar*
"It feels like you can really do business here."

Steve Marks, *Koel*
"It's nice to have consumers on one side and then an industry-only section on the other."

Kingi Gilbert, *JAM*
"I think it's good. I haven't been over to ECTS to see how that would compare, though."

David Gould, *VU Games*
"This is a fantastic networking opportunity."

Enda Carey, *Ifone*
"EGN is really exceeding our expectations and is a great alternative to ECTS."

Adam Doree, *Kikizo*
"You could describe it as a cute, little version of E3. I think it's got the right balance that people are after."

Pete Mortimer, *Telegames*
"We have been steadily busy, although the show itself has not been as busy as I thought it should be."

Brian Faller, *Cenega*
"It's nice to be able to have next year's games at an early stage at EGN."

Richard Eddy, *Codemasters*
"ExCeL is a very good venue, and much has improved since ECTS was here. EGN seems to be working well."

Lorraine Lue, *Dreamcatcher*
"We've had good meetings and have had a great reaction to our games."