

EXPERIENCE

FERN



A Conversation with John Rozum Director of Ag & Utility Exhibitions (AEM)

NSF: 1,359,269

ATTENDANCE: 15,000+

LOCATION: Louisville, KY



Fern:

John, you and the team have worked with Fern since 2017 on The Utility Expo, and my question is why Fern and why would you say the relationship has been successful?

John:

We've been with Fern since 2017 because Fern understands our unique needs for this show and is more than a vendor for us; you are a partner for us. It's more than just checking the boxes. Your team truly listens to and understands what our exhibitors need and expect, along with what we need to do to grow the show. The other key is that you come back with solutions to the initiatives and challenges we present to you and then execute on that solution with a smile.

“We're partners with all of our service providers, but we know Fern will be there when it comes to getting it done at this show.”



fern

EXPERIENCE

PARTNERSHIP

Fern:

With a biennial event of the size and scope of The Utility Expo that also occurs in Louisville annually, there are certainly advantages to having a consistent home, particularly with some of the outdoor work you do.

However, there's sometimes a challenge of keeping it engaging and exciting for the attendees. What has Fern done to help you do that and ensure that even though we're at the same venue, we're keeping it fresh, exciting, and engaging for both the attendees and the exhibitors?

John:

In many ways, the changes we want to make start years before the show where we want to make the change. With 1,400,000 square feet of exhibit space and demand for diggable outdoor space, you have to set those changes up over time.

The foundation for the changes in 2021 started in advance of the 2019 show when we found out that Cardinal Stadium would be torn down. The removal of the stadium allowed us to really flip the script on how we designed the floor. The Fern team was in on that secret and helped us visualize the layout, and got us going in the right direction for 2021. so that once we got through the 2019 show, we could work together, which literally involved a lot of walking of the space, to start to move some of what we visualized to reality. This time together allowed us to begin our planning and move what we visualized to reality for 2021, which involved using completely new and different spaces in a manner that made sense and allowed us to grow the show. The utilization of what was now one large, continuous area had a fantastic result that both the attendees and the exhibitors loved. The current iteration we landed on gives us a lot of room to grow and adapt.

We leaned heavily on the Fern team for ideas on that layout, creative signage, and traffic flow assessment. This new configuration for us included a large L-shaped continuous plan wrapped around the building. A layout of this type had never been done before at the facility. This presented some concerns in that this configuration has some natural pinch points that had me concerned. The Fern team took the time to show me how we could direct attendee traffic in a natural and organic way. The result was what ended up being a very easy flow for attendees and exhibitors.





“ And that is a partnership, that part right there! It's not OK, well, we're just going to go ahead and do your bad idea, and it's going to cost you a lot more money. It's let's develop it, let's talk about. And that is what we have come to count on from Fern, and we know we're going to get. ”



Fern:

The show recently went through a significant rebranding. Can you talk about the creative process overall and what happened with the rebranding?

John:

The rebrand started over two years in advance of the event. We did a significant amount of research and realized that no one knew what ICUEE was or what the letters stood for. That made it pretty clear we needed a new name for the show. There were a lot of discussions around the name, and when it came down to it, we went with the obvious, a name that tells people exactly what the show is.

With the launch of the new brand, we knew that we were going to need a graphics package that really popped, really told the story, and helped sell the new brand. We had to rebrand while letting all the attendees know it was the same exhibiting companies and the same equipment they had come to see in previous years.

While everyone responded to the new brand really well, we also had a new layout, and we had to use the new brand not only to make a statement but also to help them navigate the new layout. As soon as people walked into the lobby for registration, they had their statement; that giant three-story blue banner knocked it out of the park as a welcome piece and a showcase for the new brand.