

Press Release



THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE
SHOW FOR OPTICS & DESIGN

14. – 16.01.
Fairground Munich
www.opti.de

opti 2022: commercial driving force and platform for the future

The next opti, which is the leading trade show for the optics and optometry industry in Europe's most important market, will be held from 14th to 16th January 2022. Exhibitors can register for the trade show in Munich right away, doing so entirely free of risk but with the prospect of important and valuable business opportunities.

Munich, 15th April 2021 – Bettina Reiter, exhibition director of opti, the international trade show for optics and design, along with Klaus Plaschka, managing director of GHM Gesellschaft für Handwerksmessen mbH, in their capacity as organisers, reveal in an interview why in future, trade fairs will be more important than ever, what the industry can expect from opti 2022 and why the venue in Munich will be a business booster. We also talk about the question of whether trade fairs and exhibitions have a future by taking a look at opti 2032.

Mr. Plaschka, you have been working at this craft trade fair organisation that is the Gesellschaft für Handwerksmessen (GHM) since 2004, Since 2008 -you are jointly with Mr. Dieter Dohr in the capacity of managing director. Following an internal reorganisation at GHM, since April you have been responsible at a directorial level for the business segment B2B trade fairs, in other words from now on for opti, too. What is your role here and in which areas can the optics industry be pleased about your appointment?

Klaus Plaschka: First of all, I am looking forward to taking a more hands-on approach to the organisation of such a great and stylish trade show as opti. This is because if you look at our entire trade fair portfolio, opti is an optical highlight in the truest sense of the word. I can still remember what it was like when we acquired opti in 2008, since which time Dieter Dohr and myself have been jointly developing it from the starting point of our different responsibilities. We will continue to do so of course; it's just that from now on, I will also be directly responsible for opti.

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We utilised the famous year 2020 - which was the first time in its history that opti too had to be cancelled - to make both our organisation and our core competence - the organisation and holding of live events - 'fit for the future'. As part of this process, my focus was and is on corporate development, which – through collaboration with the trade fair experts – is reflected in our products and a significant contribution to their sustainability. In this regard, each industry has its own needs, with each issue needing to be looked at separately. We carry out individual, customised evaluations of all those aspects of an event whose live counterpart is irreplaceable, as well as of those that can be carried out irrespective of location. The main focus here is on the benefit to the customer, which mustn't be limited by virtual channels. We have made intensive use of the last few months to organise those processes and areas more efficiently and more simply for the trade show participants, that do not really impact directly on the added value created by a trade fair. For instance, at GHM we have fully digitised the entire area of Customer Services to include in our exhibitor portal: right from registration to the ordering of technical stand equipment and media services, as well as the viewing of admission data and participation invoice data - in future, all this will be available online and grouped together in a single portal. It was a major project that I was responsible for and I am pleased that opti is one of the first trade shows to benefit from all this work.

We are going through turbulent times. Like many other venues, opti's exhibition halls are standing empty in 2021. No one knows when we will actually get through the coronavirus crisis. Mr. Plaschka, how do you as the managing director of a trade fair organisation deal with this?

Klaus Plaschka: We have certainly been through a turbulent year and we have had to see what a great blow it has been for the trade fair organizers, exhibitors and visitors - as it also was for the entire optics industry - to have all trade fairs cancelled, including opti 2021. Despite this, I am both optimistic and firmly convinced that we can all learn a great deal from coping with this crisis - despite all the hazards and restrictions. In spite of the great and ongoing digital (r)evolution, what we are left with is the longing to go to a café, a concert or a stadium to meet each other in person. In other words, the longing for real people and real experiences is something that cannot be satisfied digitally - this is something else we have seen during the long 'forgoing'. This is also true for visiting a trade fair, because it is clear that the world of professionals thrives on intensive interaction - as do we as humans - namely from events that stimulate all our senses. It continues to be vitally important that suppliers,

providers and users meet in person and that manufacturers, GPs and other practitioners work together to improve their collaboration, to uncover the significant trends and (in particular) to discover what inspires and delights their customers. Handling and testing the products is another significant factor driving the impulse to buy and is something that cannot be permanently presented digitally. All the above is carried out most efficiently at the trade fair, this being another learning experience for us all.

By late summer, Germany too will have probably achieved the necessary vaccination ratio, so that we will then finally be able to get going again. This is the future prospect that feeds my optimism.

What feedback have you received from your discussions with industry players regarding the importance of trade fairs at the current time?

Klaus Plaschka: Without trade fairs or other sales platforms, businesses are missing out on significant and valuable business opportunities, including for making new contacts. For exhibitors, the most important reason for taking part in real-world (as opposed to virtual) trade fairs is the personal interaction and face-to-face contact, followed by the gaining of new customers and the generation of new leads, along with product presentations. You only get a proper overview of the market on a real-world platform that is a live, on-site event.¹ This is why the industry rightly expects so much from a trade fair.

Bettina Reiter: I would like to add opti's own point of view here, because if there's one thing I can say from the discussions with exhibitors, it's that the 'family' that is this industry can hardly wait to meet in person again in order to interact face to face and to experience our 'community'. This is what builds confidence and creates successful businesses. Our greatest motivation in all this is to provide the best possible inspirational framework to bring this about, so this is what we are focussing on.

Mrs. Reiter, does this mean that opti 2022 will be held next year in Munich?

Bettina Reiter: Yes, of course. As sure as the year 2022 comes, opti will be held in January of that year. And this is true in a further sense too: we are planning a live event that will be augmented by digital offerings, both in the run-up to and during and after the trade show that will provide the intensive

¹ In a recent survey, 76 percent of exhibitors said that they were lacking opportunities for gaining new customers, with 84 percent complaining about the lack of networking with visitors and other exhibitors and around 60 percent bemoaning the lack of opportunities to put on real-world presentations of new products. The survey was carried out in October 2020 among 427 exhibiting companies of major commercial sectors. The associations SPECTARIS, VDMA, ZVEI und AUMA took part, as did the association of German trade fair businesses.

interaction that the industry urgently needs. In addition, we assure both exhibitors and visitors that opti 2022 will contain many components familiar to them. We are optimally organised for it, as we will take the concepts that were already fully prepared for opti 2021. We will add to them the now-standard measures such as the integration of test results or vaccination certificates and adjusting and implementing these measures in the light of the situation that prevails in January 2022. Should it unexpectedly prove impossible to carry out the trade fair as a live event then we plan to have a different format that we will present to the market in good time.

À propos presentation: What can we expect from opti 2022?

Bettina Reiter: Routine has never been part of the opti experience, which is why opti 2022 will again be different to all its predecessors. This is because the optical industry thrive on new trends and ideas and expect to see innovation. Exhibitors can rest assured that we will again be tailoring the leading themes, concepts and ideas to the industry's needs. Giving the trade fair a clearly defined and structured design and layout has always proved very beneficial and is a principle that we will adhere to for opti 2022 too. This means that the themes will be clustered and this time will be spread across a total of four exhibition halls.

Does this mean that opti 2022 will be somewhat smaller than in 2019 and 2020?

Bettina Reiter: Yes, that's correct. Trade fairs reflect the markets they represent, with the pandemic naturally affecting the optics market too and leaving its mark there. This means we would be ignoring reality if we were to base our design and layout for opti 2022 on the figures for the previous two years, when for the first time we occupied six exhibition halls. The quality of and benefit obtained from opti will continue be the main focus. Our primary objective is to finally bring the industry together again on the unique platform that is opti. We will be hosting a trade fair that has a 'community feeling' for all participants, where the customary great atmosphere puts a spring in the attendees' step and generates business opportunities. opti will continue to function as the first business platform for movers and shakers that is a driving force for the new optical business year and that will present all the different themes and fields.

So basically, the familiar, tried-and-tested aspects will remain, but what will be new at opti 2022?

Bettina Reiter: What will be new is that we will deploy far more digital agenda components than before, both before, during and after the trade fair. In addition, our customers can look forward to getting acquainted with our matchmaking tools. A special feature of opti 2022 will be that after a long lean period, we will finally all be able to meet up again. For me personally, this is the biggest highlight, and both my team and I are really looking forward to this.

Mr. Plaschka, we now have an idea of what to expect from the upcoming opti but what do you think opti will look like in 10 years' time?

Klaus Plaschka: As I have said, our core business is to bring people together and this will continue to be a key focus for our future activities. However, we no longer singularly see ourselves as a provider of stand space that allows exhibitors to put on a presentation but as the conductor of a multifaceted orchestra. This trend was already visible but has now been reinforced by the pandemic. In this way, we as the organiser are facing a change which base is a human need and the basic idea of trade fairs: namely that the trade fair is a platform for communication and interaction. In other words, just as it was 1,000 years ago, in 10 years' time the main need that people will want a trade fair to satisfy is that of having conversations with each other at the same physical location. However, two aspects will be different to the current situation, namely that both matchmaking and discussion preparation will be made much easier by a whole host of digital tools, with very greatly individualised personal needs being optimally catered for as a result. Discussions themselves will benefit from this too, thanks to people's desire to come together, to converse and to be surprised at a human, personal level. All of these are basic human needs. This same trend will also have a knock-on effect on the business, with the boundaries between exhibitors and visitors becoming blurred. Trade fairs could become much more conference-like in nature, in other words that each trade fair participant will be a market partner who wants to become involved and help shape the creative processes and events. There will also be digital tools for this that will facilitate and interconnect these interactions. In other words, at its core the trade fair of the future will continue to be that which has always defined it, namely the campfire that we have all searched for and gathered round since time immemorial and that is now being facilitated by 'rocket science'.

We are working hard to respond to these major cultural changes and to organise the new trade fair of the future. However, the key objective will always be: to bring people together.

Mrs. Reiter, Mr. Plaschka, many thanks for this interview!

About Klaus Plaschka:

Klaus Plaschka has been at the Gesellschaft für Handwerksmessen mbH (GHM) since 2004. Initially, in his capacity as staff unit head he was responsible for strategic corporate development, before switching to the management board in 2012. Since April 2021, the Managing Director has been responsible, among other things, for the strategic focus of B2B trade fairs and GHM's digital services.

About opti

opti takes place annually at the beginning of the year and is alternating between Munich and Stuttgart. As the international trade show for optics & design it presents the entire spectrum of optics ranging from frames, ophthalmic lenses, contact lenses and low-vision products to shop set-up, technical equipment and devices. This makes opti *the* platform for product premieres by international market leaders and start-up companies alike. Since 2008 the trade show has been run by GHM Gesellschaft für Handwerksmessen mbH. Since then opti has shown continual growth. The trade show was held for the first time ever in 1998. Due to COVID-19, it could not take place in 2021 for the first time.

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