



Cancun show exceeds expectations, opens new markets

>> [IBI Plus premium content](#), by Tony Esposito December 12, 2022

Still in its infancy, CIBS is demonstrating that size doesn't always matter

While final attendance figures are yet to come, the general consensus for the second edition of the Cancun International Boat Show (CIBS) was an overwhelming success with a number of surprises and served as a gateway opening new markets to US companies exhibiting at the show.

“My biggest surprise is the quality of the people we were able to bring to the event,” show director Steven Lorenzo told *IBI* late Sunday as the show was winding down, adding attendance was “well over” 7,000 visitors.

“I’m thrilled with the traffic. I’m thrilled with the quality of visitors we’ve had at the show. Very upscale; much more upscale than I was expecting.”

In its second year, CIBS doubled in size from its inaugural event, taking advantage of the new, nearly completed GOS Marina and the Puerto Cancun residential/retail development on the Yucatan Peninsula’s Caribbean coast.

“Puerto Cancun is the place to see and be seen here in Cancun. Mexico is a very social culture. The presence here, surrounded by brand new condominium towers in a designer mall with upscale retailers and gourmet restaurants. This is the place to be in the area and we are showcasing it.

“We’re definitely going in the right direction. At all levels. Everyone is thrilled with the show: the exhibitors, the visitors, the politicians, which is very important here because

we need that government support; the stores and restaurants and vendors here in the mall, it's just been great overall."

For the US companies on-site, their goals and expectations were understated, and summarised well by Pablo Sosa, president of Spurs line & net cutting systems from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

"We came to do market research, to figure out if there is a market for our product, to see how developed the marine industry is in Mexico in general – not just Cancun – and to see what marine industry infrastructure they have already."

The US exhibitor on hand were exuberant about their results, despite having set a low bar for success coming into the show.

"I wasn't expecting much out of this for what we do," Steve Hugo, OEM sales manager for Sea Vision underwater light systems, also out of Fort Lauderdale. "I like the show, I'm meeting the people I need to meet," Hugo said, who met with potential marina clients for underwater dock lighting. "I met several quality contacts that were introduced to us through the show management and Enterprise Florida," he added, referring to the public/private commerce development organisation that represents Florida manufacturers.

"We've met our pre-show goals and even exceeded some of them and learned a lot about the Mexican market," said Paul Westrope, CEO of Onan Technologies, makers of Glidecoat. "At this point we have three potential distribution partners that we'll be meeting with over the course of this week."

Still in its infancy, CIBS is demonstrating that size doesn't always matter.

"It's a small show for us. Success is not necessarily the number of people, it's the quality. For us, it takes just three or four deals to pay for the show. We spoke to an owner across the bay here with an 80ft boat and signed a deal, which paid for our participation in the show," explained Denis Hamel, CEO of ICA Group, which makes NuTeak and NautikFlor synthetic decking system.

For next year, Lorenzo hopes to increase the number of boats and exhibits displayed and expanding the scope of the show.

"There is also the opportunity of inviting the charter people in, the luxury charter companies. Not everyone needs to buy a boat to enjoy a boat, so there is a market there. And I'm talking about very upscale charters," he added.

And the participating companies are also looking forward.

“It is a really good show, I’ve actually already talked to Steven to guarantee me a spot for next year,” said Manuel Lio, sales manager for American Marine Parts (AMP), an export company from Miami, Florida.

AMP, which does 90% of its business in the Caribbean and is looking to expand into Mexico, said in this region face-to-face sales is hugely important. Lio visited with potential customers at their shops in the days leading up to the show.

“If I pick up the phone and call them, I’ll never reach the person I need to get to. Here, we walk in their door, leave our information and within an hour, I had a phone call. Each and every person that we reached out to prior to the show has come by to see me. I was very surprised. I thought it would be days or weeks before I could identify the right person.

“I have a couple of them who have come back several times and brought their partner. Just one place I visited brought be four potential customers,” he said enthusiastically.

Not only does Lio intend to return next year, but he will also refocus his marketing efforts entirely.

“We are trying to break into the EU, but, especially after this show, we’re going to focus on Mexico first. With everything that has happened here and the outcomes that I see, we won’t bother with METS next year, we’re just going to concentrate here.”