

TABLE 2

Breakdown of foreign direct exhibitors					
	95	94	93	92	91
Boats	2	5	5	3	1
Engines	1	1	2	1	1
Trailers	0	0	0	0	0
Accessories	20	19	23	16	19
Marinas	1	0	0	0	0
Fishing	0	0	0	0	0
Services	0	0	1	2	3
Others	0	0	0	0	0
Total	24	25	31	22	24

TABLE 3

Number of direct exhibitors at IMTEC that have exhibited in consecutive years				
	95	94	93	92
Number of consecutive years				
5		5		
4	0	6		
3	4	1	13	
2	5	5	3	13
1 year only	10	13	15	9
Total	24	25	31	22

Banten, a Genoa company making high-quality radio antennae, is ISO 9002 certified, but many Americans don't recognize the quality level this signifies. Dr Maro Bonaiti says the advantage of his 50-year-old Italian firm Kong is their good name and reliability in making carbine hooks. Carlo Giustini, sales manager for Nuova Rade, an Italian maker of primarily plastic marine accessories, says the advantages of design, shine, style and price convince his customers. Razeto & Casareto promises quick shipment, while Whale says its brand name and total system concept are key. Tohatsu engines' simplicity and ease of repair are advantageous. A number of Asian firms mentioned getting business from the government and military as advantages in reference selling. Given the low historical level of the US dollar, it is surprising that foreign manufacturers do have a price advantage, and quick shipment overseas is quite an accomplishment, but a few exhibitors did mention that part of the reason they exhibit is that their products are unique or that there is very little US competition for their products.

One new twist mentioned by a number of firms was the significant difference in the distribution structure in America. Marketing representatives that don't take title but stock goods play a much greater role in the United States than in Europe. The Europeans are more familiar with a stocking distributor who buys and takes titles and resells at a mark-up instead of earning commission as US-style sales representatives do.

All foreign exhibitors displayed literature translated from their native language into English. Again, the number of European representatives means that Italian, French, Spanish and German are the most popular other languages into which manufacturers translate their sales materials. With the exception of Tohatsu, the Asian firms assume the rest of the world speaks English, because they publish their information in English only.

Foreign exhibitors have been slow to catch on to new selling technologies. Max Malavasi of Aquaman UK lists an on-line computer service electronic-mail address on his business card. Anselmo Biagini of Cover Elite, an Italian float cover manufacturer, Graham Gairn of V-Tronix, a UK land and marine communications technology company, are

considering advertising on the Internet. Patrick Hurst of Whale Water Systems equips his salesmen with lap-top computers on the road and offers the catalogue on computer disk. Rene Ponzio of Reya, a French manufacturer of water pumps, is thinking about putting its material on CD-ROM. The MNRA (National Marine Representatives Association) was displaying its new home page on the World Wide Web. International exhibitors can learn from their American counterparts in this respect and reach many foreign markets very cost effectively doing so.

In America, at times a strong 'Buy American' movement exists among consumers who supposedly prefer to buy goods produced in the US to support American jobs at home. This is an issue but not a reason for avoiding the US market. And the foreign exhibitors at IMTEC seemed evenly divided in believing this to be a problem for them. The general conviction was that primarily American buyers are looking for quality products at competitive prices with good service follow-up, regardless of where they come from. Actually, two firms mentioned that the novelty of buying from a foreign company could be an advantage. One British observer mentioned that he could "see it on their faces," when they realized they were seeing a foreign exhibit.

It's too early to tell if exhibitors have reached their goals by exhibiting at IMTEC '95, but although attendance seemed down and one group had an out-of-the-way location, most polled were generally satisfied.

In looking at other shows where these firms exhibit (Table 4), the most obvious observation is that METS is unquestionably the show for accessories in Europe, and by far the most popular outside the States for foreign accessories exhibitors. Beyond IMTEC and METS, to date equipment companies have

little option except to choose a few from the many consumer shows.

In the US, on the business-to-business side, Miami is probably the most important international consumer boat show for a number of reasons. For a start, it dedicates two days as being for the trade only and Miami's location in the south-eastern US makes it an attractive destination not only for Latin American visitors, but also for Europeans looking for some sun in February. Also the in-water display area makes it a good show to see larger yachts and sailboats that cannot fit inside IMTEC.

Fred Kegelmeyer, president of Brunger Export, a leading export management company for US marine accessories, differentiates IMTEC by characterizing it as the place for American firms to show their wares to the world and the most vital international show for US suppliers.

International business these days is conducted primarily by fax, especially by small or medium-sized firms. Although it might appear to be an insignificant problem, incorrect fax numbers make it difficult to conduct business overseas. In 1995, fax numbers were listed incorrectly in the IMTEC catalogue for 13 foreign exhibitors. Either country or city codes were omitted or they were simply wrong. Exhibitors should proof-read their listing carefully so that their customers can reach them after the show, even if they didn't get a catalogue or card.

Another small but significant point is that only a few foreign exhibitors added the exporter insignia to their catalogue listing. It could be confusing for an American to approach a foreign firm, note that they are not listed as an exporter, and assume, however illogically, that they do not export to America. In the interests of clarity, if foreign firms are seeking American customers, they should add the exporter insignia to their catalogue listing. The NMMA should do more to encourage foreign exhibitors to join the association. Membership includes many advantages, including reduced rates.

In conclusion, foreign firms that exhibit at IMTEC are there to find agents and distributors in North America, and just possibly in the Latin markets too. Therefore, after a year or two of exhibiting directly they pass the responsibilities on to a local US representative. As for foreign visitors, it's the vast array of the latest products from the Americas that they go to see.

Those who don't go to IMTEC risk missing out on a whole raft of new products and service opportunities.

TABLE 4

Number of direct foreign exhibitors at IMTEC exhibiting at other boat shows

METS, Amsterdam, NL	13	Friedrichshafen, Germany	1
Genoa, Italy	7	Montreal, Canada	1
London, UK	6	Toronto, Canada	1
Miami, US	6	Vancouver, Canada	1
B-MEC London (ex-BMTS), UK	4	Stockholm, Sweden	1
Düsseldorf, Germany	4	Gothenburg, Sweden	1
Paris, France	4	Copenhagen, Denmark	1
Singapore, METS	4	Helsinki, Finland	1
Southampton, UK	3	Oslo, Norway	1
Tokyo, Japan	3	Barcelona, Spain	1
Athens, Greece	2	Lisbon, Portugal	1
Cannes, France	2	Budapest, Hungary	1
Nice, France	2	Melbourne, Australia	1
Hamburg, Germany	2	Sydney, Australia	1
Berlin, Germany	1	Auckland, New Zealand	1