

CARPET EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

In the preview of COVID-19 situation Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) organised 2 presentation meetings through video conferencing with Prominent Members of the industry along with the COA Members on **02nd May 2020**. **The meeting was convened to discuss the Virtual Fairs as an alternative to the physical fairs for ensuring business continuity during COVID-19. Representatives of the agency M/s Falcon Pvt. Ltd were present for a presentation on the Virtual fair platform on which the virtual fair will be organized.**

Sh. Siddh Nath Singh, Chairman, CEPC welcomed the participants in the meeting and extended thanks for sharing their valuable time for the meeting. Chairman mentioned that in the times to come the biggest challenge is that no overseas buyer will be ready to fly therefore it is important to look for alternatives to the physical fairs and exhibitions which were being held till now. He invited all the members present in the meeting to see the presentation on Virtual Fairs which will give them an idea of how virtual fairs are conducted and ask any queries or give suggestions at the end of the presentation.

Chairman also informed the participants that Council along with the staff members have already had various meetings with different agency providers of Virtual fairs and now want the industry members to assess and provide feedback on the option of holding Virtual Fairs.

Chairman invited Mr Sooraj Dhawan from M/s Falcon Pvt. Ltd to give the presentation. The presentation covered a brief overview of the virtual fair platform. The platform showed how exhibitors/buyers will register themselves on the platform. A registered buyer can search for an exhibitor on the basis of the product or various categories which can be defined and is customisable. The platform provides features of shortlisting products, exhibitors and also supports video meetings with exhibitors. The exhibitors can upload company brochure, product videos and high-resolution product pictures. The agency also informed that in case some exhibitor requires help in creating Company Brochures the details of Mr Nihar the agency who works in this field can provide their services. The contact details of Mr Nihar who was also present during the meeting were shared with the members during the meeting. The agency also informed that the virtual fair platform is both mobile and laptop/tablet compatible.

Following the presentation chairman invited the participating members for questions & clarifications on the platform. Mr Sooraj Dhawan along with his team members answered and resolved member's queries.

The Queries and responses are summarized as under:

1. Some of the members **raised concerns on the security of the platform** and wanted to know how safe the data will be. The agency clarified that the entire platform is GDPR compliant and all security measures related to exhibitor's product data, buyers' interactions, details of buyers visiting the booths will be totally encrypted and safe and will be visible only to the exhibitor.
2. Whether the **platform will be strictly B2B or also cater to B2C** most of the members agreed that the platform should be strictly B2B and not cater to the end consumer.
3. One of the **features of the virtual fair platform is giving product recommendation to the buyers based on his browsing history** Many members recommended that product recommendation on the platform should not be based on price as price sensitivity needs to be maintained rather product-based matching should be done.
4. Some of the members **enquired that why should the individual websites of member exporters** not be promoted rather than a single virtual fair platform. The agency responded by saying that the platform is an amalgamation of all members and a single place to attract the buyers will fetch much better results.
5. Our overseas buyers fall into **different time zones** and to ensure that all buyers across the world can be attended to by the exhibitors during the virtual fair dates Members suggested that platform should be kept open throughout rather than keeping a fair for only 3 to 4 days. Chairman suggested that a decision on this will be taken into consideration the time zone factor.
6. Some members enquired about the **possibility of adding the functionality of ecommerce to the virtual fair platform**. Chairman mentioned that the platform can be evolved at later stage to include the capabilities of ecommerce .
7. Some members enquired if there is a **provision of integrating Social media handles and their websites** with their exhibitor

profile on the virtual fair platform. The agency clarified that there is a feature and it can be integrated

All the queries were satisfactorily answered by the agency and the member participants appreciated the concept of Virtual Fairs while also appreciating CEPC role in ensuring that member exporters have business continuity during COVID-19.

Chairman mentioned that another meeting will be scheduled with the Buying Agents and possibly some buyers next week and their feedback will be also be taken into account in deciding the way forward.

The 1st Session of meeting ended with a vote of thanks.

2nd Session of meeting through video conferencing with Prominent Members of the industry along with the COA Members was convened to discuss the Virtual Fairs as an alternative to the physical fairs for ensuring business continuity during COVID-19. **Representatives of the agency M/s Tricornio Technologies were present for a presentation on the Virtual fair platform on which the virtual fair will be organized.**

Sh. Siddh Nath Singh, Chairman, CEPC welcomed the participants in the meeting and extended thanks for sharing their valuable time for the meeting. Chairman mentioned that over a period of time the distinction between physical fairs and virtual fairs will gradually blur as in the times to come virtual fairs will also give you similar results as a physical fair. Chairman further mentioned that in the present COVID-19 scenario the buyers are also forced to adopt the virtual means for carrying out their business and our members should presently focus on creating a strong virtual profile which will help them to attract buyers. He also said that exhibitors should focus on superior products photography and company profile designing. He invited all the members present in the meeting to see the agencies presentation on Virtual Fairs which will give them an idea of how virtual fairs are conducted and ask any queries or give suggestions at the end of the presentation.

Chairman invited Mr Kishlay Rai from M/s Tricornio Technologies to give the presentation. The presentation covered a brief overview and the salient features of the virtual fair platform were covered.

The highlights of the platform are as below:

1. **The platform has been divided into three major modules Pre-Event Registration, Event, Post Event.** Exhibitors/Buyers/Buying Agents will have to register themselves on the platform. CEPC will monitor the Buyers registration and only approved buyers will be provided a login for the platform.
2. Exhibitor **Booths layout can be customized** and all facilities can be added. **E-Commerce facility** is also available.
3. Exhibitors can display **any no of Videos, images of their products and various booth offerings can be customized** and will be decided by CEPC. The agency will provide all kinds of **Technical Help to the exhibitors** both online and offline to ensure smooth presence of the exhibitors on the platform. A **webinar** will also be organized for the exhibitors to train them on how to use the platform.
4. Buyers can **visit the Booths via the virtual Help Desk or through the Floor Maps.**
5. Exhibitors and Buyers can **schedule meetings** and interact through a Chat Box. All details of interactions will be available as Chat History and the interaction will be protected through C Level Security.
6. **Privacy** will also be maintained as one exhibitor cannot see other exhibitors' products. Also, all Buyers –Exhibitor interaction will be totally private and secured.
7. Features like **Virtual Briefcase** and **WhatsApp Chat box** will be available
8. The agency will also be involved in **Digital Marketing and Social Media Management** to ensure good footfall of buyers on the platform.

Following the presentation chairman invited the participating members for questions & clarifications on the platform. Mr Kishlay Rai answered and resolved member's queries. The Queries and responses as well as suggestions received from the members are summarized as under:

8. Members suggested that the **platform should cater strictly to the B2B segment.** Chairman, CEPC also agreed that the platform will cater totally to the B2B segment

9. Members suggested that the **timing of the Virtual fair must coincide with the Buyers buying season** and must be scheduled keeping the dates of major exhibition shows like Domotex Atlanta and Domotex Germany in mind.

10. Some members enquired that since this is a virtual fair if CEPC has formulated a policy on how to address the issue of **RETURNS of products**. Chairman mentioned that the issue will be taken up with the COA members in the committee meeting. Some members also suggested that since this is a B2B platform the question of returns is probably not valid as most buyers are sent a sample of the product.

11. Some members enquired if there is a **provision of integrating Social media handles and their websites with their exhibitor profile on the virtual fair platform**. The agency clarified that there is a feature and it can be integrated.

All the queries were satisfactorily answered by the agency. Chairman mentioned that another meeting will be scheduled with the Buying Agents and possibly some buyers next week and their feedback will also be taken into account in deciding the way forward.

In both of the sessions almost 100 members exporters attended the meeting and shared their view point. All of them unanimously appreciated the idea and effort of Carpet Export Promotion Council for their timely initiatives.

Meeting ended with a vote of thanks.
