

# Media Release

## **BUSINESS EVENTS CASE STUDY – Prepared by Klara Vida, Communications Manager, Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre**

<b>Client:</b>	Mitre 10
<b>Event:</b>	Mitre 10 2011 Conference and Expo
<b>Attendees:</b>	1,492
<b>Days:</b>	3
<b>Date:</b>	7-9 February 2011
<b>Budget:</b>	Undisclosed

### **THE EVENT AND WHAT WE DID:**

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Mitre 10 is the second largest player and the only independent wholesaler to the Australian home improvement and hardware industry. Operating since 1959, the iconic brand boasts a retail network of more than 420 Mitre 10 and True Value Hardware stores, delivering value and quality to the Australian home improvement market every day. It is therefore little surprise the extensive audience that the retailer is required to reach to communicate its strategy and direction for the year ahead. The Mitre 10 Conference and Expo is the annual event for Mitre 10 store owners and supplier partners, showcasing merchandise, trade, marketing and operational strategies, and creating a managed environment for supplier partners to network with stores.

Underpinned by its passion to continue delivering the high quality service and products which have built the Mitre 10 name into the iconic brand that it is today, the theme of the 2011 Conference and Expo was 'Changing the Game', reflecting a new phase of business growth underpinned by a changing retail landscape. The three day event presented a series of informative business and education sessions, a merchandise and trade expo, and a charity dinner and awards night in a single consolidated show.

Attracting more than 1,400 delegates from across Australia representing 281 stores and 202 supplier companies, the majority of attendants came from Victoria (46.86 per cent), followed by Queensland (23.17 per cent), NSW (18.72 per cent), SA (6.82 per cent), WA (3.06 per cent), Tasmania (1.95 per cent) and NT (0.42 per cent).

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS:

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Flooding of Brisbane and surrounding areas just weeks prior to the conference threatened attendance numbers and put a question mark around the continuation of the event. While the Gold Coast was not affected by the extreme weather which devastated parts of the state, many Mitre 10 stores and suppliers are located in areas which were hit by the waters, either directly or indirectly through the supply chain. To ascertain whether or not to progress, all key stakeholders in Queensland (stores and contractors) were contacted and asked if they were able to attend the event and if they felt it should go ahead. A resounding yes on both counts ensured the continuation of the Conference and Expo. Minor logistical and product supply issues resulted in certain parts of the event being modified (such as changing the Gala Dinner menu and several contractors).

Despite the weather conditions which had slowed down so much business across the state, the 2011 Conference and Expo attracted record attendance. Increased delegate numbers meant the client had to work with the venue to alter the floor plans for the business sessions and Gala Dinner, create more breakout areas for delegates and increase catering numbers. Expected conference numbers were exceeded by 492.

At this year's conference there was also an increased number of exhibition booths sold. Overwhelming interest in the show resulted in Mitre 10 hiring more space midway through the project. A total of 7,500m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space was used for the expo comprising of the exhibition halls and adjoining central rooms. The expo catered for an extra 21 booths to reach a total of 221 3m x 3m booths. The GCCEC worked closely with the client to find solutions to these challenges, ensuring the continuation of the event was a success.

## OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS:

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Each year the Mitre 10 Conference and Expo creates a platform to showcase merchandise, trade, marketing and operational strategies to its store owners and supplier companies, combining two historically separate events (trade conference and retail expo) into a single consolidated show. The event celebrates and rewards stores and suppliers for their achievements and loyalty, creates a managed environment for supplier partners to network with stores and a forum to communicate current key business objectives and messages. Education sessions at the 2011 Conference and Expo addressed topics such as local area marketing (what marketing events and activities have worked in store and why), visual merchandising (practical demonstrations and advice from experts about setting up effective in-store point of sale displays) and business planning workshops. Green Building Sessions also featured in the educational component, addressing the ever-growing challenges by the property industry to lower the carbon footprint of buildings, and making store owners more aware of benchmark performance and standard practice within the green operation sector. Gardening workshops, presented by Mitre 10's Living and Gardening Team and their key supplier Yates, provided a helping hand to sharpen the skills and bring new and innovative ideas to store owners. Last but certainly not least, one of the event objectives was to raise money for the flood and cyclone affected areas of Australia through a variety of raffles and auctions over the three day event.

Reaching all objectives, the 2011 Conference and Expo attracted a record attendance exceeding previous years' events. Over 50 per cent of delegates reported that the show was 'above expectations' and that they would return the following year. From the supplier front many reported that they had achieved record sales at the event. Other areas of positive feedback included the extensive networking and partnership opportunities, 'exhibition stand numbering' making the expo easy to navigate, and portable food and beverage within the expo helping keep delegates on the move. From a logistical point of view wireless internet

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*Objectives and Results continued...*

access allowed delegates to use the internet anywhere within the venue or in the specially designed member lounges located inside the exhibition halls. The member lounges also ensured that more delegates stayed within the exhibition space, where a forced-flow floor plan directed expo-goers past more stands, resulting in a busier looking space. The GCCEC's foyer areas which were 'dressed up' by Greenlife as extra break out space for delegates to sit and meet were well received.

Positive feedback from the client also included the use of on-site external banners and internal banners and electronic signage in the foyer areas which branded the building and gave the client a sense of ownership of the space for the duration of the event. Similarly the client reported that the branding of building entry ways and registration desk made delegates feel like they 'belonged' and that it was 'their' conference. The 'food pagodas' and portable style of food which catered for additional delegate numbers was well-received and reported as 'overwhelmingly good'. The client said that the purpose design of the GCCEC made it easier to set-up and run the event from a logistical point of view as compared to some of the bigger event locations. The Gold Coast as the host city was also well-received, with the client reporting that delegates were more likely to extend their stay to see some of the many attractions across the destination. Both the GCCEC and Mitre 10 identified areas for improvement as part of the lessons learned which included some logistical issues around bump in and out, storage and lighting, which has been taken into consideration by the venue for future events. Overall the annual conference and expo was an extremely successful event, with positive feedback reflecting the fantastic job done by both the client and the venue.

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*Objectives and Results continued...*

In a significant economic boost for the local Broadbeach area, the Conference and Expo brought in excess of 1,500 room night bookings for neighbouring accommodation houses. Through the generous support of delegates, the event also raised a massive \$26,000 for flood and cyclone affected areas of Australia.

## **CLIENT COMMENTS:**

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“The fantastic venue and state of the art facilities offered by the GCCEC have once again facilitated the delivery of an exceptional Mitre 10 National Conference and Expo. The team at the Centre went ‘above and beyond’ to ensure that our 3 day event ran smoothly from start to finish, including the many months of designing and planning. The catering for our event was innovative, well presented and tasted sensational. Our 2011 event was one of our biggest yet with over 1,400 delegates and their feedback tells us that this venue is the one to beat! It was a pleasure dealing with such a friendly, practical and professional team.”

Stephanie Dixon  
Project Manager – National Conference & Expo  
Mitre 10 Australia Pty Ltd

## **ENDS**

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