CASE STUDY

SEMI® Automates On-Site Booth Selection for SEMICON West 2009

"Working with a2z professional services has been a very rewarding and productive experience. Their professionalism has accelerated our joint design, development, testing and deployment cycle time. **The a2z model has become a standard of excellence for us in IT."**

— Gil McInnes, SEMI Chief Information Officer

Challenge:

SEMICON West is the flagship annual event for the global microelectronics industries, featuring manufacturing products and technologies for semiconductors, photovoltaics, MEMS, solid state lighting, flexible electronics and related technologies. Now in its 38th year, the San Francisco show is one of ten expositions produced worldwide by Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International (SEMI).

We're a global industry association, and we want our customers to have a first-rate user experience when participating in the space selection process at our expositions, SEMI offers on-site booth selection to more than 1,200 companies exhibiting at SEMICON West based on the priority points members have earned for SEMICON West participation. Space selection for the next year begins at the current year's show. SEMI uses all three buildings of the Moscone Center (North, South, West). Each of the three areas is segmented by product area, and each product area includes pre-set configurations based on space used the previous year. When exhibitors arrive at pre-determined appointment

"We're a global industry association, and we want our customers to have a first-rate user experience. Compared to other SEMI events, the booth selection experience at SEMICON West was the most complex due to the process of incorporating multiple halls, exhibit floor product segmentation, and our priority points process. We are also co-located with a partner."

— Gia Carunchio,
Sr. Director, Global Expos

times to select their booth locations, they are invited to preview and select the available space in the on-site booth selection room. Once exhibitors are called for their appointment times with SEMI representatives, they have just a few minutes to select their space and confirm their reservations with a 20 percent deposit.

Although SEMICON West automated the onsite selection process approximately five years ago — using computers to preview the floorplan, assign space and process payments — software, hardware or connectivity issues impacted the operation on

occasion and forced staff to revert to the back-up processes. SEMI needed to streamline the onsite booth space selection process in order to complete assignments within the designated timeframe and improve customer experience and satisfaction.

Solution:

In early 2007, SEMI began to look for an enterprise-level solution that would replace the current floor plan and tradeshow management software and integrate with its new association management system (AMS). a2z Inc. was the clear market leader. The release of the a2zShow8 enterprise edition contained the full suite of tools required to manage and market expositions, including built-in integration with AMS and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. SEMI selected a2zShow in October 2007 and deployed the floorplan management tool for SEMICON Korea, Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2008, in Seoul. SEMI used the tool to populate the electronic floorplan after exhibitors selected space on the paper floor plan.

After this successful "proof of concept," SEMI decided to introduce a new online space selection process at SEMICON West 2008. Working with a2z, several contractors including Freeman, Moscone telecommunications, SEMI IT and finance, the SEMI operations team devised an improved plan that allowed all exhibitors to select their own space for 2009 during the 2008 show.

Onsite at SEMICON West 2008, exhibitors checked in at the new booth selection area, which occupied a more spacious room furnished with counter space, comfortable seating, and eight preview stations with 22-inch widescreen monitors. The screens displayed color-coded floor plans for each hall, with assigned and available space clearly visible in real-time. When exhibitors were called to the assignment area to choose their booth space, they sat down at a terminal with a SEMI representative and selected one of their top three choices, or chose the best available location and placed their name on a wait list. Exhibitors then moved to the finance area to pay their deposits.

Using the a2zShow financial module, SEMI issued invoices and processed credit card payments onsite — a first for the association. Email confirmations went out at the end of each show day with a link to the online floor plan. Post-show, reports were generated for event sales analysis and payment reconciliation. Accounts balanced 100 percent.

Results:

"Using the a2z system changed and improved the SEMICON West onsite booth selection process beyond expectations," says Cindy Goldstein, SEMI Director, Global Expositions Ops. "When we shifted from assigning booths within SEMI to empowering exhibitors to select space themselves, we dramatically improved our customer service. Customers can now easily see the 'big picture,' check out where their competition is located, and select the best possible location."

The new onsite space selection process yielded immediate results:

- **Zero down time.** The system was never offline, thanks to stable web-based software and bandwidth usage monitoring.
- **Decreased cycle time**. After previewing floor plans online, exhibitors spent less time at assigning stations. Exhibitor satisfaction significantly improved. They were able to spend less time renewing and more time focusing on this year's show.
- **Improved customer experience.** Exhibitors said floorplan previews were easy to navigate, and the selection process went quickly and smoothly.
- **Reduced IT labor costs.** The efficient use of network and Internet connections required less labor than previous configurations.
- **Saved finance staff time.** The financial module significantly reduced audit time on a daily basis.
- **Less pre-show testing.** The user-friendly software reduced time spent on systems testing and validation by about 1.5 days for two to three people.
- **Real-time, single-source data.** a2zShow eliminated redundant data entry and multiple databases to deliver more accurate and timely information to customers. Significant time savings were also realized by no longer needing to perform an extensive post show audit.

SEMI now uses a2zShow to manage floor plans and space assignments for global expositions, though Internet connectivity issues preclude an entirely online, on-site process in some regions. "Using a2z, customers now have real-time access to online floorplans and tools throughout the year, to assist in their preparations. The tools also provide additional insight to where their competition is located," Carunchio says. "We will see a return on our investment in a2z software through reduced show management cycle time for our staff and our customers as well as increased customer satisfaction."

The SEMI IT department continues to work with a2z to plan and implement the SMS/AMS/CRM integration project to integrate a2z (SMS), Aptify (AMS) and iExtension (CRM), which concludes a three-year initiative to move to a Services Oriented Architecture (SOA).

"**The a2z solution is best in class.** There was a great push to improve the process overall. In the true spirit of collaboration, commitment and everyone 'giving their all,' the excellent partnership with a2z helped us streamline our processes and improve customer satisfaction."

— Cindy Goldstein, SEMI Director, Global Expositions Operations