

Pitchfix Asia and Promoclip Asia at the International Premium Incentive Show 2010, Tokyo

Innovative products and designs, new and eco-friendly materials, and an emphasis on "capturing the hearts of women consumers" characterised the latest International Premium Incentive Show at the Tokyo Big Sight international exhibition centre.

The fair featured 243 exhibitors and attracted a total of about 68,000 visitors over its 14 to 16 April run. The look of the show was slick, with bright and colourful, well-appointed booths and, not surprisingly, a cornucopia of free giveaways.

Domestic exhibitors dominated, both in numbers and with superior style and presentation know-how. There were no "country pavilions" this time, with most of the non-Japanese exhibitors sharing a reasonably favourable location adjacent to the main display area.

One of these was Hong Kong's *Pitchfix Asia* and *PromoClip Asia*. Dutch-born Managing Director Rene Theil has been based in Hong Kong for the past 10 years and brought aesthetically pleasing, international-style product displays and a multilingual staff to his company's double-sized exhibition booth.

Building on the previous success in Japan of *Pitchfix* golf divot tools, Theil reached out to new customers with a line of *PromoClip* paper clips. Prices for the stylish stainless spring steel clips ranged from US\$0.26 to US\$3, depending on size, with a flat-rate set up printing fee of about US\$160, depending on number of colours chosen. The clips were manufactured in Holland and printed in Hong Kong.

Theil said doing the printing in Hong Kong was feasible due to his company's "lean-and-mean" set up. The state-of-the-art (and award-winning) printing machine required only a single operator, allowing *Pitchfix Asia* and *PromoClip Asia* to operate with a total staff of just eight.

Theil, who will participate in a total of six Japanese trade fairs this year, explained the business approach that has garnered him success in this market: "at a European trade fair, you can pat a guy on the shoulder, tell him to just try the product in a small quantity with a low invoice value, and he'll probably go for it. But here in Japan, that sort of casual and spontaneous dealing is rare." According to Theil, the trader needed patience and an ability to develop relationships slowly and carefully. Also, Japanese customers liked a high level of style and quality in their products and services. Theil pointed to his company's online presence as a further example of focused marketing. The *Pitchfix* and *PromoClip* websites are accessible in English, Japanese and Korean: www.pitchfix.asia, www.promoclip.asia.



Rene Theil and colleague Patty Tsui



The Post-It truck