

As the economy and changing consumer trends continue to reshape the landscape, trade show organizers are moving fast to adapt. Some are shifting their dates to more closely align with market cycles, while others are revamping their formats and floor layouts. Optimizing their digital marketing strategies also remains a priority, as shows seek to better connect vendors and buyers. Here, the organizers of six of the largest domestic and international events discuss the state of the shoe industry and share what's in store for their shows this year.

**LESLIE GALLIN**, president of footwear, UBM  
**New this season:** "We are showcasing lots of fresh talent at FN Platform. Each new brand will be identified as such in the show directory and on the booth ID signs. We are proud to have 10 brands coming from France under the guidance of Au-Delà du Cuir (ADC). Project Sole, our men's-only show, will now sit within the MRKT and Project shows, creating a robust opportunity to see both apparel and footwear and to validate trends. Sole Commerce will now operate alongside our newly acquired Business Journal shows, Edit and Stitch, mixing apparel and footwear and delivering a fully integrated shopping experience."

**Five new brands to see:** Adrienne Vittadini, Lacoste, Airtox, Koalabi Australia, Pediped  
**Social media initiatives:** "Our partner, *Footwear News*, will up the social media game with live Facebook streaming and the creation of curated content that retailers and brands can utilize for their own websites and social media platforms. This is a game changer and adds value for both business-to-business and business-to-consumer connections."

**Hottest trends:** "We are seeing a lot of fur-trimmed styles, sneakers and booties. The slide also looks to be a big trend for spring '17."

**Most excited for:** "Being able to provide the industry with a platform for a national event twice a year. It is an opportunity for the industry to gather in order to shape, shop and learn."

**Biggest challenge:** "As the world changes and we all [increasingly] utilize electronic forms of communication, we need to remember that people want to do business with who they like and trust. This happens when you make personal connections. The twice-annual opportunity to have both retailers and vendors in one place at one time offers such amazing takeaways for everyone. This business opportunity should be seized."

**Attendance prediction:** "We are very encouraged at this early date. People understand that you must be in the game to win."

**Business outlook:** "As I always say, footwear is an economic indicator to the next 12 months to 18 months. Things are turning, and con-

sumers want quality. They are looking to do their research online and then visit brick-and-mortar stores to buy. They are more interested in cool assortments and newness. Constant sales [and promotions] make consumers feel like they are not getting first-rate product. Sales during specific days and times are what consumers find more reasonable. Retailers should embrace this change."

**LAURA CONWELL-O'BRIEN**, executive director, The Atlanta Shoe Market

**Most excited for:** "Each season, we try to implement something new for all our attendees. This season, we are in the process of rolling out several new interactive initiatives that will take place on the show floor. We hope this will offer attendees a memorable experience, one that will make them want to continue to come back and make The Atlanta Shoe Market a must-attend event."

**Five new brands to see:** ED by Ellen DeGeneres, B Brian Atwood, Loudmouth, Macarena, Swims

**Social media initiatives:** "We continue to focus on keeping our attendees interactive using social media, not only during the show but throughout the entire year. This helps build stronger relationships between vendors and retailers."

**Hottest category:** "Lifestyle is by far the hottest category, showing no signs of slowing down. This category is sold out months before the show's opening."

**Biggest challenge:** "Trying to keep the show fresh with new ideas and new formats. We want to create a great shopping experience for retailers so that when they leave the show they feel they have seen the newest assortment to keep their stores fresh."

**Attendance prediction:** "It's a new year, and I am hopeful that attendance will continue to be up as long as the economy stays on an upward trend."

**Business outlook:** "The economy seems to be

improving and reports from the retail sector for the Christmas season were very favorable, so I hope this continues. I am keeping a cautiously positive outlook for 2017."

**KIRSTIN DEUTELMOSER**, director, GDS

**New this season:** "GDS will mostly remain the same in February. We will present new fall '17 trends in the high street, pop-up and studio lifestyle worlds."

**Five new brands to see:** Berkelmans, Filipe Sousa, Loake, Miss Julia, Nine West  
**Social media initiatives:** "Together with our partner Styleranking, we will once again organize informative events for attendees. With our social media consulting, we will offer information on influencer marketing, blogger relations and social media management. Two trend detectors and eight selected influencers will share trends and impressions from the show on GDS' Instagram channel."

**Hottest category:** "Our kids' area in Hall 3 is one of a kind. It will showcase a comprehensive, international lineup of children's collections."

**Most excited for:** "I am very excited about our roster of international collections. I am happy to see so many exciting brands at GDS."

**Business outlook:** "The business is very dynamic right now. The sector is facing great

shifts, including structural changes both in retail and in the [manufacturing] industry, as well as big changes in consumer behavior. To be successful, retailers need a unique story, an interesting niche or an extraordinary business model."

**Biggest challenge:** "The biggest is the footwear sector itself. The mood is quite volatile and unpredictable, and this is a result of growing online sales, shifting trade structures

and growing market shares of vertical providers. In tough times, it is normal to have challenges, but the vendor and retail communities must try to face them together and adopt changes."

**Hottest trends:** "The sneaker trend will continue. There have been a couple of seasons where sneakers were the most popular style in both the women's and men's categories. Sneakers do not get boring. Since sneakers are socially acceptable, even with business outfits, I support this trend. The fresh developments in shapes, materials and bottoms are interesting."

"As we [increasingly use] electronic forms of communication, we need to remember that people want to do business with who they like and trust."

Leslie Gallin, UBM