



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Industry Gathers to Create Reporting Standards for Digital Trade Shows and Events (RSDE)

Shelton, CT August 31, 2021 – Members from more than 15 organizations from the event industry, including trade show organizers, exhibitors, and digital platforms, and under the leadership of global assurance provider BPA Worldwide, have been working together for the past six months to bring consistency and trust to the data being reported by developing standards and a common language for digital event reporting. The project is called **BPA Reporting Standards for Digital Events (RSDE)**.

The event industry's recent focus on digital brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic uncovered a new challenge: a lack of measurement standards for digital events. To tackle this challenge, a diverse body of industry experts was assembled from around the world (see list below). The working group contends that consistent standards provide a stable – but continually evolving – foundation enabling the entire exhibition industry to further develop and thrive.

As [announced on July 8th](#), the first phase of this initiative was recommended amendments to the [Auditing Rules for the Statistics of UFI Approved Events](#) to include digital metrics and audit protocol. The recommendations were accepted. As a result, organizers pursuing UFI “approved event” status can include attendees and exhibitors to digital and hybrid events such that digital event metrics are on par with physical event metrics.

The output of the working group to attain its phase-two goal – standards for the digital event marketplace that will be used as criteria for conformance testing to help ensure data reported from digital event platforms are accurate, reliable, and comparable – is now available for public comment. [A glossary of terms has been created, as have data formats and tables for reporting.](#)

According to Glenn Hansen, BPA's President and CEO, “With hundreds of digital platforms and the reemergence of the industry in a new era, there is a tremendous need to develop industry standards for taxonomy and data formats for digital events similar to what exists for physical events. We are following in the footsteps of the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB), which successfully set the standards for the digital advertising industry during its infancy. And, in doing so, helped stabilize and empower the media and marketing industries to thrive during a time of disruptive change.”

Ultimately, these standards will serve as a guide for digital platforms to adopt to help organizers accurately and efficiently report event metrics and provide exhibitors with the information they need (and have been eagerly awaiting) to understand and create success through digital events.

The value of this group's efforts to the events industry overall is threefold:

- Remove ambiguity and confusion by developing a glossary of terms defining the real-world activities the metrics are supposed to measure or reflect;
- Simplify comparison from platform to platform and event to event by creating a uniform structure for data capture that establishes accurate and reliable reporting standards;
- Facilitate productive collaboration and empower all parties to make smart decisions within the digital events environment by setting a reporting standard that is understandable for all stakeholders.

"As an event organizer, Questex is fully behind the initiative to create standards that will hold platforms accountable so we can bring a new level of confidence in the data to all parties involved: organizers, sponsors, exhibitors and attendees alike," noted Rhonda Wunderlin, SVP, Performance Marketing for Questex, and a member of the working group.

Arjun Chakravarti, Managing Partner, COGNITION Analytics and member of CEIR's Research Council added, "Our clients tell us that while one of the main benefits of digital events is the opportunity to gain a complete view of how people engage with their event, actual data reported by digital event platforms is often incomplete, inconsistent, or inaccurate."

"Incorporating the input of a diverse group of peers and event data experts in the BPA working group has allowed us to create a standard ensuring reliable and accurate data that organizers and stakeholders need to assess performance and plan for the future," Chakravarti continued.

The glossary component of the RSDE standard has been shared with the Events Industry Council (EIC) for review and consideration for inclusion in the [Accepted Practice Exchange \(APEX\)](#) glossary of industry terms. The RSDE working group sees value in having one destination for the industry glossary. Those conversations are ongoing.

The data format and tables component of the RSDE standard has been shared with the [Virtual Standard Export Format \(VSeF\)](#) for its consideration. As with the glossary, the RSDE working group sees value in a single data format and reporting standard and wishes to avoid existence of conflicting standards. Those conversations are also ongoing. It is important to note, at present, any digital event platform (DEP) following the RSDE standard will by default be in compliance with VSeF, as the VSeF guidance has been incorporated in RSDE completely.

The working group is now engaged in phase three of the initiative – establishing a protocol to certify DEPs compliance with the standard. Having a certification program in place will enable DEPs to assure organizers and exhibitors the data outputs have been independently third-party validated to conform and are accurate. The result will be visitor and exhibitor metrics pre-validated by BPA to satisfy audit requirements. This will offer DEPs a differentiator in the events marketplace.

The RSDE working group now invites the industry at large to review and comment. [Click on this link to view the documents.](#) (Note: You will need to use Google Chrome as your browser to view the document. There are several tabs on the Google Sheets document to be reviewed.) Use the Insert/Comment option from the dropdown menu to provide comments and questions.

The comment period will end Tuesday the 21st of September at which time the working group will convene to review public comment and make final recommendations to BPA.

Working group members include:

- David Adler (Chairman at BizBash and SISO Board Member),
- Melissa Ashley (Chief Commercial Officer at Airfair),
- Dax Callner (Strategy Director at Smyle),
- Arjun Chakravarti (Managing Director at Cogkognition and CEIR Research Council Member),
- Karen Cohen (Events Manager at UFI),
- Scott Craighead, CEM (Vice President of Exhibitions & Events at IAEE),
- Robyn Davis, CPTD (Trade Show Trainer/Consultant and Owner at Exhibitors WINH LLC),
- Jimmy Mouton (National Sales Manager at eShow),
- Nicole Peck (Vice President of Marketing - Events at IDG),
- Jordy Ressler (Sales Development Representative at SwapCard),
- David Richardson (Principal at Cogkognition),
- Brian Scott (CEO at ClearTone Consulting and IAEE & CEIR Board Member),
- Adrienne Whitestone (Sr. Mgr, CES Operations, Attendee, and Show Services at Consumer Technology Association, producer of CES),
- Rhonda Wunderlin (SVP, Performance Marketing at Questex), and
- Andrey Zhukovsky (CEO at RussCom IT Systems and Vice-President of the Russian Union of Exhibitions and Fairs).

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About BPA Worldwide. [BPA Worldwide](#) is in the business of providing assurance. For 80+ years as a not-for-profit assurance service provider, BPA was originally created by advertisers, advertising agencies and the media industry to audit audience claims used in the buying and selling of advertising. Performing nearly 2,100 annual audits of media channels in more than 20 countries, BPA is a trusted resource for compliance and assurance services.

BPA's services have expanded with the launch of the BPA iCompli brand to assist in the creation of standards and external assurance thereof. We do so for government and industry bodies. BPA [iCompli Technology Assurance](#) provides verification that companies are compliant with industry standards in the digital advertising ecosystem.

[BPA iCompli Events](#) provides verification of compliance with UFI industry standards for the measurement of trade show attendees and exhibitors.

The latest innovation to move the industry forward is the [BPA Media Exchange](#), an online private marketplace which offers automated media solutions for buyers and sellers of digital advertising.