

Andrew Doole

President, U.S. Boat Shows, Informa Markets

As the boat show season shifts into full gear, who better to spotlight than a highly respected global leader who's been actively engaged in promoting the boating lifestyle for more than 40 years? This issue, *Boating Industry* profiles Andrew Doole, president of U.S. Boat Shows for Informa Markets.

In his present capacity, Doole is responsible for leading and directing the teams that produce all five of Informa Market's boat and yacht shows including the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, the largest in-water show in the world, owned by MIAASF; Discover Boating Miami International Boat Show, owned by NMMA and IYBA; the Palm Beach International Boat Show, owned by MIAPB; and the St. Petersburg Power and Sailboat Show and the Suncoast Boat Show in Sarasota, both Informa-owned and produced. He's fully engaged in overall strategic planning along with turnkey show production, government relations, partnerships and sales.



By Wanda
Kenton Smith

Andrew's career represents more than four continuous decades of boat show event planning and execution that have catapulted him from his earliest days as a show sales rep, to his position today at the helm of the world's largest boat show producer. Throughout his career, he's embodied a mantra that has served him well: "Try Hard." That strong work ethic, passion and relentless drive continues as he focuses on new ways to innovate and improve the boat show experience for exhibitors and consumers alike.

Boating Industry (BI): Before we dive into the boat show business, tell us about your personal boating background.

Andrew Doole (AD): Since I was a young child, I have always led an active boating lifestyle. I was a competitive sailor out of the Essex Yacht Club, Leigh on the Sea in England when I was younger and have always lived by the water. I'm a boat owner today and enjoy boating with my family in my free time, especially on the Indian River lagoon, or fishing.

BI: How did a chap from England end up stateside?

AD: I met an American girl, got married and moved to the U.S. in 1981.

BI: When and how were you introduced to the boating industry ... and how did you launch your career in the boat shows business?

AD: I was introduced to the boating industry at a young age while visiting the London and Southampton Boat Shows. My boating industry career began when I joined Show Management as a sales representative in 1983 and I quickly developed a passion for the industry. Witnessing the success of producing five of Florida's largest boat shows under Show Management's umbrella fueled my desire to expand my role, ultimately leading me to build a fulfilling career in this dynamic and exciting industry.



Informa Markets US President Andrew Doole celebrates the opening of the 2023 Discover Boating Miami International Boat Show during the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

BI: Who were your early supporters and/or mentors in the marine industry and how did they encourage your professional development and growth?

AD: One of my early supporters was Kaye Pearson (owner of Show Management) who was not only my boss, but my mentor. We started the Sarasota show together and then the brokerage show in Miami with the brokers association. Kaye instilled a strong and dedicated work ethic and always reinvested in the business. Skip Zimbalist helped us transition from a family-owned business to a corporation. Since 2017 when Informa purchased Show Management, I have developed a strong friendship with Ken McAvoy who has really taught me more of the trade show industry and encouraged my role in taking over relationships with the associations and the cities we deal with.

If I have learned one thing, it is that this industry has a lot to teach me, still to this day.

BI: From your perspective, how have boat shows evolved since the early days of your career?

AD: Boat shows have undergone a dramatic transformation. Exhibitor interactions have evolved significantly, with more elaborate displays and a broader range of offerings to showcase. The rising expectations of exhibitors, fueled by the increasing popularity and sophistication of boating - particularly with a European influence - have prompted us to elevate our game and investments. Notably, the industry has embraced internationality, with North America emerging as the largest consumer market, which is a substantial shift since the early days of my career.

BI: With the combined show promotion in partnership with the NMMA, what strategies have you incorporated to build a winning team?

AD: We have strategically leveraged their extensive network and collaborative efforts with manufacturers. This partnership provides us with a comprehensive understanding of diverse consumers, exhibitors, and programming. Additionally, by fostering trade partnerships and actively encouraging participation in events like those in Miami, we've created a synergistic approach to attract a broader audience and ensure the success of our shows.

BI: What is the biggest challenge you see facing boat show producers today ... and into the future?

AD: Logistically, the continuous expansion and development in the region poses ongoing challenges. While we are happy for the growth and change in our different regions, it's challenging to always find new and different ways to produce our events.

BI: Any new initiatives planned for Miami, Lauderdale and other Informa-produced shows in 2024?

AD: In 2024, attendees at Miami, Lauderdale, and other Informa-produced shows can anticipate exciting new initiatives that showcase the latest innovations in the boating industry. We're working on improving our VIPs, parking, and transportation so this will create a more streamlined attendee experience.

In Miami, we will showcase an EV (electric vehicle) pavilion in the convention center. In Palm Beach, a great deal of our focus will be accommodating the large 200+ yachts that want to exhibit in the show. In Fort Lauderdale, two new properties will be open that will greatly enhance the show including the fabulous new five-star Pier 66 Resort and Marina; its proximity will be fantastic for attendees. Also, Las Olas Marina will be complete, which will give the opportunity to not only expand the show but also curate a Catamaran section to enhance the attendee experience.

BI: Regarding attendees, what do you believe consumers are looking for today from show exhibitors?

AD: Consumers seek more than just a product; they desire exemplary service and personalized attention, wanting to feel in good hands like the experience they have when purchasing a car.

Beyond the technical aspects, there's a growing emphasis on showcasing the lifestyle of boating, understanding that the appeal of the sector is a significant draw. Exhibitors who successfully convey the joy of experiences, such as taking the family out on the boat, hold a distinct advantage in meeting the evolving expectations of today's consumers.

BI: Finish this quote: The Best Boat Show Exhibitors ...

AD: ... are those who embrace the shows, maintain positive attitudes, and foster innovation. It's also best for exhibitors to come in with the mindset and preparation that the shows are a marathon, not a sprint.

BI: Any specific advice for exhibitors?

AD: Exhibitors and their staff should come to shows well-prepared, organized, and in sync before shows as it's essential for the synergy between show producers, exhibitors, and consumers. To maximize ROI, show exhibitors must emphasize connectivity with consumers and have personnel engagement through interactive displays.



Boating is a family affair. Andrew with son-in-law Wes Stevens and granddaughter Presley Stevens on the christening of the commercial boat, Miss Presley.

BI: What strategies help you stay on top of your game?

AD: I believe in fostering a dynamic work environment that blends the energy of a young team with the wisdom of experienced professionals, promoting collaboration at every level.

My strategy also involves maintaining close global contacts, particularly in the US and Europe, to stay abreast of industry innovations. Additionally, I consistently seek inspiration from outside the marine sector, exploring diverse exhibitions and trade shows to bring fresh perspectives and ideas into the field.

BI: Which outside industry shows inspire you?

AD: I study Food + Wine Festivals and world-class conventions like Art Basel and Art Miami as benchmarks for great shows. These diverse sectors offer valuable insights into incorporating lifestyle elements into our boat shows. Additionally, exploring events in the aircraft industry, especially in Fort Lauderdale, and various art shows, provides inspiration for innovative approaches and enhanced experiences that can elevate the overall quality and appeal of our marine events.

BI: I understand you won the prestigious MIA SF Golden Anchor Award in 2021 for your valued contributions to the marine industry. Besides your work at Informa, what other industry initiatives are you involved in?

AD: I serve on the IYBA Show Committee, Marine Industry Association South Florida Board, Winterfest Boat Parade and was the longest-serving board member of the International Superyacht Society.

BI: As you reflect upon your lengthy and successful 40+ year career, what are you most proud of in terms of achievements within the boat show segment?

AD: I take great pride in expanding each show to the international level, a significant achievement that has broadened the reach and impact of the boating industry. Notably, I spearheaded the transformation of the Fort Lauderdale and Miami shows into what they are today, setting new standards for exhibitors and fostering valuable partnerships with Informa. My dedication has not only grown investment and support but has also been instrumental in elevating the overall success and prominence of the boat show segment.

In addition, I'm proud to work with the best boat show team in the world. ●