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NAB attendance down but biz brews

Smaller exhibits doing well despite less foot traffic

By [CYNTHIA LITTLETON](#)

LAS VEGAS -- Foot traffic is way down at the National Assn. of Broadcasters confab this year, but some of the smaller fry on the exhibition floor say they're still doing pretty good business.

A walk through the NAB's 810,000 square feet of exhibition space at the Las Vegas Convention Center is a vivid reminder of the hardware-intensive nature of broadcasting and production. The big brands dominate the floor's skyline, but in between the sizable spreads mounted by Panasonic, Sony, Microsoft, JVC, Toshiba, Canon and Avid, among others, are hundreds of smaller shingles boasting all manner of specialties -- from the most intricate digital gizmos to the basic building blocks of broadcast towers. It's Shangri-La for gearheads, as indicated by the slogan on the booth of sound-systems company Lectrosionics: "Made in the USA by a bunch of fanatics."

Carl Clouse, director of marketing for Elgin, Ill.-based Linear Industries, was excitedly pitching his company's new line of "digital exciters," boxy devices that can translate analog broadcast signals into digital for TV stations and also help boost the reach of a station's digital signal. It's a "one-click solution" for smaller TV stations that can save them bigtime on engineering costs, at a cool \$29,000 (and up) per exciter.

And although everybody at NAB is talking about the digital transition set for June 12 (at long last), the signage on Linear's booth touts its "analog transmitters." Isn't that like advertising a Model T Ford these days?

For the U.S., yes, but not for many other countries in the world, Clouse says. Business from South and Central America has been strong for Linear's latest analog devices, Clouse said.

"Mexico won't go digital for another 10 years," Clouse said, with pesos in his eyes.

Around the corner from Linear is the modest outpost for CineBags, which pitches its heavy duty camera and gear bags as being for people who live "life on location." The Glendale-based

company is run by cinematographer Markus Davids, who creates the bags when not lensing docus. He's been selling his wares at NAB for the past 10 years.

"I design these bags around what I need when I'm working," Davids said. "I really just do this for fun."

And profit. Wednesday was a good day for CineBags: A rep from the National Guard stopped by on Wednesday and placed an order for 200 large bags at \$200 apiece.

Overall, attendance at the NAB confab, which began Sunday and runs through today, was down 19% vs. last year's crowd to about 83,800 attendees -- more than 23,000 of which came from outside the U.S.

The grim state of the broadcast economy, particularly for the local TV and radio stations that are NAB's bread and butter, was palpable amid the crowds on the floor and in the myriad panel seshes. A chipper femme rep for Panasonic began a product demonstration session in the company's large booth by emphasizing how its latest high-res HD broadcasting tools allow stations to do more "master-quality, file-based production at affordable prices."

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118002735.html>

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