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Operators, vendors share highlights of 2021 EXPO

April 29, 2021 | by [Shandra Martinez](#) |

Alvin Harris, President and CEO of the second-generation Horizon Motorcoach in Augusta, Georgia, says he appreciated that the United Motorcoach Association held an in-person EXPO in 2021 despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We definitely know it’s different from all the other EXPOs, but we are so grateful that UMA put this together because it’s a start to get us back into transporting people,” said Harris.

Operators and vendors alike said they appreciated that UMA pushed through COVID-19 challenges to host an in-person EXPO.



Alvin Harris, CEO of Horizon Motor Coach, gets a foot massage at the Sardo booth.

After walking the Exhibit Hall to talk to vendors about services and products, he took a break in the Sardo booth, where he was invited to slip his feet into a heated foot massager.

Harris said he felt reenergized at EXPO after the educational seminars, speakers, Exhibit Hall and connecting with his industry friends.

Sharing highlights

UMA Members and vendors were happy to share highlights of the EXPO in Orlando, Florida.

The industry conference marked the 31st for Sandy Follis, who has been with longtime motorcoach industry supplier Sardo Bus & Coach Upholstery for all of those years.



The 2021 UMA Motorcoach EXPO marked the 31st for Sandy Follis.

“Usually when we come to EXPO, we are writing orders,” said Follis, Sardo’s President of Sales. “This year, there were no expectations whatsoever. We were just here to support the industry. This EXPO was more to see everybody and let them know we are here for them.”

Earlier in the year, Owner Lou Sardo announced a first for the company: a 20% discount on all orders through the end of the year.

Axier Etxezarreta, President of Irizar USA, was able to attend the EXPO only after receiving special permission from the U.S. Embassy in Madrid to travel to the United States. He had been visiting his family in Spain for the holidays when the borders closed and he had to stay.

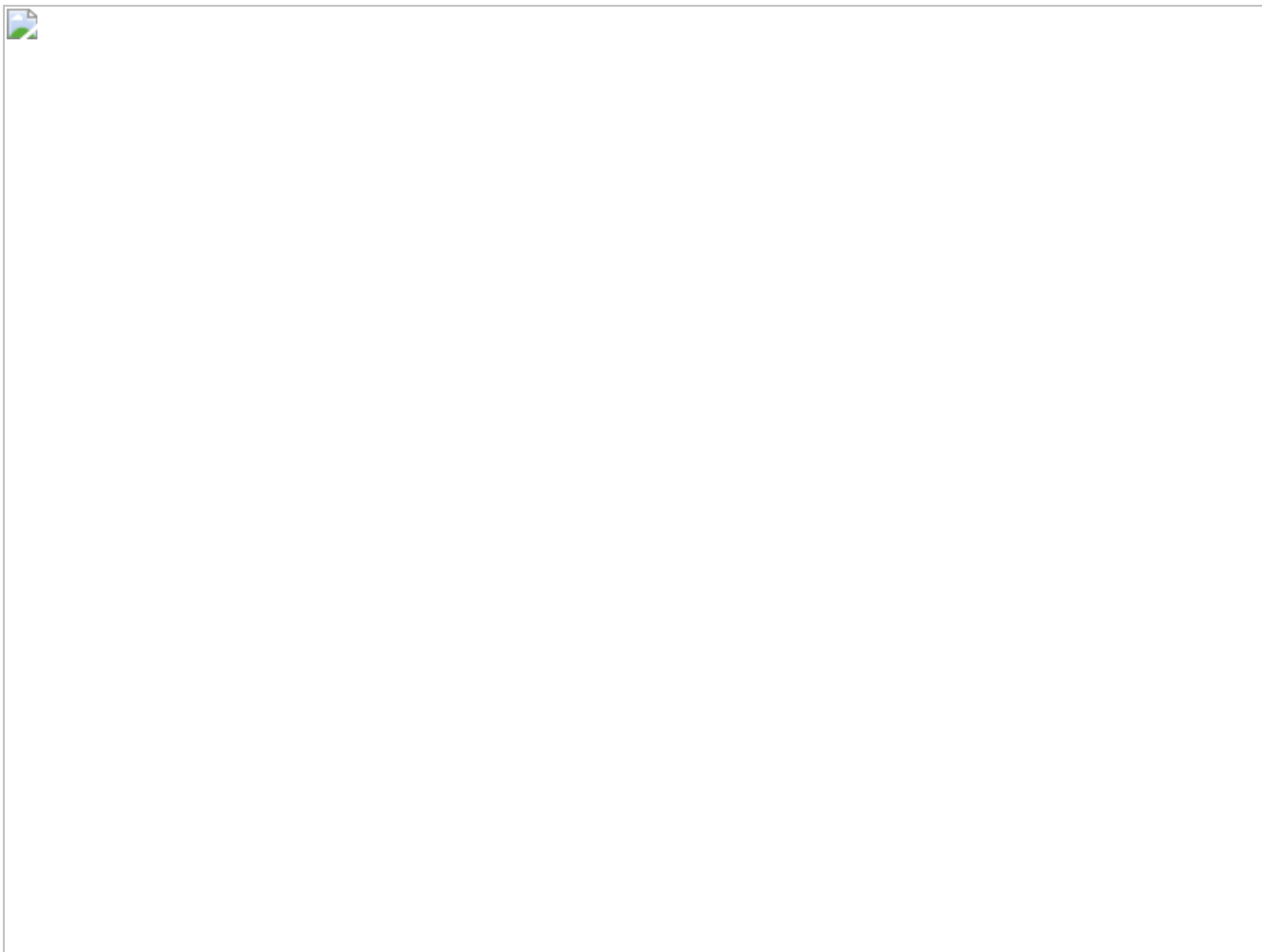


Axier Etxezarreta, President of Irizar USA, at the EXPO’s Breakfast with the Buses.

“It’s good to have the industry trying to restart and ramp up after all this pandemic situation,” Etxezarreta said as he stood in front of a white Irizar motorcoach during the EXPO’s Breakfast with the Buses. “It’s been an interesting event.”

Turnout better than expected

BYD had the only electric bus on the Exhibit Hall floor. There was a lot of interest in the technology, not only from an environmental standpoint but as a way to reduce maintenance costs because of the simplicity of the design.



MCI was just as determined to be part of the 2021 EXPO, said Brent Maitland, MCI's Vice President for Private Sector Sales and Marketing.



Brent Maitland, MCI's Vice President for Private Sector Sales and Marketing, sits in an MCI coach during EXPO's Breakfast with Buses event.

"The turnout was what we had hoped for, relative to where we're at with COVID, and even a little better than we expected," said Maitland. "It's just a nice sign that people have the confidence to come here, and it bodes well that we're in recovery."

Cary Martin, Owner and President of Little Rock Coaches in Arkansas, found the EXPO "checked the boxes" for him. He brought his management team to attend the education sessions and meet with vendors.



Cary Martin, left, with two members of his team.

“I think we’re going to end up better companies at the end of this pandemic than we were at the beginning,” said Martin. “This show was probably one of the best shows for me, personally, because my goal is to be able to do more with less. We are becoming more efficient.”

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When industry operators and suppliers have better and faster information, they can make smarter and quicker decisions. It is for these reasons and others that Bus & Motorcoach NEWS was created. Bus & Motorcoach NEWS supplies the industry with meaningful information that's fresh and useful. Essential and compelling news, information and analysis are the meat and potatoes of Bus & Motorcoach NEWS. When there's a significant industry development today, it will be reported and interpreted for the entire industry in Bus & Motorcoach NEWS within two weeks - often sooner.

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