

Transcript: Exec Summary, Informa 2024 Annual Review

2024 was really an exceptional year for the Informa Group.

It was a record year actually in terms of revenues and profits and cash flows.

The business grew double digit on a like for like basis and in both our businesses, our B2B events businesses and also our academic markets businesses, we grew strongly in both areas.

Geographically, we also made great progress expanding further in more faster growth geographies and regions and delivered growth really across the world.

It really was an outstanding year for everyone.

That really puts us in a good place going into 2025 and beyond.

Already the world has become different and more uncertain and that throws up many challenges as well as many opportunities.

We're going to talk a little bit about some of those opportunities today as we speak to really some of the stories behind the story.

Because when you deliver great results like that, really, it's a collection of many, many individual efforts by colleagues across the group in our many different businesses.

In 2024, we also ended and completed our GAP 2 program, which really was all about coming out of COVID and making the most of the opportunities for the group.

And as the results in 2024 show, we've really done that.

Solenne hi, great to talk to you.

We're going to talk a little bit about WHX Dubai, which is the artist formerly known as Arab Health, which is a long-term brand for us.

So how did Arab Health and now WHX Dubai, how did it become such a big brand in the region? Arab Health started its journey in 1975 with 40 exhibitors down in a small tent by the creek.

It's now 3,800 exhibitors, international exhibitors, 70,000 visitors, 60% of which are international.

So that gives you an idea of the scale.

And really, Arab Health now WHX Dubai, USP is a lot to do with Dubai itself.

Dubai is at the crossroads between Asia, Africa, Europe.

For us, it's been the sort of partnership with local entities, sort of the ministries of health, the Dubai Health authorities, who've really supported the event over the last 50 years.

And what that translates to in the event is that we therefore have support from really leading companies in healthcare.

So the Siemens, the GE's and Philips of this world who bring the innovation to the show.

So really that's what's setting us apart from our competitors.

It's beyond trade and it's beyond, yeah, it's government, it's medical science, it's medical practice.

And I guess recently a testament to that success is that we introduced in 2025 a fully ticketed model.

So it's been free for the last 50 years and we introduced-- Now you pay.

Now you pay.

And the exciting part about that is that it's got a value to our visitors. So we're able to deliver on their pain points and help them have a better experience at the event.

And on the flip side for exhibitors, it means really qualified audiences and really quality buyers. High quality.

So I think all of that together is what's created such a powerful brand.

Amazing. Yeah.

I mean it's sort of characterises Dubai as well as this trading hub and the way they've created this sort of platform for business and trade.

And why WHX? So what's the story behind that? How did you go about rebranding?

Because Arab Health, 50 years, well known, well established, that's a big bet, the sort of big sort of thing to take on board to change.

It is.

Arab Health, now WHX Dubai has sort of outgrown the venue that it's in in Dubai World Trade Center.

We're completely wall bound at full capacity.

And so we made the decision to move the event to the new venue that's being built, Dubai Exhibition Center at the Expo site, giving us the opportunity to move that event there, but also then time that with our medical laboratory event, which attracts 800 exhibitors internationally, a very specialized event, a very important event.

This is Medlab, formerly Medlab, WHX Labs now.

And running those two events at the same time, in the same city, at two different venues, really creates a World Healthcare Week and it allows us to surpass our competitors by doing that.

We run a portfolio of 13 events internationally.

We've got events in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, all across the world, all with different names.

So nothing unifying this whole portfolio apart from a visual identity.

So that's pretty much why we set about doing it.

Really what it comes down to is we wanted to absolutely represent our global nature, both for what formerly is Arab Health, but also our portfolio of events, for hence World Health Expo.

What's the response been so far? I know it's early days, but how are you feeling about it? We launched at the event, and I guess our most exciting part was the fact that we projected this on the Burj Khalifa.

Yeah, I saw that.

So it ticked a lot of boxes.

Internally, we were very excited, but also we're announcing this world healthcare brand on the world's tallest tower, but also it resonated locally with our local stakeholders as well.

So we're very proud of that moment.

70% of the people understood why we were doing it and approved of the change.

Very good percentage to get that very quickly.

Look forward to seeing WHX take on the world.

Nick, maybe we can start with yourself, and talk a bit about Elysia.

It's our own AI platform, so can you tell us a little bit about what it is, what it does? Elysia is our generative AI, personal assistant for all colleagues across the organisation.

It's leveraging the best in breed technology from infrastructure to large language model, and it's really kind of revolutionising how we operate as a business, no matter of your role, no matter of your location.

Everyone can start to see the benefit and the AI time dividend that it can deliver for us as an organisation.

It's an exciting time to be a marketer.

It's a time of great flux in the marketing industry thanks to AI.

As a central marketing team and as a digital marketing team, we've been working with Nick's team for a number of years now.

Crucially, understanding the search landscape and how people are finding out about our products or trying to answer their questions is vitally important for us.

So we can leverage Elysia to understand the new AI powered landscape and how people are inputting their queries into Google SERP and Microsoft SERP.

And from there, we can understand their needs, pains and gains, so we can serve them the best content, the best solutions, the best events, and crucially, when they need it.

So better quality, but also to Nick's point, it sounds like you're getting a bit of this AI time dividend.

It's allowing you to do things faster, spend more time on things that may help customers or might generate revenue.

Absolutely.

We also use it to do a lot of in-depth campaign analysis in our live campaigns, but also to inform future strategies.

So we don't spend our time now crunching the numbers.

Elysia crunches the numbers for us and we can focus on the data-driven insights and then being able to push that out quickly and effortlessly and be more creative around what we do as marketers as well.

Fantastic.

And just to be clear, it's built on a third-party engine, someone else's engine.

So the power of a big technology platform, but then tailored into Informa and secure so we can feed our own data and information into it.

We built the application with the flexibility to move to and from models should we need to. But the good thing about it is we've loaded it with Informa data as well.

So it really feels like an in-house tool and it has a lot of awareness of what we've kind of done as an organization.

We want to grow that as well.

We've got a lot of data, a really data-rich organization.

How can we use that and with an AI layered over the top to give both more to our colleagues and our customers. Exciting.

I mean, really exciting.

You know, if you're not embracing AI, I think you're getting left behind.

Alex, hi.

We're here to talk a little bit about One Informa, which is a new initiative for the Group for the next three or four years.

And so why don't we sort of start at the top, give us an idea, what's it all about? One Informa really is a change program and it's about creating better platforms and better solutions within our business off of which to build and to grow.

Our view is that there are four things that we can focus on that allow us to drive revenue and allow us to drive margin.

And those four things are to be market leading in marketing, to be market leading in brand, market leading in customer experience and market leading in colleague experience.

And we've put together a set of initiatives underneath each one of those four pillars where we'll focus over the next two to four years in order to deliver value.

And so this is really about making the company work better, more effectively, more efficiently.

We've obviously had quite a long history of acquisitions as we've sort of built and bought and expanded the Group, gone more international.

And so some of this is just about working in a more unified way in different areas.

Is that true? Yeah, I mean, we've made a number of acquisitions and a number of acquisitions is probably an understatement.

We've also gone through a number of investment programs.

We've gone through quite a bit of restructuring.

So reorganizing, adding things, taking things out.

And we've also been dealing with the restructuring that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

And that's created, I call it the wake.

It's just created this environment in which we operate where there's a degree of complexity.

The idea behind One Informa is to do a bit of a tidy up operation, to simplify the estate so that we have more unified processes and more unified platforms upon which the processes occur.

And that allows us to have a better way of working, a smoother way of working.

It reduces complexity in the business.

Now the world keeps throwing challenges up, not just to Informa, but to all businesses around the world.

Does One Informa really, does it make Informa more resilient? Does it create more opportunities for us? I think what One Informa does is it makes us, it increases our capacity for change.

It's a change program.

And so we're introducing these changes that allow us to simplify our systems.

And as we have these simplified systems, if we want to improve a product, or if we want to change an experience, or if we want to do our marketing in a different way, or manage our colleague experience in a different way, it's just easier to make those changes.

But the other thing that One Informa does is because there is a cadence of change, I think it will help to promote a culture within our organization where we're more ready to accept a change and adapt to a changing environment, whether it is a friendly environment or a more volatile environment.

I know one of your four pillars is brand.

Across the Group, we've got many, many, I would say famous brands in their own niches, specialist brands, but maybe one brand we never made the most of or never tried to sort of build more equity in is the Informa brand.

And I think I'm right in thinking that's a little bit of a thinking around brand as a pillar in One Informa.

Do you want to just talk about that a little bit? Informa is really an amalgamation of businesses and consequently, it's an amalgamation of brands.

And one of the challenges that we have is that when people join the company, they often join as part of a brand.

And so their connection to Informa isn't as strong.

This manifests itself not only in the brand, but actually in the structures that support these businesses that goes into their processes and into their technologies and the landscapes in which they operate.

The consequence of that if you enter Informa through one brand, there may not be opportunities available to you in other parts of Informa because other parts of Informa operate in different ways, even the same function.

And so the idea behind one brand is not simply just to put everything under an Informa umbrella, but it's actually to help people understand that when they enter the company, they enter into a place that is one company and we have a more singular way of doing things so that the opportunities available to you are not opportunities that are available through the brand.

They're actually opportunities that are available to you throughout Informa.

My hope is that as a result of One Informa, people will come to Informa not simply because it's a great place to work, but actually because it's a great place to build a career.

Fantastic.

Well, very exciting.

Really look forward to seeing how One Informa develops over the next three or four years. So thanks for taking the time.

Look forward to seeing how it goes and maybe we'll talk again when we're further deep into One Informa and see how it's going.

That would be great.

Thanks for having me.

Thanks a lot.

Thank you.