

Industry Insider: Geoff Moore



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This interview was conducted by SMA Vice President of Industry Affairs Steve McKelvey.

SMQ: Let's start by sharing with our readers a little of the creation of the Circuit of the Americas (COTA), the major events you attract, and your primary responsibilities there.

Moore: Circuit of The Americas is located in Austin, Texas, and was created to be a state-of-the-art Grand Prix race track and event facility. For those who aren't familiar with Grand Prix racing, it is typified by racing on a road course versus an oval track.

The biggest event we host at COTA is the Formula 1 United States Grand Prix, which will be held on October 23-25 this year. The track, which is the only Grade 1 race track in North America (which means it is the highest quality track available), was also designed to host the highest form of motorcycle racing, the FIM MotoGP World Championship. The race we host is the Red Bull Grand Prix of the Americas, and we typically hold it the first or second weekend of April. We also host a major sports car race weekend called Lone Star Le Mans. It features the premier sports car series in America, the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA) and the FIM World Endurance Championship (WEC). The WEC teams are the very ones that participate in the world's most famous race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. We are the only track they visit in this country.

We have also hosted the ESPN Summer X Games for the last two years (and have a contract to host it for another two years). This event really shows the versatility of our venue. It uses portions of our race track for racing cars, trucks, and motorcycles. It uses portions of our track, grandstands, and hospitality facilities for skateboard and BMX events (Big Air, park, and street courses). X Games was also the first time we used our large infield area for a concert—Metallica drew more than 40,000 to our inaugural SuperStage event.

COTA also features the Austin 360 Amphitheater in our Grand Plaza. We partner with LiveNation on the A360—it has about 25 to 30 major concerts there annually. The A360 is a spectacular amphitheater. It

was named Pollstar's "Best New Major Concert Venue" for 2013.

As the Chief Revenue Officer for COTA, I am responsible for sponsorships, ticket sales, and suite/hospitality sales for the events that come to our facility. I joined COTA in June 2011. I was fortunate to be a part of our first event, the Formula 1 United States 2012 Grand Prix, which was named "The Sports Event of the Year" at the 2013 *SportsBusiness Journal* annual awards event.

SMQ: A recent article described COTA as "a leader in environmental stewardship and protection" since opening in 2012. What was the impetus behind this?

Moore: To create the Circuit of The Americas, there had to be significant agreements made between COTA, Austin, county, and state officials. Austin is very progressive city, so it was important to them that the facility and hosted events be operated in an environmentally friendly manner that is in line with how they embrace environmental responsibility. So, together, we came up with a list of things that were important to each of us and then we hired Edgar Farrera as our Director of Sustainability (perhaps a first for a race track in America) to make sure we live it every day. Some people see the concept of sustainability and race track as being mutually exclusive concepts. However, Edgar does an excellent job of showing us how we can improve every action we take as an organization to be more aware of how we use resources and how we can be a better partner to everyone we interact with—fans, our surroundings, Austin, race series, etc.

SMQ: COTA won the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme's (FIM) 2014 Environmental Award for its sustainability initiatives during the 2014 MotoGP Red Bull Grand Prix of the Americas. Was this a first for a US facility and can you describe some of the major initiatives that led to winning this award?

Moore: The award was a first for a US facility. The American Motocyclist Association won the award in 1998, which is the only other time the award has gone

to an American entity. It is the third time a circuit has been recognized; previous winners include Nürburgring (1999) and Catalunya (2012). The FIM Environmental Award encourages greater awareness of environmental concerns within the motorcycling world, and rewards significant contributions to the protection of the environment.

SMQ: What are some of the more unique and innovative things COTA is doing in terms of sustainability initiatives?

Moore: Since its inception, COTA has been committed to setting a standard for sustainability programs within major event facilities. Our recent accomplishments include:

- The only circuit in the world with a permanent sustainability staff, tasked with addressing environmental issues year-round
- Site Stewardship:
 - 2 Tallgrass Prairie Restoration designated areas (over 40 acres)
 - These areas are in the heart of the facility, so they very well could have been used for commercial purposes. So, this was not a casual commitment.
 - 7 protected critical environmental features (ponds)
 - 1 dry creek restoration project & invasive plant removal
 - Quarterly water quality testing in ponds
 - On-site apiary with 50 honey bee hives
 - This was inspired by one of our investors, John Paul DeJoria.
- Resource Recovery:
 - Recycling and composting program for all major events and concerts
 - MotoGP (April, 2014): 6.4 tons recycled, 1.8 tons composted
 - RedFest (May 2014): 6.6 tons recycled, .6 tons composted
 - X Games (June 2014): 300.3 tons recycled, 8.6 tons composted
 - Lone Star Le Mans (October 2014): 11.7 tons recycled, 3.7 tons composted
 - Compost is used as fertilizer for track verge
- Energy & Atmosphere:
 - COTA subscribes to more than 2 million kilowatt hours of renewable energy through the local utilities' GreenChoice program

- 182,500 kilowatt hours of clean energy used for MotoGP alone
- 3,200 metric tons of CO2 equivalency offset using certified carbon credits
- Additional carbon offsets achieved through a local tree planting program

• Conservation:

- 23,000 water bottles kept out of the landfill by dispensing 11,000 liters of free drinking water to guests

• Recognition & Outreach:

- In recognition of the COTA's environmental accomplishments, the FIM recently awarded the 2014 FIM Environmental Award to COTA.
- Guests were encouraged to participate in COTA's environmental program by posting images of them keeping COTA clean and sustainable. Winning images received prizes.

SMQ: A commitment to sustainability is certainly a worthy goal in and of itself, but I suspect that there are some financial incentives and rewards to this. Can you elaborate on this, and how some of your initiatives impact your bottom line?

Moore: As discussed above, COTA would not exist if it weren't for our commitment to sustainability. Conserving water and energy are good for everyone and we see cost reductions that help us measure our efforts. And it doesn't cost you any more resources (time and money) to be an aggressive recycler. So, why not do it?

And, while we like the external rewards we get from fans, community groups, and media for having a robust sustainability program, we also like the internal rewards we get from our employees—they like working for a company that makes the effort.

SMQ: I read that COTA is a member of The Green Sports Alliance. Can you discuss this initiative in terms of its mission and purpose?

Moore: The Green Sports Alliance leverages the cultural and market influence of sports to promote healthy, sustainable communities where we live and play. They do so by inspiring sports leagues, teams, venues, their partners, and millions of fans to embrace renewable energy, healthy food, recycling, water efficiency, species preservation, safer chemicals, and other environmentally preferable practices. Alliance members represent more than 300 sports teams and venues from 20 different sports leagues and 14 countries.

Since February of 2010, the Alliance has brought together venue operators, sports team executives, and environmental scientists to exchange information about better practices and develop solutions to their

environmental challenges that are cost-competitive and innovative.

The information gathered from this collaboration is available to Alliance members in order that they gain a better understanding of how sporting events can be performed in an environmentally sensitive manner. Circuit of The Americas was one of the first motor-sports organizations to join the Alliance, and our programs are frequently presented at their annual conference.

SMQ: Keeping with the theme of sustainability in sport facility management, can you share with our readers a few other US facilities and organizations that are thought and action leaders in this space?

Moore: In terms of organizations, the Green Sports Alliance is a valuable resource for the greening of sports. They have resources, webinars, conferences, and case studies that can benefit any sports team, league, or venue. The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) is a great resource for collegiate sport programs, and the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) for facility management, in general. In terms of the construction and operation of sports facilities, particularly new ones, the US Green Building Council has very good programs and resources.

In terms of motorsports, the FIM is a thought leader. They have an active program to promote sustainability at motorcycling events around the world, they maintain environmental standards, and many of their key athletes (such as world champions Marc Marquez and Valentino Rossi) participate as eco-ambassadors.

SMQ: Taking out your crystal ball, what do you see in the future for the sustainability movement in facility management? What's next, short and long term?

Moore: The sport and entertainment world is about action, competition, and excellence. In terms of sustainability, this means it is time to take positive action. Get involved, do better, try harder. Recycling is a great start, but it isn't enough. Facilities and events should strive for zero waste and continue to steadily improve their resource conservation efforts.

We also need to align with leagues, race series, entertainers, and athletes and sponsors to amplify the sustainability message to fans. Can you remember a time when people didn't wear seat belts? Or when people littered on highways without a second thought? People can change for the better, but we need to get the positive message out consistently to bring about these changes.

Longer term, the term "sustainability" itself is likely to be stretched to include STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education programs, which is where COTA and the events we host (F1, MotoGP,

sports car racing, and X Games) provide a living, exciting example of the cutting edge of STEM topics.

SMQ: Switching gears (pun intended!), the U.S. Grand Prix in Austin has been referred to as "the starting point" to help popularize Formula 1 racing in the US. Can F1 gain serious traction in the US and assuming so, how?

Moore: There have been several people/facilities/events that have invested in bringing F1 to the American audience over the years, so I don't think it is fair to call COTA the starting point. It is fair to call us the first permanent home for F1 in America given that the track was custom built to show the best of the sport.

American sports fans embrace the world's best in every sport as they are exposed to them over time. F1 has a core group of fans in the US now, and more and consistent exposure will grow that fan base. F1 can help accelerate that process by making small changes to the sport and race weekend to make it (the drivers, cars, and their storylines) more accessible to the fans.

SMQ: I recently read that COTA signed a major partnership deal with RetailMeNot, the world's largest coupon digital marketplace. This seems on the surface to be a fairly non-traditional corporate partnership program. Can you share with our readers a little of how this deal came together, and how it's being activated?

Moore: RetailMeNot has a big presence in Austin, so it was natural for us to get together. I think the most important aspect of the partnership is that we recognize that digital marketplaces are an important place for us to be—we need to bring our events and products to the widest amount of people possible. The important thing for us is to do it in a way that integrates the offers into the normal pattern of our sales and marketing campaigns. So, this means our offers on digital platforms might not have as large of a discount as some of their offerings might, but they can still be designed to offer value to their audience.