



THE ASSOCIATION  
MAGAZINE

# Headquarters

DECEMBER 2020 #97 BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

Singapore: Where the  
'Progressors' Meet

HQ's 21 Tips:  
What's Coming Next?

Where do Non-profit  
Associations go?

APIC: Spreading Knowledge to  
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Cover image: Fireworks During National Day at Marina Bay, Singapore

**Education**



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# A Global **Reset**

Nobody saw it coming (in a clear enough manner), nobody was prepared for it and nobody knew precisely what to do. Such was the war declared on the entire world by a minuscule organism in just a few days. There was no escape and there was not a country in the world that remained unaffected in any form. Almost all economies were forced to rise to the challenge - including the meetings industry.

At the same time, a silver lining appeared. The skies cleared, because most aircraft stayed at home. Cities remained empty, because people were afraid of being trampled (not by the crowd, but by an invisible attacker). And, in most MICE sectors, people determinedly looked for solutions, because the very bedrock of our industry - physical contact - was affected.

The drive to resolve the situation in a matter of months was unprecedented. Congresses and conferences were suddenly transformed into mere sounds

and images. Not a breath could be felt or heard. We continued to search and hope that everything would return to the way it was before: travelling to lots of places, attending lots of conferences and organising lots of social activities. In a word, letting life sing.

Life will go on, but the meetings industry of the future will definitely be different. One benefit is clear, though: many venues will place an emphasis on welcoming fewer visitors. This means that huge crowds will be replaced by groups of higher standard of quality. Did you hear the speech of New Zealand's new minister of Tourism, Stuart Nash? "Our future is high-net-worth visitors!"

The time has come for countries to convert to complete sustainability. One of the best examples of the rigorous choice made by Costa Rica, named 'UN Champion of the Earth' for pioneering role in fighting climate change in 2019. Whoever is not convinced that a change

is very much needed should take the time to attentively watch the documentary David Attenborough: *A Life on our Planet*. The world is ready for a complete reset because nature and humankind have drifted too far apart.

Therefore, the meetings industry will need to obtain special government support and large-scale funds to give all forms of meetings a new future. It will take a great deal of work or, to conclude with a futurologists' adage, "the best way to restore the future is to create it."

Do we have the faintest idea of how to do this? We have to be better prepared for changes.

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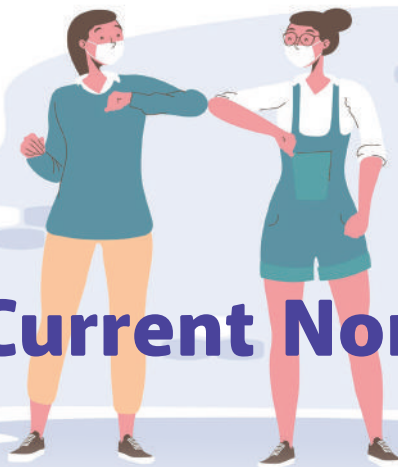
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## The 'Current Normal'



What did we write about going back to work in *HQ*'s last edition? In fact, it looks like we will have to remain patient for a looong time.

Just about when we were again enjoying the old routine of our lives, like museums, cinemas, places of worship, gyms, restaurants and - yes - even schools and offices, the **World Health Organisation** said that the surge in virus cases was a "great concern".

At the time of writing, the US had 15.5 million cases, followed by India (9.8) and Brazil (6.7). Over the past year, there have been almost 70 million cases and over 1.5 million deaths worldwide.

Countries re-applied some levels of lockdown and many among us are spending the season holidays far from their loved ones. Likely, events and conferences won't involve face-to-face meetings in the first half of 2021, plus screens and headphones will stick around a little longer.

In this scenario, the MICE industry shall not be overwhelmed by the continuation of the pandemic. The industry was clearly impacted and limited in its actions by it, but we must avoid hasty reactions and make any damage control ASAP. The clock is ticking.

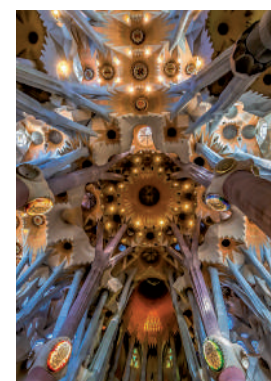
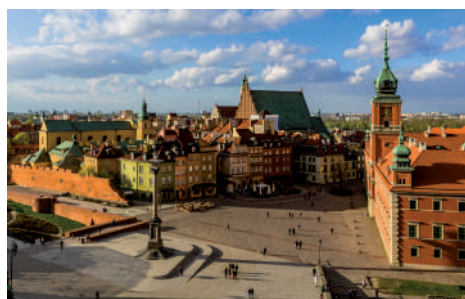
Our suggestion is this: forget the 'new normal' and start calling what we are now experiencing 'the current normal' instead.

Then look up at your mentors, because this edition of *HQ* will take you through the topic of education and we hope to show our readers what kinds of things they should pay attention to and dedicate their pedagogical efforts. But this is also the last edition of a crazy 2020, so here is our insight on prevention and fundamental hygienic measures that associations' members and destination's professionals will have to implement in order to have a safe and - we all wish - good 2021.

We interviewed destination managers from all corners of the world: from Spain, to Australia, Canada and Singapore. We asked the infection's experts at **APIC**, the teaching savants at the **Lifelong Learning Platform** and the executive director of the **International STEM Council** what keeps them awake at night and how they are going to deal with the year to come.

In the following pages, you will also find more about empowering rather than patronising, attending programmes that are genuinely useful for training partners, and finding the right tools and apps to keep on learning while locked at home.

At the end of the day, it takes a whole planet to find a way through the pandemic.





# From **Behind the Scenes**, now in **Public View**

The **Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)** represents infection preventionists (IPs) with nearly 16,000 members. Founded in 1972, APIC's mission is to create a safer world through prevention of infection. *HQ* interviewed **Elizabeth Garman**, vice president of communications and practice resources.

## **The pandemic affected all of us, but APIC must have been particularly touched. How has your work changed over the past year and the last dramatic events?**

Ordinarily working behind the scenes, the rapid escalation of COVID-19 put IPs front and centre in their facilities, leading incident command teams and preparing their facilities for the spreading pandemic.

In late January, we initiated a campaign to help our members carry out our mission to 'Create a safer world through the prevention of infection'. We developed a website to get members the most relevant information on COVID-19 quickly. We formed a **Task Force** to vet materials and to keep us from burdening our member committees who were working round-the-clock on the COVID-19 response. We met weekly with leaders of **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** and other stakeholder groups to clarify changing guidance and get answers to pressing questions. Putting mission ahead of profit, resources were made available for free, including key chapters from APIC's encyclopedic infection control textbook. To meet the urgent needs of nursing homes facing disproportionate deaths from COVID-19, APIC created a separate website for this audience and gave six months of free access to our **IPC Guide to Long-Term Care Guide** and relevant chapters within the APIC

Text Online. We also collaborated with other associations to provide free online education to members and potential members.

In March and again in October, we surveyed our members to inform policymakers and the news media on the lack of access to personal protective equipment. From a business standpoint, APIC, like other associations, had to cancel all live education events, including our annual conference scheduled for June in Phoenix (Arizona) that regularly draws 5,000 people. To fill the space, we converted several live events to virtual learning events including a **Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization conference** in October and created a completely new virtual conference called **APIC Live Online** taking place December 11. We also strengthened our online learning portfolio and accelerated COVID-related updates to existing products and resources. Because our members still need to sit for their certification exams, we organised two virtual **certification prep programmes** in the fall.

## **You have been really active. Did you take other initiatives?**

In addition to providing scientific education, we also needed to address the psychological and emotional toll the lingering pandemic was having on IPs. Starting in August and continuing through the fall, APIC offered a series of

**free virtual wellness events** to engage and promote discussion about how to heal the emotional wounds of the pandemic. We learned through focus groups that our members felt beaten, weary and defeated and the end of the pandemic was nowhere in sight. So we re-focused our annual **International Infection Prevention Week** campaign to centre on the unique and heroic contributions of IPs, created a **#WeLoveIPs** campaign and featured IP stories on the website, in our weekly eNews publication and our quarterly magazine *Prevention Strategist*.

## **How does your approach adapt to reach all of your members worldwide and across their differences?**

IPs prevent the spread of infections to patients and workers inside healthcare facilities including hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, public health and other types of settings. Most APIC members are educated and trained as nurses, physicians, public health professionals, epidemiologists or medical technologists. They play a pivotal leadership role in their facility's outbreak preparedness efforts, they adapt policies and procedures about novel organisms and educate healthcare personnel about infectious diseases and how they can remain safe while treating patients. IPs also work to prevent healthcare-associated infections in healthcare facilities by isolating sources of infections and limiting their transmission. They collect, analyse and interpret health data in order



**ELIZABETH GORMAN**

Vice President of Communications  
and Practice Resource at APIC



[APIC.ORG](https://www.apic.org)

to track infection trends, plan appropriate interventions, measure success and report relevant data to public health agencies. They establish scientifically based infection prevention practices and collaborate with the healthcare team to assure implementation.

Because IPs come from varied backgrounds and work in varied settings, APIC develops tailored education and resources to address different segments of membership who have different educational needs. While the majority of APIC members are based in the U.S. or North America with limited face-to-face interaction, online education and electronic resources are consumed by IPs around the world.

**What is the most challenging part of your work: “spreading knowledge” or “preventing infections” – for as much as the two are connected?**

IPs are charged with both spreading knowledge and preventing infection – these are the fundamental tenets of their jobs and drive our work at the association level. This has been challenging during the pandemic, as government organisation guidelines on COVID-19 changed on a frequent basis. Staying on top of shifting guidance continues to be an enormous challenge for our members and it is one of the most important ways that APIC provides value to our members.

**APIC 2021 EVENT AGENDA**

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
January 22-25	EPI Intensive	Virtual
TBA	ASC Intensive	Virtual
TBA	One-day CIC Preparation Course	
June 28-30	2021 Annual Conference (hybrid)	Austin (TX)
October 28-29	Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization Conference (hybrid)	TBA



**APIC**<sup>®</sup>

*Spreading knowledge. Preventing infection.*

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology



# Barcelona: Remember that **Last Splash** in the **Mediterranean?**

After all those newsflashes of over-tourism and the steady growth of business events year by year, Barcelona is facing a new reality and trying to circumvent challenges with the help of connections. Rethinking the strategic model and preserving business relationships is vital to the city's convention bureau.



“You cannot imagine how good it was heading to Malaga two weeks ago, to attend the ICCA Regional hub...” This is how **Christoph Tessmar**, (in the image) executive director of **Barcelona Convention Bureau (BCB)**, kicked-off our long conversation about MICE operations in a pandemic year. Certainly he is describing a state of mind that is shareable among various event professionals, since the second lockdown took place in Europe. Barcelona is in a similar situation to several other cities with a late-night curfew, the closing of restaurants, venues, non-essential stores and the tightening of measures on holidays and weekends. An unthinkable scenario if we only go back one year: more than 150 business meetings in 2019 have positioned the city as one of the main international conference destinations in the world.

“Retaining clients is essential. We have been working with our partners and meeting planners in big events scheduled for next year, such as the **Mobile World Congress (MWC)** or the **Integrated Systems Europe 2021**,” says Tessmar. In face, most of their clients have postponed this year's events to 2021, due to

travel restrictions and market instability. “Everybody understands that it will be difficult to produce the same events we did in the past. Nobody can expect 100 thousand people at MWC but if we can get one tenth of those delegates, it will be refreshing.” Yet, with several open bids and a local network determined on resuming business in the second half of 2021, there is still a light at the end of the tunnel. “In the past couple of weeks, we just confirmed two important congresses. We all know that associations need to re-establish the path for events for their own survival.” On the other hand, Tessmar sees a marked resistance from corporate to come back due to the offspring of virtual. “We have to focus on being present without putting too much pressure. Digital gives you presence and broadens the range of your communication.”

In this regard, **Barcelona International Convention Centre** is setting up a studio to give the possibility to organise hybrid meetings, while hotels continue to provide spaces for working sessions. “I will say that hotels in Barcelona were the first helping the community by housing quarantined people which led **FIRA** to

follow the same example,” says

**Mònica García**, association meetings manager at BCB. “Regarding hybrid, I think the congress format will inevitably change. Nothing will be like before and we all have to reinvent our practices, products, venues or trade shows.” One of the most striking examples was that of **FIRA Barcelona** offering its facilities in Montjuïc to shelter homeless people and to assemble a field hospital in another pavilion. When the pandemic is over, the BCB team is sure that we will find a way in between.

The legacy project will keep endorsing sustainable events, bridging the scientific communities and the local startup hub with future delegates. Goals for 2021? For Tessmar, “first, we must ensure that the convention bureau continues to operate normally in the future. Then, we must deviate from the original script; understanding that not everything will happen as planned before. The third is placing our goals back into the local economy, creating new solutions and empowering the partner network. Finally, improving our digital presence and the hybridisation process.”



# Looking to the Future of Calgary Meetings

Calgary has large ambitions for the Canadian roadmap of events, as shown by the over \$1 billion investment in meetings organisation. The goal is simple: to become the largest convention destination in Western Canada.

In the western part of the Canadian prairies, lies a bustling city that is reshaping as the conference destination for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the second year in a row, Calgary has been voted the most liveable city in North America and, all things considered, this does not come as a shocking surprise. Surrounded by a breathtaking natural setting, it is thriving with a safe and compact downtown, multiple solutions for your business and easy access worldwide. The city entered an initial lockdown in mid-March that has been lifted since late spring, when economic activities started to resume as safely as possible. And, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, the Calgary International Airport began a COVID-19 rapid-testing pilot programme for international travelers arriving there - the first and only airport in Canada to have this initiative.

“Part of the reason why Calgary continues to be a celebrated city is because of the work that goes into ensuring it’s not only a great place to live, but also to visit,” states **David Woodward**, executive director of meetings and conventions for **Tourism Calgary**. “Right now, Calgary is investing over CAD\$1 billion into infrastructure benefitting both the local and visitor economy.”

At the moment, a city-wide security

programme is underway to make it easier for delegates to feel confident in choosing the city. Tourism Calgary is capitalising on this investment by launching a brand-new marketing campaign for meetings and conventions called ‘A Billion Reasons’, as well as preparing important tools for event planners to ensure success for their meetings and conventions. “Safety is of utmost importance to us and our partner venues and hotels,” says Woodward. “We are working closely with our customers with a focus on restarting face-to-face meetings in the second quarter of 2021.”

Both their major venues have been proactive during this pandemic and have been accredited with the **Global Biorisk Advisory Council STAR**. Furthermore, hotels have worked diligently to welcome back small meetings with local businesses that need physically distanced spaces. The \$500M **BMO Centre** expansion has not been hindered by the impacts of COVID-19 and is moving smoothly towards the planned spring 2024 completion, while the **Calgary TELUS CC** has introduced a hybrid event studio for event planners. About this virtual transition, Woodward doesn’t falter: “It is very difficult to replace the energy of a live event in a host destination and we believe participants are eager to return to these types of events when it is safe to do so.”



**DAVID WOODWARD**

**Executive Director at Tourism Calgary**

Calgary is also an eco-conscious city dedicated to environmental stewardship. According to Mercer Global Financial, it is the cleanest place in the world thanks to many factors such as the amount of green spaces, renewable energies for transportation and the urban pathway systems. “Calgary is well equipped to host a sustainable event that reduces waste and minimises the carbon footprint generated by conferences and trade shows.”

When asked about the future, Woodward did not deflect from the major points for 2021 goals: “To have our meeting delegates feel comfortable for face-to-face events, to see attendance at local events and tradeshow increase and to reinforce our safety protocols in our hotels, venues and local attractions.”



MENU

Hi **There**  
Welcome to Perth:

Start your  
adventure

## The **Conference Sunshine**

Perth's rise in the business events industry has been unstoppable. A delegate favourite, the 'city of light' ticks all boxes to conduct an upper-level event. Hence *HQ's* interest in finding out what is going on in Western Australia.

BUSINESS  
EVENTS  
PERTH

Isolated from the rest and facing the Indian Ocean, Perth combines a relaxed atmosphere surrounded by idyllic settings with a booming economy that is fuelling billion-dollar investments in infrastructure projects, business centres and a recent transformation in the hospitality sector. Western Australia's response to COVID-19 was strong and swift, allowing for a world-leading management of the pandemic. "In April, WA Government closed its border to interstate and international visitors and returning citizens had to apply for an exemption with a necessary quarantine," says **Gareth Martin**, CEO of **Business Events Perth**. Because of the success in managing the spread of the virus, the state was able to ease local gathering restrictions, allowing people to meet again at business events. "By the end of July, Perth had hosted Australia's largest business event since the onset of COVID-19, with 950 delegates," Martin adds. Given this fortunate position, local venues and suppliers are now well accustomed to hosting events within COVID-safe guidelines. So, tourism is once again bustling in Western Australia, with many regional hotels fully booked out into the new year.

Simultaneously, 2020 also marked a new dawn for the convention bureau with a name change and a series of new campaigns. In August, they launched **Event Here Now** to provide local event organisers with funding to sustain the industry during the lockdown. This meant that the business development management bent on local MICE. The initiative supported more than 60 local business events with 58 under development, bringing together more than 20,000 delegates to connect and learn from each other. BE Perth also came up with a bespoke "**interactive business event planner**" (cover photo), an online planning tool designed to showcase the best of Western Australia's business events and make events' planners choose their own adventure. "Our target is to generate a certain level of economic impact for the state," Martin reveals. "This is broken down into direct delegate expenditure, room nights, delegate days and materialised delegates."

Regarding safety plans, BE Perth created a COVID-19 microsite to provide event organisers with the most up-to-date COVID-19 information, so that conveners can see the measures taken by venues and suppliers. In

November, Western Australia transitioned from a 'hard' closed border to a 'controlled' open border, allowing interstate visitors from places with no community transmission for 28 days. "Due to the short-lived nature of our shut down, our meeting venues didn't have to pivot as much as those in other cities," Martin says... but clearly, they are up to the job. Spaces, such as **Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre**, are well equipped with cutting edge audio-visual material in order to accommodate hybrid events, in tune with other Australian capitals. "We're confident that the drive to meet in person will ultimately prevail, as the experience of meeting in person is so much more valuable than that of an online meeting"

BE Perth also recognises the importance of future-proof policies. They appointed a sustainability adviser to develop a roadmap on how local business events can adopt more green practices. "We were proud to secure the **25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals** in December 2023, that will be entirely carbon neutral," Martin concludes.

And you? Are you ready for that Quokka selfie?



# Singapore: Where the 'Progressors' Meet

The Republic of Singapore is becoming synonymous with innovation and growth in various professional fields. Against all odds, COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for a forced innovation and new opportunities in the MICE business.



CARRIE KWIK

Executive Director for Europe at Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

The Government of Singapore has intervened in unprecedented ways to help the city-state cope with the immediate effects of COVID-19 downturn, rolling out \$100 billion in support and training measures. “Our key priority is to preserve jobs and capabilities by helping our businesses recover safely and staying connected to the world,” says **Carrie Kwik**, executive director for Europe at **Singapore Tourism Board (STB)**.

The ‘Lion City’ is indeed gradually reopening for travel through fast lane arrangements and adjusted measures for inbound travellers. As an example, Singapore and Germany announced in October the establishment of a reciprocal green lane to further enhance business travel with direct flights both ways. On the other hand, key tourism businesses such as hotels, off-site venues and tour operators have resumed with strict Safe Management Measures in place. STB also launched the **SingapoRediscovered** campaign in July to encourage locals to support tourism and lifestyle businesses in Singapore. By handing out \$ 100 SingapoRediscovered Vouchers to all Singaporeans aged 18 and over to spend on hotel stays, attraction tickets and tours, SBT seeks to stimulate the tourism industry in a \$ 320 million initiative.

“The health and safety of the community and our visitors remains paramount. We need to have the best end-to-end system to ensure that MICE visitors can enjoy a safe and seamless journey.” According to Kwik, this means developing viable solutions while fulfilling the need to safeguard everyone’s health such as the **Safe Business Events** framework or **TravelRevive**, the first international travel tradeshow in the Asia Pacific during COVID-19 – a hybrid event powered by ITB Asia and STB. The aim is to guarantee safe itineraries for delegates and provide high-quality, bespoke interactions. An all-around tech experience.

Singapore also aims to lead the way as a safe, trusted and pioneering destination for MICE events. During the pandemic, both convention centres - **Sands Expo CC** and **Suntec** - launched state-of-the-art hybrid event broadcast studios allowing event planners to produce innovative meetings. “We believe that our country’s strong fundamentals as a leading business events destination have not changed with the pandemic and will stand us in good stead,” says Kwik... and it’s difficult to argue with her: crowned as the top Meeting City in Asia-Pacific for 18 consecutive years, Singapore brings together world-class infrastructure, a stable government, a

tightly-knit business events ecosystem and culture in a strategic location on the continent. To solidify this position, they came up with **SG Clean**, a national mark of excellence for businesses adhering to the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene, covering more than 27,000 individual premises around the island. Simultaneously, Singapore is about to release the new **SG SafeEvent Standard**, an industry-led national accreditation programme for trustworthy business events initiated by STB, ESG (Enterprise Singapore) and SACEOS (the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers).

These efforts are yielding good results: Singapore has secured the rights to host the **Worldchefs Congress and Expo in 2024** and the **110th Lions Clubs International Convention in 2028**. “Singapore needs to redefine our value proposition as a MICE hub so that we can emerge from this crisis in a stronger position,” concludes Kwik. Indeed, many companies have used this downtime to upgrade their teams with new training, in order to move their business models and event formats to a more tech environment.

In conclusion, hybridisation, safety, skills, community network and innovation: the recipe to overcome the crisis.



# 2020 is Dead, **Long Live 2021:** **What Now?**

As we approach the end of the year, the prospect of an extended lockdown in 2021 is an increasingly likely scenario. There are no definitive solutions on the horizon, however, some case studies and action plans point to a sustained use of virtual events, reduced delegations and investment in staff training. We are treading uncharted territory, which does not prevent destinations from chasing their own goals. **Warsaw, Athens and Glasgow** are aware of this fact and *HQ* asked them...

1. **What lessons have you learned from this 2020 health crisis? What have you achieved as a bureau in the midst of the pandemic?**
2. **What does 2021 hold for the business event industry, and for your destination in particular?**
3. **What is the importance of training and education for your team and partners when facing this new era of business events?**



## GLASGOW CONVENTION BUREAU,

BY THE HEAD OF CONVENTIONS, AILEEN CRAWFORD.

**1** We have learned that association conferences are resilient and remain positive in the face of change. We have also seen new ways of sharing research and innovation online - traditionally content shared through education at a live conference. However, a research from ICCA shows that over 80% of associations think there are limitations to virtual meetings. So, although virtual solutions have been necessary, there is an appetite to return to face-to-face meetings when the time is right. The blended hybrid model of meeting is being planned by over 40% of the ICCA respondents. With this in mind, since 1 April, Glasgow has partnered with over 30 associations to secure future conferences in the key sectors of medicine, engineering and low carbon, recognising the importance of live meetings to support research and innovation.

**2** There are still over 100 conference clients working with our team expecting to meet face-to-face in 2021. However, we appreciate that many of these meetings may be hybrid or virtual. For that reason, we created the **'Hybrid Glasgow Hub'** of useful content and free services to support conference organisers to run a hybrid meeting in our city. The toolkit offers delegate facing content, as well as access to audiovisuals to personalize the meeting with a taste of Scotland. The Hub also welcomes local Glasgow businesses to be part of a marketplace to sell unique gifts to delegates, during difficult times. We also appreciate that there are a number of measures that organisers and delegates should not need to fathom out alone, as the city Convention Bureau will share all COVID-19 Information and facts on our website, alongside our 'know before you go' factsheet.

**3** Our conference industry has been instrumental in keeping the team up to date to the world of Business Events, as we work from home. The team have benefitted from great education through ICCA, ABPCO and the Global Destination Movement. Sustainability is a major focus for Glasgow, as we prepare to host the **UN Conference on Climate Change** in November 2021. For this reason, Glasgow has joined with 'EarthCheck' on sustainable city accreditation and 'EarthSafe' to benchmark and report on the positive public health measures during 2020. We are keen that the work we put in now will ensure a professional, sustainable and memorable Glasgow welcome, when the time is right.





## WARSAW TOURISM ORGANISATION & CONVENTION BUREAU,

BY THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD, *MATEUSZ CZERWIŃSKI.*

**1** 2020, like no other chapter in the history of tourism and the MICE industry, has proven the well-established Darwinian point that adaptation is the key ability for those striving to endure and prosper in this ever-changing environment. While reaching the critical threshold of the second lockdown, we see how the landscape of an otherwise fairly stable industry is changing. On a daily basis we see agencies, DMCs, tour operators and venues drastically altering their business models, even up to the point of switching to different areas of operations. Obviously, we also have to change, just as circumstances for both local and global destination

marketing are changing. That is why we have implemented new tools and strategies for communication with our potential clients and we have focused even more on supporting our local suppliers in those difficult times.

**2** There is one branch of our global industry that according to the current demand has proven to be both critically important and painfully insufficient: that is the online/hybrid meetings sector. The tools and platforms we have at our disposal at the moment lack many crucial aspects. For example by retaining participants' attention (longer than an hour), delivering ROI for sponsors, encouraging and facilitating networking. It

seems that today the meeting owners need virtual meeting tools that are designed for an enhanced experience that is way beyond simple online streaming and rudimental interaction.

**3** We all have found ourselves in the realm of constant change, which means that today it is a must to acquire new skills on a regular basis, think outside the box, operate outside the comfort zone and learn how to quickly and efficiently redefine previous ways to meet the established objectives. Training and education are (and always have been) key aspects of every organisation's self-correcting mechanism.



[WARSAWCONVENTION.PL](http://WARSAWCONVENTION.PL)



## THIS IS ATHENS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU,

BY THE PRESIDENT OF ADDMA, *MELINA DASKALAKIS.*

**1** To begin with, the city of Athens successfully implemented measures to contain the virus, such as cancellation of major public gatherings, events and lock-down measures throughout. The city's goal though was to ensure everyone's access to healthcare, especially by protecting the city's marginalised communities. It is also clear that this was the right time to collaborate and form strong alliances. With this in mind, **This is Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau** formed a close partnership with the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers and the Thessaloniki Convention Bureau, launching the 'Greek Meetings Industry Webinars'. The ambition was to create a strong, united team to confront this new challenge, to collect information and raise awareness on the value of the industry to the

national economy and society. At the same time, we invested greatly on the education of our team and on creating new products and services to offer to our clients.

**2** Technological disruption and digital transformation are here to stay. We believe that the next step should signal a transformation to a different type of experience altogether: hybrid is the new way to create, deliver and experience events. Our team is already planning the next **Travel Trade Athens 2021** edition, the signature event of the City of Athens for travel and meetings professionals, where participants will be invited to Athens and given the opportunity to hold online B2B meetings, but with real experiences. Meanwhile, we are investing in the digital transformation of our MICE portfolio by updating existing and creating new sales tools, beyond building a new tech-savvy info-point at Syntagma square. We

are also investing in partnerships with tourism stakeholders and international organisations in order to implement our projected sustainability agenda for the city, and work towards a safe, resilient and sustainable destination.

**3** In order to face the new challenges on sustainability, safety and tech, we believe that upskilling and reskilling are a necessity for the entire event industry. We intend to offer our members upskilling training on social responsibility and sustainability in order to support the transformation towards a sustainable future for our city. Apart from the tech skills that are essential in this new environment, these new times call for a development of soft skills. Those would be empathy, resilience, flexibility, problem-solving, creativity and critical thinking, skills deeply rooted in the Greek way of being.



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# Post-Coronavirus **Education:** It **Takes a Village**

**W**e, both as kids and as adults, don't take classes just to remember everything we are taught. We also do so to gain a broader, deeper and possibly more useful perspective on who we are and what we should do with the time we have at our disposal. That's why learning, within the best circumstances, it's a never-ending dynamic process and can feel so exciting. And why teaching is an elder's job, the purest work of heart.

The importance of transmitting a system of values is undeniable, whoever your pupils are. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a well-functioning network of people to raise a brilliant association and a combination of efforts to raise the ideal destination. Remember: associations are precisely born to find solutions to issues experienced by a community. So, first of all, do not panic! You are ready for it.

**Albert Camus** was a French philosopher, author and journalist, who, as it happens, wrote **The Plague**, a novel that tells the story of an epidemic sweeping the French Algerian city of Oran. When

he won the **Nobel for Literature** in 1957, he thanked his old elementary-school teacher. Winning a Nobel prize is perhaps too ambitious. However, we often encounter occasions to thank the people who helped us find the time to study, mature rather than aging and - if we are extremely lucky - learn from our mistakes.

Being such a new and bustling professional class in the job market, event planners originally came from other industries such as entertainment, hospitality or marketing and had to work their way up and self-learn on that journey. They were learning as they walked, modelling the very first principles, methodologies and practical applications of the art of organising events. Fast-forward a couple of years, we are now seeing the first generation of people entering the industry who have obtained degrees,

certificates and diplomas in event and MICE management. This poses a critical question: should I invest in a formal classroom-style education or should I spend my time with relevant experience where I can learn on the job?

This new educational phase has brought a new attribute to the surface: adaptability. It is the perfect prerogative to move forward with the always complex and cross-cut theme of education that, without any doubt, will be part of the headlines of our industry in 2021. As always in these cases, the specific training of our professionals goes



hand-in-hand with the new trends, disciplines and crossroads, which are intermingling with the reality of the associations. In fact, even these first diplomas that are being absorbed in the MICE labor market may run the risk of becoming obsolete, given the new demands that COVID-19 has raised.

Many instruments are at our disposal, including the long discussed virtual events. In this case, virtual means a cosy space for you and your members to talk about the development of your missions and how to achieve it. There are plenty of e-learning platforms and learning management systems, including the most famous LinkedIn and Moodle. Online learning can be even wider than physical learning, allowing more people to connect flexibly from wherever they are and offering a level of personalisation otherwise impossible. Content can be more engaging too, thanks to the obvious opportunities of a computer compared to a desk in a classroom. These options would also help you use your time better as people's attention in front of a screen is going to last even less than in person: no room for chit-chat.

**Sven Bossu, CEO of the International Association of Convention Centres**, has a point. "Two main trends are clear. First of all, an intensified training on everything that is related to safety and security protocols and secondly, understanding the value of new technologies and models such as hybrids. Especially the latter is uncharted territory, both for venues and organisers".

Training will not only be about understanding new technologies, but also how to include them in a **new business model**, both for organisers and venues. "All teams, especially the sales & marketing team, need to encapsulate the hybrid and digital offering of their venue in their value proposal," Bossu adds. In order to do so, they need to fully understand the possibilities these technologies offer

and the key focus area should actually be the data which can be collected to provide value. As a result, new roles will be created within venues, requiring new types of training.

These points are corroborated by **Uta Goretzky**, executive director of the **International Federation of Exhibition & Event Services**: "We have to adapt to formats like pandemic safe exhibitions and events, as well as new challenges due to hybrid and virtual events. Here we need new vocational formats, since these requirements are completely new for our industry."

There is a need for ongoing research into event management, so that course development and training requirements can be further improved to meet the current and future needs. No surprise that the online learning platform software market is booming worldwide and is anticipated to grow over the forecast period 2020-2025.

**Safety planning** will be another attraction that will reign over the associations' courses and workshops, swinging around the common interests of event destinations. It has never been as important as it is now to educate people on the topics of hygiene and prevention. Everyone among associations, events' organisers and destinations' managers is exploring social and behavioural change as an effect of the current crisis. Rules often arrive from governments and local authorities, but it can be very much up to the MICE professionals to find the ideal system. A whole bunch of new processes are requested in order to plan, implement, manage and assess health education interventions.

Last but not least, do not undervalue diversity and inclusion. The business case for it, is stronger than ever. According to a report from



**McKinsey & Company**, "the business case for both gender diversity and ethnic and cultural diversity in corporate leadership continues to strengthen." The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability. This can be explained by several reasons but there is one that stands out: building a true society of nations and individualities within your board promotes innovation, strengthens execution and creates different perspectives on how to tackle on a business (or bid); a simulation of the society itself, your customer base and the changes to make before everyone else. Companies and agencies need a systematic, business-led approach to inclusion and diversity, as well as bolder actions from top to bottom.

*"Two main trends are clear. First of all, an intensified training on everything that is related to safety and security protocols and secondly understanding the value of new technologies and models such as hybrids. Especially the latter is uncharted territory, both for venues and organisers"*



# A Year of Living on the **Edge**: **21 Tips** for What's Coming **Next**

This year was longer than usual and, brutally, crushed ambitions and plans of many meetings and association professionals. What might have been a great kick-off for the new decade when it comes to promoting associative events and conference destinations, lo and behold, marked the outset of a forced standstill for both parties (buyers and suppliers). The pandemic hit us hard and the burden we're asked to carry seems heavier by the day and, for this reason, HQ drew up a list of 21 tips to guide you through 2021 and beyond... including a very special one that'll get you off on the right foot.

## 10 TIPS FOR DESTINATIONS

### 1) **Technology is here to stay**

Throughout the year, 'we value digital events, but they will never replace face-to-face meetings' was the most repeated quote in our newsroom has been. Nevertheless, this assumption is somewhat groundless: virtual events are not here to replace personal contact, but they are another working tool. Looking at the long run, smart digital transformation is needed. Look beyond the webinars and online events. Consider easily accessible communication tools online communities for your local partners, digital tourism transformation and creation of future meeting spaces.

### 2) **Site inspections are not city tours**

When planning your next site inspection, try a different approach than just a guided city tour. Of course, checking the best hotels, venues and restaurants should still be at the basis of any fact-finding visit, but don't let yourself be caught in unnecessary steps. Time is money and it will be better spent on networking activities, business meetings and a specialised agenda so that your visitor can connect the dots for their next event. Try to get to know your entourage better and remember: city tours can simply be done by visitors themselves whenever a free afternoon is included in the programme.

### 3) **Back to the origin**

The COVID-19 outbreak was a wakeup call for destinations to shift their attention back to domestic markets. Some of you might realise how they were not at the core of your strategy before the pandemic. Don't sweat it: now it's the time for you to develop these markets by bringing together local partners to find new survival ideas or, if necessary, even a short-term business-model shifting idea.

### 4) **Rational, but not desperate**

When talking about bidding for association events, indeed, we were taught to look ahead to three or five years from now. But think about it, are associations still planning their events so much ahead of time? Well, not all of them! Depending on the changing of policies, different organisations have different visions for their future events. A more dynamic approach such as 'call for RFP' should be implemented. Instead of calling with a strong destination-selling purpose, how about making it a more personal approach? No one will refuse a touch of kindness. But if you have a KPI to fulfil, well, this is the moment for your supervisor to reflect!

*Check the article on Page 26 to find out more details about the relationship between non-profit organisations and event destinations.*



### 5) Empower your research team

In order to adapt to this ever-changing world, we need to be constantly updated, act accurately according to the general needs and be a trend-observer. Devote part of your attention to the research team. If you don't have one yet, it's time to start thinking about it. In any professional sector, research is a vital tool for building knowledge, to increase public awareness and, mostly, to spot lies and root for the truth. Empower your researchers and trust their guidance!

### 6) Lobbying is never enough

The pandemic also helped us realise that there is room for improvement in the way we lobby. While various tourist and event segments are determined to get new licenses and incentives for their activities, business events cannot be left behind. In fact, a professional sector valued at a staggering \$1.5 trillion per year cannot afford to leave its services and impact unnoticed. Try to harmonise the best policies, highlight the economic contributions to your destination, protect the thousands of jobs nurtured annually. Yes, lobbying in the MICE industry is far from complete.

### 7) Improve your industry ecosystem

Not everything is within the scope of your action, but, as a destination manager, you should have a say in strengthening your local event ecosystem. This is a unique opportunity to gauge the players you trust, redesign your city map, consider hotels, restaurants, venues, companies, institutions and so on. Remember that planning a meeting in a strange host city can be daunting and bumpy. By making sure that you direct the content of your meetings at the right stages and places, you are not only guaranteeing the success of your client, but also boosting the stakeholders of your local business. This is a win-win situation! So ask yourself: how can I look at my conference city as a whole and not as the sum of its parts?



### 8) Act locally

Sometimes, we become so obsessed with our international exposure that we forget there is also a market and valuable assets around us. The COVID-19 crisis also served as a reminder of an often unspoken rule: do not underestimate the power of your local partners. They can represent a potential ally in building your event destination. Opening the doors of your convention centre as a makeshift hospital is not just a good deed: it's a commitment to the foundations of your business. This is the moment when CSR should play the main role!

### 9) Building trust in the 'new normal'

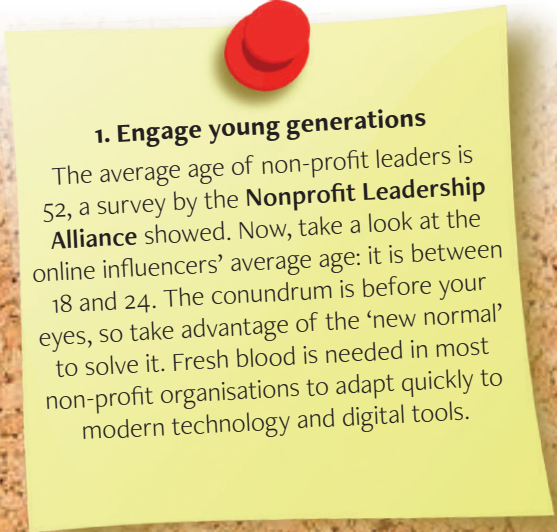
In these crazy times, we need to be prepared for constant changes. A more dynamic way of negotiating is needed when facing clients from non-profit organisations. Consider their point of view. Aren't we all seeking for goodwill and understanding during a tough patch? To carry this load, we must not forget neither the long standing relationships that we built in fat years with our clients, nor their struggle now. Crises like these are a 'russian roulette' because they hit us when we least expect it. Support your local associations, give them a voice and you will be surely rewarded.

### 10) DMC's are here for a (good) reason

Are you overloaded with work commitments and bids? Is your team shrinking? 2021 will bring a long round of negotiations to the table, including searching for new sponsors, remodeling the client portfolio and reshaping of your staff. Share your workload and trust your partners. Outsourcing the event management could be the most suitable plan for a long-term solution. Whether for meeting planners or DMCs, delegating functions will serve to both unload your business burden and optimise quality service within your conference destination. DMCs have the expertise, cachet and necessary experience to put innovative ideas into practice and crack the puzzle within budget. Keep in mind, this is not just getting your own work done, but also solidifying others' positions in the industry.



## 10 TIPS FOR ASSOCIATIONS




### 1. Engage young generations

The average age of non-profit leaders is 52, a survey by the **Nonprofit Leadership Alliance** showed. Now, take a look at the online influencers' average age: it is between 18 and 24. The conundrum is before your eyes, so take advantage of the 'new normal' to solve it. Fresh blood is needed in most non-profit organisations to adapt quickly to modern technology and digital tools.



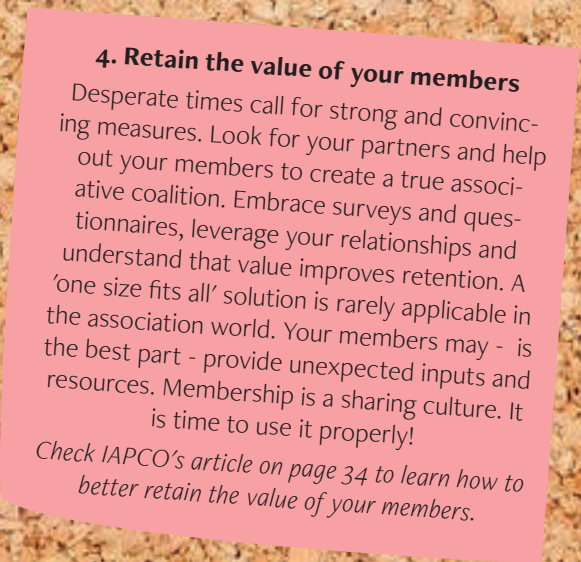
### 2. Stay responsive

As a network, representative or association, we have an obligation to keep up with questions and requests from our stakeholders and members. Mostly, we must not leave room to neglect our day-to-day interactions. Encourage your employees to stay informed, engaged and give them confidence to take decisions. Do not gloss over that missing contact or yesterday's email. Who knows what will be around the corner?



### 3. Build an online community

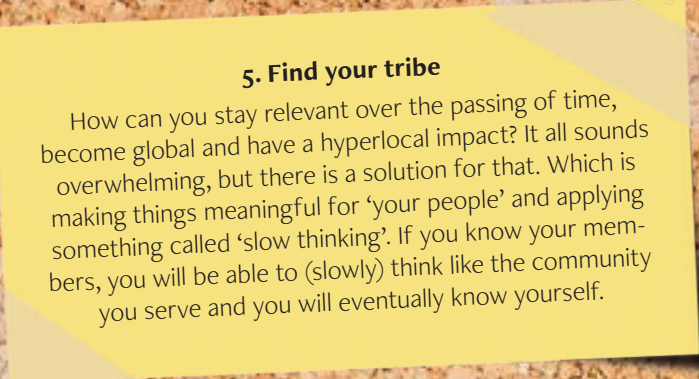
Since we are all relying on digital communications and event platforms, creating an online community is an important step. This means that you should encourage your members to attend the virtual events on a regular basis. A communication strategy will be required, to help members getting into the habit. But keep in mind that you are growing a tree, not building a house. You don't need to have blueprints for what it will look like from day one. Just start bringing people together, take it easy and, over time, your community will organically find its own form.



### 4. Retain the value of your members

Desperate times call for strong and convincing measures. Look for your partners and help out your members to create a true associative coalition. Embrace surveys and questionnaires, leverage your relationships and understand that value improves retention. A 'one size fits all' solution is rarely applicable in the association world. Your members may - is the best part - provide unexpected inputs and resources. Membership is a sharing culture. It is time to use it properly!

*Check IAPCO's article on page 34 to learn how to better retain the value of your members.*



### 5. Find your tribe

How can you stay relevant over the passing of time, become global and have a hyperlocal impact? It all sounds overwhelming, but there is a solution for that. Which is making things meaningful for 'your people' and applying something called 'slow thinking'. If you know your members, you will be able to (slowly) think like the community you serve and you will eventually know yourself.

### 6. Use the data you have

If anything, we can say that the closing decade showed us what data can do. And it can do a lot. So make sure you are using this powerful tool as much as you can. The association world is full of figures about members' identities, origins and interests (that are free, accessible and legal) too often disregarded. It's worth taking some time to collect this abundant information and analyse it, obviously in compliance with GDPR regulations. It will help you predict challenges, empower your tribe (see above) and in the end reach your goals.



### 7. Offer support

Can't believe we are still in the middle of a pandemic. You know what could help? Knowing that you are not alone. We are coping in different ways. Some of us find it more difficult than others. What is fantastic is that associations are precisely born to solve this and assist people in need. So offer training, masterclasses, some distractions or even little moments of apparent normality to your associates. Continue to do so after the pandemic will be over (it will!) and members will always be grateful. Don't be afraid to share your knowledge between organisations, too. United as one equals final success.

### 8. Travel sustainably

There was a silver lining in staying home. Actually, two. Pollution levels decreased for a tiny bit and, notably, more and more people started realising they are part of a delicate thing called 'nature'. Of course your list of travels is waiting, conferences on the other side of the world are just being postponed and everybody needs a holiday now more than ever. You can for instance offset your emissions by choosing trains, locally grown food and energy efficient venues. Satellite images of a cleaner world, at the time when people were forced home, will hopefully be sticking on our mind for a while.

*Interested? Check out Guy Bigwood's thoughts about how to learn from nature on page 36.*

### 9. Keep diversity in mind

Ashanti Bentil-Dhue is a practitioner and speaker who helps the global events industry become more diverse. She recently said there are ways to avoid an all 'white old men' panel, which will only end up speaking to a minority (though the powerful one) of the global population. One way is giving a huge importance to inclusive language, another is bringing diverse speakers and contributors from different departments and different levels of seniority. Try to be protective and practically useful for everybody. "Ultimately, good communities are built on the basis of trust."

### 10. Lead change

The best way to embrace change is to anticipate it. Do not shy away from it, so avoid improvisation and free yourself from the past. Updating new work systems, balancing organisational structures, reinforcing new action plans... these are just some of the procedures reflecting a transition. To help your organisation thrive in a new environment, analyse new trends in your field or come up with new guidelines for your partners, change must come from within. Leading change is simply the most accountable way to shape the face of your association.

### 21. Keep reading HQ!

Can we tell you a secret? Probably as for you, this was a dark year for our magazine in which our partnerships were curtailed, our newsroom was often distant and our resources in short supply... but we will not give up on you, dear reader! 2021 will be a grinding year for sure, and we are prepared to do what we know best: inform you on the latest news; keep updating the biggest market trends and support you in this great associative family.

Trust us, you will not regret it! ;)



# “We’d like to call for **universal entitlements of lifelong learning**”

Many of our preconceived ideas about learning structures and educational strategies have been challenged by the digital transition and innovation at work. The **Lifelong Learning Platform (LLP)** is an umbrella that gathers 42 European organizations active in the field of education, training and youth, that has been calling for non-formal and informal learning at all stages of life. An opportune time to ask a series of questions to **Brikena Xhomaqi**, the organisation's director.

**L**LLP aims to voice citizens’ concerns about lifelong learning with the main conviction that no one should be left out and that bridges across sectors need to be built. How has this pandemic significantly impacted your working frame and structure?

The pandemic has impacted all aspects of our work: from office life to physical meetings, from our advocacy efforts to large events. Just like anybody else, we had to work out with our creativity to deliver on the activities we had foreseen at the beginning of the year, but I must say that every gear in the machine worked hard to overcome these new challenges. On the other hand, some of our members had to stop their activities because they were mostly, if not only, working with mobile target groups. Therefore, organisations that work on learning mobility were affected the most.

**In a new era in which technology and innovation will irreversibly alter learning processes, how can we define a concept of “XXI century education” on a global scale?**

Learning can happen anytime, anywhere, and the spaces where this learning occurs are incredibly and increasingly diverse. The concept of XXI century education is an ever-lasting process that puts the learner and its needs at the centre of education systems. It is a kind of education that gives value to all learning environments - in and outside the classroom - and that prepares learners for the world they will be living in. Education systems are undergoing a paradigm shift in the struggle to meet the needs of learners in a world that is rapidly changing from a technological, demographic, societal and environmental perspective. This demands that we designate equal value to all learning environments, and by doing so we will be shaping the future of education. In a digital context, this also means moving from knowledge acquisition to knowledge creation as we learn and create new things exploring new ways and tools. Experiential learning shall be a polar start.

**What kind of projects do you intend to highlight in 2021, which are essential in affirming your mission and values?**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Brikena Xhomaqi is the current director of the Lifelong Learning Platform – European Civil Society for Education since 2016. She is a member of the Civil Society Europe Steering Committee since 2017 and former head office of the European Students’ Union (ESU) and director of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN).*



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In 2020, we have highlighted issues of sustainability for the European education systems and wellbeing of all learners. For us, it is clear that these issues have been there for quite some time, and that they only surfaced because of the pandemic. It is quite telling that by ‘only’ closing schools, didacts and learning processes everywhere were halted. Where was the attention to the wellbeing of learners? Why weren’t teachers and educators sufficiently trained?

In an ongoing effort to continue addressing such issues within the European institutions, for 2021 we would like to call for universal entitlements of lifelong learning. An inclusive (r)evolution of European education systems is bound to happen only through the recognition and validation of all forms of learning. To this extent, we intend to call upon the European institutions for policy reflections that mirror the reality we’re living in. This reality is the one where citizens everywhere should be entitled to a life-long learning journey in their daily lives.

**Quoting from your website: “despite calls to promote longer-term investment in education and to invest in training systems, public spending in education has decreased in most European Member States in the last years”. How can we reverse this tendency?**

Unfortunately, education is often among the first items to suffer cuts on budgets.

Policy reforms are too often thought to be just an appendix of visibility campaigns, and investments in education do not win elections. Moreover, and to make it all more difficult, education sits outside of the EU portfolio and remains a Member States’ competence.

The Lifelong Learning Platform has been calling for a structured, coherent, and ambitious European budget that translates the needs on the ground into effective policy instruments. At the European level, one of these instruments is the **Erasmus+** programme that was created as a learning mobility programme and has developed into a real education framework. We have carried out a two-year-long campaign to call for a substantial increase of the Erasmus+ budget in the next ‘MultiAnnual Financial Framework 2021-2027’, and we are happy that our efforts were publicly praised by the European Parliament. It might be by chance that the Erasmus+ was one of the few programmes to see a significant increase in its funding, but we like to think that civil society efforts are key to this renewed ambition. As we move to a new world of work, digitalisation, demographic change and climate change, investment in reskilling and upskilling will be inevitable. Member States will not have a choice if they want to stay competitive and survive altogether.

**How did you manage to reshape your events agenda this year and what plans do you have on the table for 2021?**

Policy gatherings, awareness-raising events and capacity-building activities are crucial to our mission. For 2020, we went digital. We must say that despite the apparent difficulties at the beginning, as well as the lack of physical interactions, digital happenings helped us increase our outreach. In the end, this was a learning process for LLLP as well. For 2021, it is still not clear when (and if) events will resume. However, we want to keep an optimistic outlook and hope to resume the good relations that we had with our usual partners. We can’t wait to have inspiring, dynamic and fruitful in-person events again!

**With a long-term impact on the economic growth of an increasingly competitive world, and the speed of information in an aging society... what influence do you foresee for your organisation and the underlined subjects in the future?**

We believe that change is both cultural and political. There are unfulfilled needs on the ground that technologies, emerging pedagogies, and a holistic lifelong learning approach can (and will) meet. At the same time, there are already best practices in place that ought to be transferred and adapted elsewhere. These processes are already ongoing and so is life-long and life-wide learning. For us to engage in topics such as third-age learning, socio-economic inclusion of all learners or education in the digital age, it only means to keep up with our work.

**LIFELONG  
LEARNING  
PLATFORM**  
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION





the icc  
birmingham

“We continue to **lobby for government support** and an **industry reopening date**”

With more than 7 million visitors and 750 events per year, **NEC Group** is the leading UK company in live events. World-class specialists in venue and destination management, this multi-tier event company runs its business through exhibitions, conferences, music, sports, entertainment and hospitality. Owner of multiple MICE centres such as **ICC Birmingham**, the group was prompted to further responses with the decline in live operations and the shift to virtual events. Senior Account Manager, **Sandra Eyre**, addressed the most pressing topics in the Birmingham convention bubble.

**COVID-19 has hit the heart of our industry and convention centres are no exception. With the lack of government regulations and calls for tighter lobbying, what is your company's position at this critical time?**

The events industry has been one of the hardest hit by the effects of the pandemic. The NEC Group has three conference venues located across Birmingham: the **National Exhibition Centre, ICC Birmingham** and **Vox Venue**. All three venues have unfortunately been closed to events since March and throughout this period we have worked closely with event organisers and associations to reschedule events appropriately. As the UK's leading live events business, we continue to determinedly lobby for government support and an industry reopening date with accompanying criteria. Alongside these efforts, the venues have been operationally

prepared for a return to business, allowing us to host safe and controlled gatherings as soon as we are permitted to do so.

As difficult as this period has been, we look forward to the return of events and meeting our industry colleagues face-to-face again. There has been a great deal of investment into Birmingham and our venues over the past few years, as such the future is promising. This anticipation for the future is only further enhanced by the **Commonwealth Games**, which arrives in Birmingham in 2022, and has presented a set of fantastic opportunities to the region and our venues.

**Among these three options, what will be your top priority for 2021: bring in new sponsors and a solid membership; build up a new customer base comprising the domestic market; or increase revenue at a sustained pace?**



**SANDRA EYRE**  
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Naturally, as a near zero revenue business for most of 2020, increasing revenue is fundamental to our operations for 2021 and beyond. However, there is almost 80 years-worth of event experience across our three venues and the long-term customer relationships must be maintained now and then strengthened through 2021. This engagement and the understanding of our customer base has been a close personal focus.

Updated travel restrictions, domestically and internationally, may further determine how our customer base is formed in the coming years. As circumstances change and new working methods are adopted, there will be ample opportunities to attract customers from across the world. We are operating in partnership with **West Midlands Growth Company**, which also has a dedicated team working with international clients to attract future business to Birmingham.

**What new assets is your venue ready to offer in this ‘new normal’ period of time? What can associations expect right now in terms of prevention and safety?**

We understand that new working methods have become essential and we are embracing the “new normal”. Our in-house Production Management has recently enhanced our hybrid services, allowing us to deliver virtual events of all kinds, including hybrid, web streaming, studio productions and webinars.

Meanwhile, we have devised ‘Venue Protect’, which is an all-encompassing toolkit based on a four-step approach to the safety and protection of people at our venue. Measures have been put in place to support testing and tracing, ensure adherence to social

distancing, enhance venue sanitisation and provide appropriate communication to all audiences. The toolkit includes guidance, checklists, accreditation, risk assessments, visitor information, explainer videos and more.

**Virtual events are not new to the market but the truth is this health crisis has increased the digital weight, offering hybrid solutions for venues. Do you see this as a threat or a unique opportunity to improve meetings and events?**

This is most definitely an opportunity. Whilst there are many aspects of physical events that are irreplaceable, digital services allow events to be broadcast far and wide, providing content to the masses, reaching audiences that may never have had the opportunity to attend. We look forward to adding this hybrid component to events now and for the foreseeable future. Our event spaces offer a fantastic platform for hybrid elements, and we are well equipped with a broad range of technologies, enabling the delivery of virtual events in line with organisers requirements.

**Associations may feel at risk of signing a contract given the volatility of the situation and their own commitment to the success of the event. How are you building trust between the venues and your clients?**

There is great trust between the venue and our clients, and by understanding their requirements and desires, we will build upon this trust in our delivery as business operations return. We should soon be able to host meetings of up to 1,000 attendees. As we adapt to a new normality, we will be evidencing our adaptability to changing

circumstances as well as how the measures detailed in ‘Venue Protect’ are being implemented, helping to build conference organisers’ confidence in our venue and our operational delivery.

**For a long time it was thought that sustainability was just a buzzword to shake the market positively. How did these sustainable policies impact the structure of NEC Group today?**

Sustainability has long been at the forefront of our operations. We’re proud to invest considerably and implement a range of appropriate initiatives across the venues. In addition, the ICC holds the **ISO 14001 accreditation**, which officially recognises our efforts surrounding environmental management systems.

There are energy saving technologies across all our venues, managing lighting, systems and hardware. Waste management is considered under the reduce, reuse and recycle principles, and we further actively participate with the local waste to energy scheme. Sustainability efforts also extend through our business catering arm, Amadeus. Amongst many initiatives, they source produce locally, procure sustainable product packaging, appropriately dispose of all waste and have pledged to responsible plastic usage and management.

**ICC**  
Birmingham





“A smart mix of **virtual**, **hybrid** and **in-person** events is **our future**”

Although the digital transformation process is being assimilated without much resistance, it is difficult for any professional to predict the future of events in a post-pandemic era. The market-leading meetings and events technology provider, **Cvent**, recently held its flagship conference, **Cvent CONNECT Europe**, to shed some light on the debate of virtual vs face-to-face meetings. Cvent's Chief Marketing Officer, **Patrick Smith** went straight to the point with *HQ*.

**First it was just marketing and communication, but now it seems that the core business of the event industry has definitely moved to online and digital. What is your forecast for the next decade?**

The global pandemic has certainly been a forcing function for the meetings industry to adapt and embrace technology. The industry has transformed in mere months right before our eyes. Something that would've taken five or seven years happened in the first 90 days of this pandemic. But these changes have laid the foundation for the 'golden age of events', a time where events are held more frequently, have more impact and reach a far broader audience. Because of the pandemic and because of digital transformation, events will become an even more critical part of the business landscape. There are now three unique event models available to event professionals: in-person, virtual and hybrid. Being able to leverage them will uncover untapped potential across the entire event programme. So, while for the time being our industry has moved online, events will be held in-person in the years ahead. At the same time, technology will

play an integral role in making those event experiences more impactful, memorable and accessible.

**Many people are calling this transition 'the Era of experience'. What does this mean for the human nature of the industry?**

It's absolutely the case that future events will need to become even more engaging and interactive. With more events being held, it will be those that deliver on all three event fundamentals: **content, connection/networking and experience**, that will ultimately not only drive bigger attendance, but more importantly, engage their audiences in more meaningful, lasting ways. So, the pressure will be on to really elevate the total event package and technology can help them do that. By leveraging the wealth of data and insights that can be gained from analysing delegate actions and gathered via attendee intelligence technology, planners have so much valuable intelligence to create the right content and provide attendees with a memorable and personalised experience – particularly when in-person events resume.

**How challenging will it be for a meeting planner or a PCO to transfer their expertise to a hybrid culture and virtual methodology?**

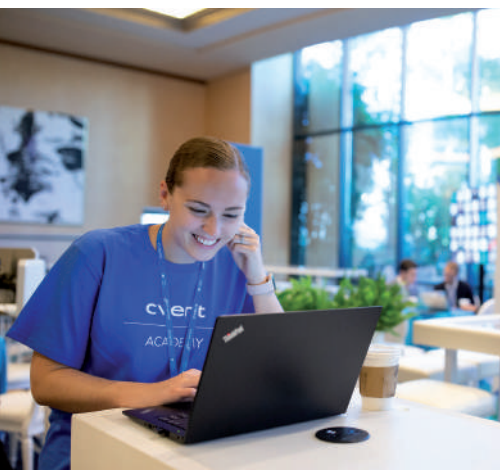
By nature, event organisers are incredibly resilient and are used to find new ways to adjust. There is no question that they will be able to use their skills and succeed in the new normal. However, it will take a digital-first mindset to do so. The type of skills needed for future events has changed due to technology. We are seeing the rise of the event technologist role and also that event organisers are now mastering TV production and video editing, all skills critical to the execution of virtual and hybrid events. The industry has already gone through a steep learning curve and both event organisers and venues have stepped up in very big ways. Just look at how far virtual events have come in nine months in terms of content delivery and production values: it's astounding! This education is going to continue for months and even years. I have no doubt that industry professionals will meet the challenge.





PATRICK SMITH

Senior Vice President and CMO  
at Cvent



**Despite all the benefits, many attendees and associations begin to report a state of “digital fatigue” and a series of limitations to virtual meetings. Is there a risk of going from ‘famine to feast’, whenever the situation normalises?**

Certainly, digital fatigue is very real, but great content will always be demanded and the massive reach of virtual events will ensure they are here to stay.

However, I don’t think that there will be a ‘famine to feast’ situation as things normalise. We have already seen that recovery will not be linear. We will continue to take a few steps forward, then maybe a step back. Even when a vaccine is widely available, some may not have access to it, or others may want to wait for more studies to be done before they choose to take it. In addition, not everyone may have the travel budgets or be comfortable being in a room with thousands of other strangers.

The return to normal will take time. Small to medium-sized events will start the recovery, while large events will be the last to return. Ultimately, a smart mix of virtual, hybrid and in-person events is our future. The quicker the industry accepts and works towards the new landscape, the faster we can take advantage of it. As our CEO Reggie Aggarwal mentioned in his keynote at Cvent CONNECT Europe, “we truly have never had this much potential just waiting for us to harness.”

**Let’s address the elephant in the room now: what will be the short-term and lasting impacts of this transformation on ROI and on financing models to host an event?**

Since the pivot to virtual, event organisers have been focused on proving the ROI of their virtual events. With virtual events, you can capture and measure more engagement points than ever before if you have the right technology. But nothing will ever beat the power of meeting face-to-face to build brand loyalty and deepen relationships. The key is using the right event type to meet your goals.

Virtual events will reach a broader audience, be less expensive to organise and give you

more information on your delegates than ever. But in-person events, despite being generally more expensive, will accelerate business faster, create lingering experiences and have better networking opportunities.

Both types of events have different financing models, will require different pricing structures and have different ROI profiles. Both will be lasting components of event programmes and will logically lead to hybrid events where you can tap into the best of both models.

**What will be the critical issues in the new format, from a business process management perspective? What do associations need to know to legally manage their membership in a virtual world?**

Data privacy has rightfully taken a front-row seat, especially in the last few years with GDPR and similar regulations being put into action. With the move to these online event environments and digital transformation, those concerns will only increase – which is why it is critical that associations make data security and privacy a key pillar in their event programme and membership management strategy. Whether associations choose to hire a data security expert full-time or work with a consultant, it is something that should be considered into the budget for both legal and ethical reasons. It is also critical that associations ask the right questions of their technology partners and vendors. They need to ensure that vendors take data privacy seriously, and that they all have the right security credentials and safeguards in place. While the time and money spent to prevent any data mishaps may seem cumbersome, it well outweighs the potential price to pay should something happen and no work was done up-front to prevent it.



# Where do Non-Profit Associations go?

**David De Alves**, executive director at **International STEM**

**Council**, looks beyond 2020 to find out the future relationship between nonprofits and event destinations.



To say that 2020 was challenging for the global meeting industry is, of course, an understatement. COVID-19, border closures and social distancing requirements have radically changed the entire space for conferences, exhibitions and events.

These changes have been especially felt by the non-profit sector. Tighter constraints and focused needs have meant that there is often little margin to absorb errors, while the sector also required responsive and dynamic continuity mechanisms in order to survive.

Within the non-profit space, education events have been hit particularly hard. The higher education landscape underwent significant transformations as a result of changes in staffing levels, teaching and research practices, as well as the way international student mobility was affected.

In order to respond, non-profit associations have had to increasingly refocus on their

core mission, with an eye first and foremost towards their own **membership base** and their fundamental need for engagement and collaboration with the wider world.

It is often easy to forget that associations exist to enable their members to achieve and organise outcomes collectively. Without the active engagement of members themselves, many associations risk becoming top heavy. They risk being on a treadmill of pursuing one digital event after another, without a core base to give meaning and purpose to the very events they run.

As such, when formulating strategies for a post-COVID world, many convention bureaus, destinations and suppliers need to re-address the alignment of their needs with those of their buyers. When trying to formulate any blueprint plans that involve many different stakeholders, the often obvious but missing key is a greater understanding of motives, perspectives and needs.

Without this understanding, the perspectives of non-profit associations are easily misunderstood. The needs and priorities of member-based organisations are often finely balanced with limited time and resources. There is also a degree of risk aversion that is very different from corporate and other clients. The rational approach needs to be one that dismantles

barriers to entry through **relationship building**, rather than enacting a purely transactional or service-based model.

*“...the often obvious but missing key is a greater understanding of motives, perspectives and needs.”*

As much as being introduced to destination facilities is important, the creation of **on-the-ground relationships** proves vital to move beyond a stage where a local organising committee can be formed, to one where outcomes can be delivered. There is no better time for the industry to invest in building relationships in order to have a **collaborative approach**.

This problem is hard enough in normal times. Fostering introductions and viable links with on-ground groups should be the overriding challenge for any destination proposal. Any worthwhile event requires both **real effort and faith** in order to lay the basis for stability and certainty - something that, more than ever, is surely pressing for non-profit associations.

The provision of actual commitment and resources from destinations should be focused on breaking down the barriers to entry through good faith relationship-building and co-operation in far more dynamic and closer ways.



In doing so, it is important to not see association events as purely transactional. Building networks and relationships and organising members, all leads to a **sustainable cycle** of active host communities who provide sustainable **long-term legacy goals** and create **ongoing opportunities** for themselves.

*“The provision of actual commitment and resources from destinations should be focused on breaking down the barriers to entry through good faith relationship-building and co-operation in far more dynamic and closer ways.”*

While it's never easy to propose a new destination, these relationship needs are overlooked in a world that is used to marketing its way out to a solution. While such marketing exercises can be useful - decisions inevitably always fall back to the strength of the relationships built from them.

Undoubtedly, there are many other **marketing tangents** that in themselves are useful to explore, but they sometimes detract from that core relationship building. The hot words of ‘virtual and hybrid meetings’, for example, will undoubtedly evolve as a response to market needs. However, they will survive only if they can drive the same levels of engagement and collaboration with membership as traditional meeting structures.

*“These relationship needs are overlooked in a world that is used to market its way out and in which it's never easy to propose a new destination.”*



Either way, irrespective of the ultimate delivery platform or future challenges, host destinations can reliably invest in the cornerstone of relationship building and specifically in the **fostering of local organising committees**.

While these unknowns can sometimes prove to be a barrier in itself, there needs to be greater work done with facilitating the right conversations and the right groundwork. Merely providing a list of potential contacts is rarely enough.

*“...‘virtual and hybrid meetings’, for example, will undoubtedly evolve as a response to market needs.”*

Instead, the direct involvement of convention bureaus in the formation of local organising committees will allow destinations to understand the sore points. Moreover, it will allow them to dynamically adapt to address needs in ways that are often overlooked and inevitably lead to common stalling of efforts. Changing our perspective and motives towards investing in relationships means that our industry can respond to whatever environment the future presents us with.

In times such as now, we are increasingly required to focus energy on longer term plans and goals. Not just because the short-term is a game of shifting goals posts, but also because only through the building of relationships **a solid foundation** is provided for the dust to settle in a post-COVID world<sup>19</sup>.

*“Merely providing a list of potential contacts is rarely enough.”*

While any day-to-day plans remain in limbo, we have an opportunity to refocus on these long-term deep relationships. This gives associations and our industry a **once**

**in a generation chance** to get off the treadmill and build events from the ground up that are based from the very outset on members, stakeholders and relationships.

*“Changing our perspective and motives towards investing in relationships means that our industry can respond to whatever environment the future presents us with.”*

Let's not forget what pushes many of us to organise a conference or event: in a more disconnected and fragile world, the meeting industry serves as the **greatest hope** for people to collaborate, connect and organise.



#### ASSOCIATION PROFILE

*The International STEM Council is a non-profit member-based association working towards the advancement of science, technology, engineering and mathematics throughout the education sector.*

*They aim to fostering community engagement and collaboration through events, conferences and exhibitions.*

*Comprised of STEM-based academics, educators, industry partners and professionals, they pursue their goals in science education policy by hosting and creating the space for collaborative forums in cities and regions where they can make the greatest impact and meaningful change.*

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# A NEW TOMORROW

ECM COVID-19 ANTIBODIES  
FOR YOUR DESTINATION

## Needs of **Knowledge**, Sense of **Purpose** and **Directions**

The COVID-19 crisis, has profoundly shaken all aspects of society, business and economy worldwide and it is reshaping our world forever. For European Cities Marketing, this crisis is a matter to strengthen connections between members while proposing relevant content and keeping on its sense of purpose and direction in a fast-changing visitor economy – a manifesto of our beliefs and values as passionate professionals.

**W**hile the current crisis is both intensifying already on-going challenges and generating new ones, it also creates new opportunities that help us change for the better. Professionals had to rethink their structures and the way they worked, which required many actions, major challenges and the return to traditional models is now unthinkable!

### **Education is a pillar for associations' mission**

Education has always been the core mission of European Cities Marketing.

Offering two main conferences per year as well as a Summer School for newcomers in the industry and many more specialised events (like expert meetings and masterclasses), ECM made no exception and had to reinvent itself when all these events had to be cancelled (at least their in person versions).

In the new ECM's Strategy launched in 2019 and called **Tomorrow Today**, it is ECM pledge to members to be forward-looking and help prepare today for what will come tomorrow. And, while it is difficult, we need to believe, stay positive and work towards this new tomorrow. A

tomorrow that will be different from what we came from and that will require us to rebuild, reshape and reimagine tourism and the responsibilities and role of DMOs anew.

Following the cancellation of the ECM Spring Meeting at the beginning of March, just a week before the event, European Cities Marketing had to react very fast and be proactive. Following input and needs of ECM members, together with Group NAO, ECM launched a series of activities and webinars named **#ANewTomorrow** to discuss the future challenges faced by DMOs in the COVID-19 crisis.

The purpose of the **#anewtomorrow series** is to create innovative content to share ideas and overcome challenges, find inspiration in new practice and different approaches and envision together with all members, a new future of destinations rebuilt. A new tomorrow of DMOs repurposed.

Members' response was really positive and ECM decided to push the analysis forward by publishing, in collaboration with **TOPOSOPHY**, the **DMMO COVID-19 Continuity Checklist** – an ECM guide for sustainable recovery, a relevant and lucid tool for DMMOs in this unprecedented time to face new challenges. The purpose of this paper is to share insights to help DMOs, CVBs, local entrepreneurs, political decision makers, visitors and local communities.

### More educational digital opportunities make communities bigger and strengthen links

In parallel with these webinars, ECM had to transform their in-person events into virtual events. The advantage is that these offer actually more opportunities in terms of audience and space. Even if traditional events remain a powerful way to build connections, the online world allows us infinite prospects in the reach of people, since we can truly talk to a global audience. Of course, we all need and want to be able to meet again. But this new way of meeting has allowed more people to participate and many of the members who didn't attend our conference before, do now take part in our webinars and online

initiatives.

“The organisation of virtual events and webinars has allowed us to expand our education scope. Our Knowledge Groups members, for example, used to see each other 2-3 times a year during our conferences and meetings, but now they virtually meet every 6 weeks. We can truly say that even without meeting in person our members are now more connected than ever before,” ECM president **Petra Stušek** said about the frequency of interactions between members.

### Education is a manifesto of our beliefs and values, as a community of passionate professionals

“We developed many initiatives to stay proactive for our members during this difficult time and, with the people in mind, we decided that we had a role to play in the crisis by providing collaborative solutions beyond our members. We did that with the launch in August of the ECM Mentor Programme,” Stušek continued.

The **ECM Mentor Programme**, launched during The ECM Summer School 2.0 by ECM, is a free industry-supported initiative created to secure networking, relation-building and knowledge-exchange, between newly-appointed and advanced professionals.

Indeed, the COVID-19 has had huge consequences for the meetings industry. It has resulted in the cancellation and postponement of not only congresses and conventions, but also of industry events.

In close collaboration with partners - IAPCO, IBTM, ICCA, IMEX and HQ, the ECM Mentor Programme is meant to be one of the collaborative solutions in this unprecedented period. Newly-appointed and advanced professionals will have the opportunity, firstly virtually and hopefully physically in the future, to interact, to inspire, to share and to grow together.

ECM also opened 15 seats for mentees whose job has been made redundant, and students to enlarge the scope and help even more people in this difficult time. “In less than three weeks, all the mentors' seats had been filled, which really shows the interest and will from advanced professionals in the meetings industry to share their knowledge and experience with the newcomers,” said **Sam Johnston**, ECM vice-president for the meetings industry.

Each participant of the ECM Mentor Programme has access to a platform where they can exchange with their mentor or mentee in one forum, and with their peers in another forum - for example, a mentee can exchange with its mentor in a forum and with all the other mentees in another forum. It gives them another way to engage in the programme.

“The new mentors and mentees, coming from all over Europe, started to virtually meet and exchange on their experiences and challenges mid-October, and it's really gratifying to see the newly matched 'duos' already discussing and learning from each other, thanks to the programme we set up,” Johnston concluded.

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# The **Value** of **Education**

By **Sara Hosford**, Director of Media & Industry Relations at **SITE**

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**2**020 has been a year of unprecedented education and steep learning curves. An education none of us wished for, and yet, we find ourselves in this 'sink or swim' situation where honestly, we don't have the choice. So, what have we learnt?

## **Science**

The threat of a global pandemic, as predicted by many scholars and scientists for years, including Bill Gates, is actually here. We are living it, and it's awful. We've learnt all about viruses, how they spread and the damage they wreak. We've learnt about the power of masks, and our hands are red raw from sanitising gel.

## **Business**

We've learnt how interconnected and fragile our Global Economies are. We've had to evaluate, adapt, re-adapt, and in many cases, take incredibly difficult decisions. Many of us may have found ourselves furloughed or out of work completely, or if lucky enough to still have a job, drastically scrambling to upskill on technology platforms and the many other sharp turns that have been thrust upon us.

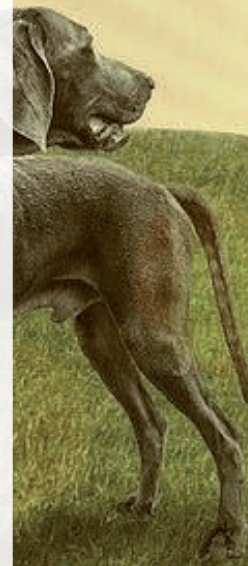
## **Personal**

It's been a whirlwind of emotions and no man/woman is an island. We have battled with isolation, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and some have suffered devastating bereavement. Others are struggling with a house full of children and trying to balance work, educating the kids, and all the while keep the madness at bay. No doubt others are trying to cope with even more dire situations, stuck indoors, with no social avenues to turn to for help.

## **2020 is a worldly type of education.**

An education which smashes through classroom doors and broadens our perspectives, on everything. I think Albert Einstein got it right with the following: "Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."

In this day and age, it's hard to know what exactly we need to learn, and it can be overwhelming to know where to start. There has been a barrage of information and while we tried to soak everything up like diligent sponges back in March, April, May... I know we are all most likely a bit weary now. So, it's time for a more focused approach!



**1. Stop for a minute.** Don't panic.

Take the time to really think about where you are, but also very importantly, where you 'were' and if you even liked it. There is no point yearning for the past if actually it didn't suit you in the first place, so take time to evaluate this. Maybe this is your golden opportunity.

**2. Now think about where you would like to go.**

What do you need to do or learn to get there? Even if it's to stay in the same job, I'm sure you know by now that will mean upskilling. If so, embrace that. Take it in bite sized chunks and go from there. Sign up to that online course. Commit to an hour a day. You can do it, but it won't happen overnight, so be patient with yourself, and with others. We are all in the same boat after all.

**3. If you don't know where you want to go, that's OK too.**

Sometimes we don't immediately have the answers, and that's fine too. But as Benjamin Franklin said, "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

So, pick something. Allow your mind to indulge in a topic that interests it. Much like physical exercise, the hardest part is getting off the couch... but aren't you always glad when you do? The mind is a muscle which needs stretching... allow it an inch, and it will bring you a mile, probably to somewhere you never imagined or dreamed possible.

In 2020, we are both overwhelmed from the education we didn't expect, and yet hungry for the education we need. For associations, trying to look after our members has been fundamental during this time. Upping our educational content has been a key instrument in staying connected and also helping members to know where they stand, and how to move forward.

What is important now is quality. Information overload and 'Zoom fatigue' are real. So, keep the content useful and varied. Keep it pro-active and informative, and finally, *Keep It Up!* All your readers are in need of something, and each piece of copy has the potential to enlighten or inspire one of your members.

We are currently fighting a deadly virus, economies in turmoil, and a plethora of personal challenges. Our minds hold the answers. Education will unlock the door.

To end with one more quotation by **Nelson Mandela**: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

## MEETINGS | MILLENNIALS

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*Article provided by the Meetings + Millennials after invitation to the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE).*

*Meetings + Millennials is a network for future young professionals in the Meetings & Events Industry. SITE is the only Business Events association dedicated exclusively to the global incentive travel industry.*

# While You are **Providing Education**, Be Sure to **Leverage It**

*“Our mission is to provide the highest quality continuing education in our profession”*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mark Levin, CAE, CSP** has more than 25 years of experience as an association executive and is also an internationally-known speaker and consultant to the nonprofit and association community. He currently serves as executive vice president of the Chain Link Fence Manufacturers Institute, an international trade association, and as president of B.A.I., Inc., his speaking and consulting firm. He is also the current president of the National Speakers Association National Capital Area Chapter.

No, it probably is not your mission. Even those organisations that are chartered as educational associations need to really think about the role of education when presenting your value message to members, supporters, business partners, and other stakeholders. Yes, it is the cornerstone of your organisation. Yes, it is your primary source of revenue. Yes, your members need continuing education to maintain certifications, job qualifications, and licenses.

But no, providing education isn't your mission. Your mission is to make your members successful - speaking as a membership specialist, I personally think it really is to make your members more successful than those in your industry or profession that are not members!

Yes, your mission is your members' ongoing success - be it career advancement, business success, or other outcomes. Your educational offerings are one of the ways you help them succeed.

Using business or professional success as a value statement, you can leverage the educational aspects of your organisation in several ways:

- **To potential members.** Your educational programmes are a major reason to join, because they are a pathway to success.
- **To current members.** They are a major reason to renew their

membership, assuming you are providing needed and desired education at the highest levels, through multiple delivery vehicles, at reasonable cost.

- **To the industry or profession you represent.** Your educational offerings are part of your brand as an industry/profession leader, and therefore credible partner on such things as standards setting, credentialing, product development, research, etc.
- **To potential business partners.** They (sponsors, exhibitors, funding agencies, etc.) provide a high profile, high quality opportunity to co-brand with your organisation, gain exposure to your members, and enhance credibility through support of education.

Claiming to offer “the highest quality education” is great - others, of course, may be saying the same thing. But ‘offering’ education is an activity, it’s something you (the organization) do. Helping your members in their career or business success is about ‘them’. It’s always about the members.

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# Creating **Member-Focused** Structures

Open, accessible boards and secretariats that are  
there to serve (and not to rule)

Written by **Elena Alexandrová**, head of congress department at **AIM Group International** in Czechia, and **Annalisa Ponchia Baccara**, CMP, CMM, director of innovation & customer experience & director of international congress development at AIM Group International.



The association world is changing at a relentless pace. Everyone must cope with an unprecedented global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. Every association should now develop new processes to be successful. Traditional large-scale meetings, congresses and conferences are not appropriate during these times and the essential purpose of the association's existence – exchange of latest scientific and professional findings – needs to find new virtual platforms.

So how do you keep your members engaged in this new virtual world? And how to make them feel they are still an important part of the society? The wise association boards follow the ancient mantra, *regnare est servire* (to serve is to reign). Let us focus on three fundamental pillars that will help modern societies achieve this goal.

### 1. Balance between traditional and modern values

Establishing a well-functioning governance mechanism is essential to an association's success and longevity. Traditionally, boards were composed solely by highly respected honourable experts, representing the extensive knowledge and vital experience in their respective field. This may lead to paralysed governance. How can this be avoided without losing extremely valuable institutional memory?

- Try to limit the service length of board members and consider designating a portion of the board seats to be vacated each year.
- Establish maximum terms of service. Do not underestimate the importance of a comprehensive handover between the old and new board, and the unique role of the past-president.
- Do not forget to invite the new generation onto the board – how about a special role of social media ambassador, open to young members only?
- Some associations have even founded a second, parallel board consisting of young members to support the organisation with fresh ideas, propose feasible innovations and last, but not least, to grow into new leadership roles.

### 2. Diversity

The word diversity has different meanings, for large international associations and for smaller, national societies.

The former group, engaging people from diverse regions/countries/continents and diverse cultures, benefits from a range of work styles, thoughts, and perspectives that can be used to improve efficiency and encourage creativity. At the

same time, different working conditions and distinct professional policies in various countries, raises different needs for association members. By reflecting the geographical diversity in the board, you can naturally accommodate the wide range of requests.

The second group - national associations - focuses rather more on the importance of sector diversity. By splitting the general scientific and professional community in several specialised working groups you can reach more focused and effective teams that will enjoy their intimate connections.

### 3. Communication

The association members would not be aware of how much the board and the secretariat care about them, if they do not communicate well. What are the best channels? Each and every tool is perfect, when used as a two-way communication stream. Regular communication is critical to keep members abreast of developments, to offer them opportunities to give feedback and let you know what services they need and how you can best support them.

Once you manage to facilitate direct communication between individual members, you are on the right path to upgrade your association to a truly great community - a professional family.

*This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. IAPCO represents today 137 companies composed of over 9,900 professional congress organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. The Head Office of AIM Group International is based in Rome, Italy, heading up 13 offices in 10 countries. AIM is one of the world leaders in the organisation of events and conferences whose philosophy is summed up in: dynamism, reliability, flexibility.*

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# Learning from Nature

“Nature is not to be conquered or opposed, but she is to be regarded as a model of applied principles: Nature always does things in the most efficient and economic way. We need to learn how nature makes design decisions.” by R. Buckminster Fuller



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guy Bigwood is the managing director of Global Destination Sustainability Movement, a transformation platform that engages, inspires and enables destinations to become more regenerative, flourishing and resilient places to visit, meet and live in.

After 3.6 billion years of research and development, nature is the most advanced living, evolving laboratory of knowledge and circular solutions that regenerate and function in ultimate balance. Nothing is wasted. The human characteristics of greed, poverty and pollution are entirely absent in nature. All elements work together to exist, sharing water, air and open spaces. If they do this successfully, species thrive. If they don't, they perish. As a result, healthy species consistently **learn, innovate, adapt and regenerate**. There is an equilibrium between efficiency and resilience, collaboration and competition, diversity and coherence. Each aspect creates value for the broader ecosystem and enables it to flourish as a whole. By building upon this understanding of nature, we have a proposal. For the greater success of our future, we need to imagine and comprehend the events industry as a living ecosystem. By understanding and learning from the structure, systems and processes of our living system, we can

redesign it to recover and thrive after the pandemic.

For the last 15 years, the events industry has been on a slow path towards making events more sustainable. Our focus on sustainability has been about surviving instead of thriving but this has not, nor will it, deliver the change we need to see in the industry. Instead, to really create a thriving future, we need to shift the paradigm of business and public thinking, beliefs and values and embrace what regenerative models can offer to all of us. Sustainability implies a self-sustaining state and is often defined by humanity's ability to meet its own needs without compromising the needs of future generations. Therefore, the focus is on doing less harm. For example, a degraded landscape may be sustained in its current state and be used to produce food for humans, but won't be improved and brought back to its former biologically **diverse state**.

The term 'regeneration' refers to designing systems and practices that take a holistic systems approach to solving environmental, social and economic problems. The aim is to restore and rejuvenate them rather than merely sustain conditions. As **Bill Reed** states, “regenerative development asks us to imagine cities, towns and villages that

possess greater natural beauty, ecological health and productive capacity than even the world's most pristine forests”.

It is this vision that we need to bring into reality. By **asking nature** and implementing the lessons we learn through careful observation and biomimicry, the events industry can co-create a thriving and regenerative future. To accompany this vision, we need to start sharing practical stories of how we can implement the lessons learnt from nature.

The bulk of this article is taken from **The Regenerative Revolution - A new paradigm for event management**, created by **IMEX** and the **GDS-Movement** and powered by **Marriott International**. Read the full report for free, to delve deeper into the case studies and framework that outline how we can work together to bring this vision into reality.



[GDS.EARTH](https://GDS.EARTH)

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# New Blood for Events at the AIME Team

AIME is excited to welcome new event director, **Silke Calder**, to lead the team into 2021 and beyond. Calder is a highly motivated sales and event specialist with over 20 years of experience in various fields, like events and trade fairs for both creative and agency sectors. Having previously worked as the head of sales at Messe Frankfurt Venue GmbH, as well as other companies across Germany, Australia and the UAE, Calder brings a unique set of skills and an international mindset to the AIME team.



**SILKE CALDER**

Event Director at AIME

## Starting a new role in the middle of a pandemic, what has been the most challenging part of you?

Moving from Frankfurt to Melbourne, with two little kids during a pandemic has certainly been the most challenging part so far. It was certainly a surreal experience boarding the plane in protective gear and completing a 14-day quarantine in Melbourne.

Once settling back into Melbourne life, it was a different than normal meeting the AIME team. In the beginning I had to get to know each of them via video calls, but as Melbourne has progressed out of lockdown I have finally been able to meet everyone in person! It makes me proud to see just how motivated they all are in delivering this outstanding AIME hybrid experience.

## Applications for the 2021 Hosted

## Buyer programme are now open, what can applicants expect from the program next year?

While we would love to host everyone in Melbourne next March, with travel restrictions in place it is likely that our international buyers will attend virtually. Our 2021 International Hosted Buyer programme will ensure that everybody gets the most out of our exciting new virtual format, from a curated appointment diary with our new meeting matching algorithm, to exclusive online networking, to on demand and live streamed Knowledge programme content. We are also giving international hosted buyers the gift of time – a two-week period in which to conduct all meetings in time zones that best suit the buyer and exhibitor.

## You have recently launched AIME Online, how do you see attendees interacting with the new platform?

With AIME Online we are confident that the advanced technology will deliver a seamless user experience both domestically and internationally.

AIME is going to be the industry's first successful hybrid event. We needed a tech platform that could seamlessly host the virtual experience for delegates unable to visit Melbourne due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. We have worked closely with our Technology Partner, Delegate Connect to produce a platform that is instinctive and easy to use for all delegates attending AIME from within the Asia

Pacific and across the globe.

With its innovative meetings algorithm, we will be able to match connections between quality buyers and exhibitors from all over the globe. Meetings will match through a series of criteria – including business objectives, industry requirements, budgets and region, which will evaluate and summarise an overall percentage rating of each matched meeting.

AIME Online is the central hub for all things AIME and accessible from anywhere in the world!

## AIME 2021 comes at a crucial time for the events industry – why is it more important than ever for it to go ahead?

AIME 2020 was the last industry event to happen before the pandemic spread globally, and AIME 2021 is now going to be the first hybrid event for the industry to meet again.

AIME has always kicked off the business events calendar, and now we are planning the event to also supercharge business in 2021 and beyond. It's a huge responsibility but one we are honoured to take on.



# Education – a **Central Pillar** of a **Bright Future**

Education can be found in the mission statement and core activities of every association, regardless of its field of operation. But what happens when knowledge exchange is not only a mission, but a sole purpose for the organisation's existence, and how such a body thrives in a world wrapped in a pandemic?

**V**irtual Educa was established in 2001 under the auspices of the **Organization of the American States (OAS)**, with the goal of boosting innovation in education to favour social transformation and sustainable development, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. The critical factor for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not education but knowledge, know-how, and the acquisition of soft skills and competencies necessary to adapt in a rapidly transforming society. Education and training aimed at development needs to be relevant, productive, solve problems, generate value, and a sustainable meaningful way of life for all.

Virtual Educa is responding to this need in the societies to foster human development with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to face, manage, solve and innovate current and future world challenges,

not yet envisioned. Based on the **Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda**, Virtual Educa aims and goals are to bridge the gap between a classic concept of education and the life-long learning process required by technology-based 21<sup>st</sup> century global societies.

With the global pandemic speeding up contemporary education with rapid use of technology and new demands posed on the whole system, from education providers to students, Virtual Educa created a special virtual event right before the new school year began. With minimal preparation time, a three-day event was put together with over 200 hours of content, translated into three languages with select sessions including sign language interpretation. The event attracted over 84 thousand registrants from over 50 countries around the globe.

Virtual Educa is a perfect example of an association living its mission and successfully adapting to the difficulties that the pandemic has posed. While the organisation had not planned for this event or had a previous experience to create such an engagement online, it had a strong board that saw the opportunity in the situation. Virtual Educa has proven that being flexible and solving challenges not yet envisioned, can work with the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt.



## ABOUT KENES GROUP

For over fifty years, Kenes Group has been creating success stories with associations around the world. We're experts in helping associations reach their true potential by strategically building awareness, loyalty and satisfaction among current and potential members, as well as stakeholders. We harness the power of community, strengthening your association's brand through unforgettable experiences - fostering change, inspiring members, educating, and improving your association's business performance.

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# The Pillar of Pedagogy

How can associations harness education to enrich member experience?

**World PCO Alliance** answers.

Education has always been a critical element of an association's perceived value to its members, as well as the central objective of congresses and other events. But factors including technology, increased competition and a revised definition of what constitutes education, are shaping the content that associations provide their members as well as the way in which such content is delivered.

Some partners of the World PCO Alliance share their thoughts on the direction in which education is headed and how associations can ensure they are keeping up with members'— and the industry's — expectations.

Because expectations have, indeed, drastically changed over the last decade.

Where a major event like a congress used to suffice as an association's central learning hub, members now want and expect a continuous flow of content and learning opportunities. **Christophe Painvin** of France-based **Colloquium** goes so far as to say that an association's supply of content must be exhaustive. "Associations can no longer afford to be the referent of educational thought," he says. "By offering maximum content that covers all subjects, an association offers its members the opportunity to enrich their knowledge."

**Jean-Paul de Lavison** from Canada's **JPdL** is noticing the shift from a continuing education unit focus to a broader definition of education that includes a greater variety of professional development and certification options for the professional learner. He sees this shift as a strategic move that benefits both members and associations. "Associations need to recognise that professional development represents a valuable revenue stream that also favours membership engagement," says de Lavison.

So, if enriching education is a priority, what are some of the approaches that successful associations are taking to bring their pedagogy to the next level?

- **Framing education in a more value-driven context.** Whatever content associations are providing their members, they are also recognising the importance of looking beyond the content and acknowledging the values that underlie education. As **Thania Carrera** of Mexico's **T&C Group** states, "associations have an ethical responsibility to educate in a critical spirit, to celebrate the advancement of equal opportunities, equity and inclusion."
- **Factoring in a better understanding of how the adult brain processes information** and

thus enhancing overall education quality and incorporating technologies into the educational sphere. "It's probably the greatest challenge associations face," says **Gregg Talley** of US-based **Talley Management Group, Inc.** "But it is a critical step that associations must take."

- **Diversifying content** to include both formal and informal learning experiences. Conferences are still on the list, of course, but associations are also including mentoring, webinars, blended learning and online courses.
- **Making programmes more affordable and accessible** than traditional post-secondary options and thereby, attracting younger professionals who will also ensure the continuity of the association. De Lavison points out that this move also has a real impact on society at large, as "associations help bridge the gap between post-secondary education and employment."
- **Investing in educational technology and eLearning:** more associations are shifting to online delivery and interactive content.

While associations are making the move





to enhance their educational offerings, Carrera points out that many associations mistake quantity for quality. “The objective should not be learning for the sake of learning,” she says. “Associations need to provide educational opportunities that equip members with the aptitudes and capacities necessary to adapt to the changing society. This demands a preparation that cannot revolve around the accumulation of knowledge, but rather the acquisition of competences to be able to face new situations, synthesise information and apply it to different fields of knowledge.”

Before deciding on an educational strategy, associations must assess their members’ needs. The Alliance partners have different suggestions on how to do this, but they all agree that communication is key. As Painvin points out, communication is two way: “Communication from the association to its members, yes, but also from members to the association. By giving the floor to its members, an association will position itself to best cater to those members. Today it’s all about associations serving their members, not the other way around.”

Talley urges associations to “stop assuming you know what your members need” and “replace that assumption with a full learner needs assessment that allows your members to tell you what they want to learn.”

In addition to member outreach, de Lavison encourages going broader. “Work with post-secondary institutions and industry to identify the knowledge

gap and respond with affordable, industry-specific options,” he says, suggesting associations to be flexible with their pricing and pre-requisites that will attract new learners and, thereby, increase membership.

When it comes to delivering educational content, associations are spoiled with options, thanks to technology. This has driven the creation of numerous tools, including learning management systems, eCommerce, digital platforms, webinars, on-demand systems and digital badges that members can integrate on social media websites such as LinkedIn and on resumes. Despite the bells and whistles available, a major event like a congress is still recognised as a valuable source of knowledge-building and Painvin is hopeful that its value will continue to be appreciated, since “digitalisation allows associations to widen the accessibility of such events.”

When selecting which tools to deliver educational content, associations should align the approach with the type of content they are providing. Talley adds: “Hands-on workshops are best for skill-training, panel sessions for discussions on the state of the art

and a debate format to explore hot topics. Simply put, the less talking heads delivering lectures, the better.”

All in all, while trends are ever evolving, one fact will never waver: education is one of the most prized assets an association can offer its members. With the tools available today, it’s never been easier to optimise this asset, contribute to the professional development of association members and reinforce the relevance of the association itself as well as the larger society it serves.



World PCO Alliance



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# Membership Engagement: Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Members are the lifeblood of an association. When they're fully engaged, our associations thrive – creating progress, meaning and impact for all involved. Alas, it can be difficult to build or sustain membership engagement – and when it dips, members leave, morale sinks, finances drop and the association is put into question.

We are investigating the associations' engagement strategies – what is your association doing to ensure members grasp your **purpose** and are able to **participate** in your causes? Do you have a **platform** in place that makes collaboration easy? Are your members making **progress** together? How do you **promote** their contribution?

**Patricia Brunner** speaks with **Jeffery London** about telling stories that recognise member's positive experiences. As the managing director of the **International Au Pair Association (IAPA)**, Brunner brings more than 170 organisations and their members into partnership. With a mission of cultural exchange and service, IAPA has a personal touch that engages young people and families, as well as institutions.

## **PURPOSE.** How do members make sense of your *raison d'être*?

**Patricia Brunner:** Our work is inspired by the mission to be the trusted and caring voice for the global Au Pair community. For families and young people, we support them in having an experience that shapes their life. An Au Pair experience often transforms people's views of the world, and themselves – opening their eyes to what is possible, and giving them the confidence to take on new challenges later in life. Our members see us as an advocate, a partner, a matchmaker and a sign of quality.

## **PARTICIPATION.** How do your members get involved?

**PB:** The experiences of Au Pairs and the families they care for are wonderful, intimate and private; we help to put these stories into the public. Many individuals had to change their plans due

to COVID-19, which led us to do our **#NeverGiveUpOnYourDreams** participatory video starring our member agencies around the world. Creating media like this, through people's goodwill and volunteerism, embodies the heartfelt message of our membership. This has been the year of webinars and online panels, including our Annual General Meeting which had its widest participation ever thanks to the remote format. The agencies we serve vary in size and needs. While we are always their partners in establishing protocols, each relationship is unique: some countries like the USA have systems in place and we are more of a seal of approval, while for China, Au Pairs are a new phenomena and there was a lot to establish to ensure safe and satisfying experiences. Whereas Britain has Brexit issues and each country has their corona/travel regulations.

## **PLATFORM.** How do your members connect and collaborate?

**PB:** The **International Au Pair Day** has been a great connector for our community. We established the idea and an independent website last year, and now our partners use their creativity to show their talents. We provide a media kit, which helps people stay aligned, but when one group makes cupcakes with “Au Pair of the Year” on it, of course that kind of photo gets likes and shares, that we could have never imagined. For the **Au Pair of the Year** and the agency that places it, the IAPA certificate, prize and publicity is a huge boost. Believe me, the jury has trouble deciding amongst the candidates, who are nominated through personal letters from the host families. These testimonials are our best awareness makers, and better than any marketing campaign could do.

### **PROGRESS.** How do your members move things forward?

**PB:** Naturally, we inform and educate Au Pairs but we also give guidelines and orientation to host families, governmental bodies and other stakeholders. We lobby the Au Pair idea worldwide and support national associations in their work to grow and improve this cultural exchange programme. An example of our advocacy is in our co-signed letters to official bodies. We have templates to follow that highlight our core messages, and adjust it to the local conditions; being signed by both a local insider and global expert gives the message more weight. We also act as a multiplier for individuals and small agencies, reposting their social posts, and giving them a voice in our events.

### **PROMOTE.** How do you recognise member’s talents?

**PB:** As the only global organisation designated to support businesses and people involved in the Au Pair industry, we are the official voice for Au Pairs. However, the voice that people most like to hear is that of the Au Pair. The ‘IAPA Au Pair of the Year Awardees’ are our ambassadors; they do us all a great service by promoting the quality of au

pair programmes all over the world. By showcasing heartwarming stories of all Au Pairs, through photos, videos and stories, we inspire more families to consider bringing in an Au Pair, and doing so with the qualities and processes IAPA promotes. Most of us had extraordinary Au Pair experiences ourselves, so we know the characters, challenges and joys involved. All the elements of a great story!

### **POSTSCRIPT.** Any other advice for creating engagement?

**PB:** Make it personal. We are lucky to have a special story to tell, but no matter your sector, look for the people’s story. If you are trying to influence others, you need real people to tell the authentic story. Our members have a burning desire for what they do. These are the people you need to find, and let them share their ideals and rich experiences.

*“Let your members tell the story. Their authenticity will go farther than any marketing campaign.”*

*Patricia Brunner  
Managing Director of IAPA*

#### **ABOUT AUTHOR**

*Jeffer London is on the board to the **International Association of Facilitators (IAF)** and hosts the **Facilitation Impact Awards**.*

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*Check out [IAF-world.org](http://IAF-world.org) or talk to Jeffer directly about facilitating leadership teams and association-wide engagement initiatives – see [jeffer-london.com](http://jeffer-london.com) and [@jefferlondon](https://twitter.com/jefferlondon).*



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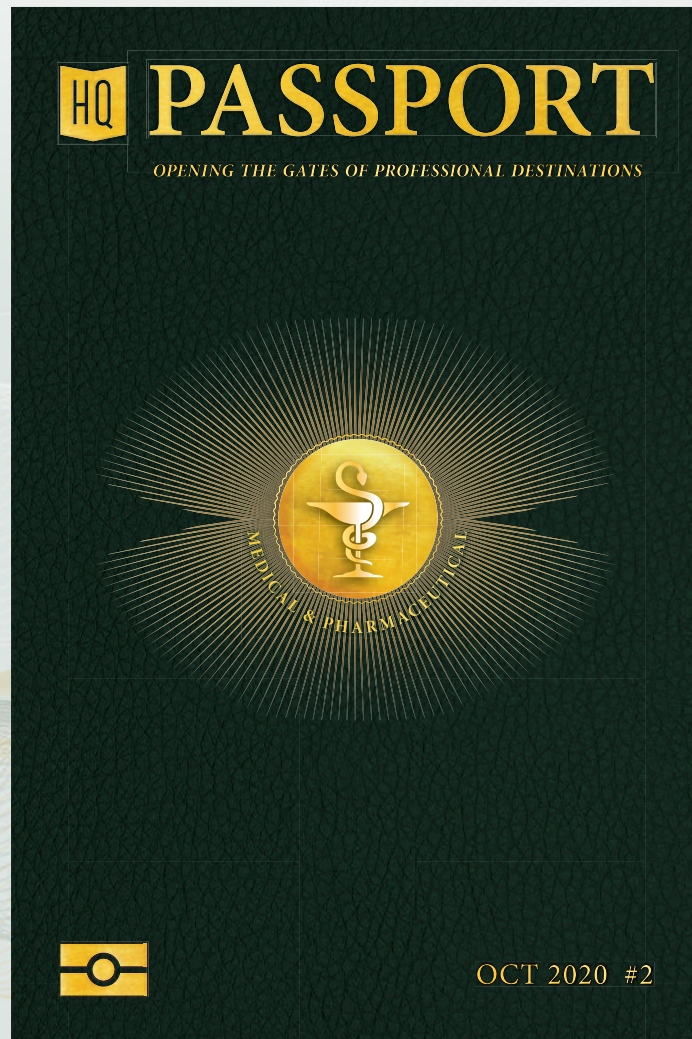


**IAPA**  
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