

Headquarters

JULY 2021 #100 BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

100th
SUMMER EDITION



Association Profile
Pacific Asia Travel Association

Marco D'Eramo
The World in a Selfie

HBAA
The Quest for an Identity

ACC Liverpool
The British Events Incubator

GSD Movement
Education to Transform Our Sector

AIPC
2021 Member Survey Results



Thailand
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What is **100**? The Time it Takes to **Build Bridges**

AUTHOR: MARCEL A.M. VISSERS, EDITOR IN CHIEF

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One hundred is a number with many meanings. For example, turning 100 is something many people dream of, at least if it is accompanied by reasonable health. But one hundred can also mean that something is completed, done, over. For *Headquarters Magazine*, it means that the July 2021 issue is the 100th issue, but not the last, because we reached the hundred with a fighting spirit. That has kept us fit in all this time to travel around the world and pick up building blocks. Once upon a time we started with issue number 1, the beginning, the launch of a magazine specifically for international associations based in Brussels.

bridge that was built between the providers and users of this industry. It is still written under the magazine motto, “building bridges in the meetings industry”. An even longer bridge was built around 2015 when Headquarters became European and then fully developed into an International platform of information for the world industry. Continents were brought together, first Asia, later South America (but not the US, which still remain a separate and almost unapproachable market).

What did that sound like again? “In 2002, this industry bellwether evolved into *Headquarters Magazine* with six editions annually and has continued to serve as an essential resource for association executives. It received a redesign in April 2016, in September 2018 and in February 2021 to meet the ever-changing trends of the meetings industry.” It wasn’t just the visual that was updated each time but also the content. *Headquarters magazine* can safely be seen as the beginning of professional journalism for the association conference world. The meetings industry as a whole was not used to reading critical reflections from association managers at the time. These opinions formed the first bricks of a

“How long can a magazine exist?”, I sometimes ask myself. There is only one answer: as long as readers find the magazine worth reading. So, on to the next round of 100 whose success will depend on our passion and rejuvenating spirit.



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Blowing Candles in the Dark

There is a sense of nostalgia around us permeated by a fussy silence as we write these first lines. We have known since last year that our hundredth edition would be celebrated behind closed doors and with little chance of freedom among our friends; that does not make this pill any easier to swallow. We are still in lockdown, albeit partially for the moment, and resilience is the watchword. We cannot put off our lives, our key dates, and the pressing need to inform our readers. So, here we are again!

Certainly, these are not the desired circumstances to reach such a special milestone for a magazine that has followed the events industry and the association community for nearly 20 years. Many stories were told by our reporters, several analyses and studies were published by our partners, and even several convention cities started their adventures on our pages. But these are conditions that everyone without exception must face and that we must carry forward to the long-awaited general resumption of activity.

Since 1992, our company has been guided by the belief that the meetings industry deserves a content-driven and thought-provoking media to inspire and stimulate our minds to create better associations and meetings; a medium to serve as a platform for all voices across the spectrum of our diverse global MICE industry. We remain committed and – as these last eight editions

of *HQ Magazine*, since February 2020, prove – vigilant and quick to react to the different stimuli, trends and needs of an entire sector.

In this #100 issue, we premiere the 2021 **AIPC Member Survey Results** on growing trends in convention centres, and unveil eight facts associations need to understand for successful future meetings. We spoke with **Liz Ortiguera**, the new **CEO of the Pacific Asia Travel Association**, and tried to figure out why event technology providers skyrocketed in the last year. We showcase the latest projects from all our partners, from the **GDS Movement**, through the **European Cities Marketing** to the **International Association of Professional Congress Organisers**. We covered destinations such as **Thailand**, **Porto** and **Houston**, and learned how events are slowly returning to venues like the **Adelaide Convention Centre** or **ACC Liverpool**.

Also, don't forget to read the exclusive interview with journalist and social scientist **Marco d'Eramo**, author of *World in a Selfie: An Inquiry into the Tourist Age*, about the future of tourism in the digital age. An edition packed with great content and intended to be a summary of all chapters and segments of the MICE industry. People used to say that the "best things in life come to those who wait". Well, if that's true, we'll be here to help you with whatever comes, stays and goes. Stay tuned!



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“We Are All **Tourists Sneering** at **Other Tourists**”

AUTHOR: *TRISTAN HALLER*, HQ EDITOR

At *HQ Magazine*, we like to talk about the MICE Industry as something disjointed from the larger tourism industry. But we're also open to different points of view and we know that we need more critical thinking about the impact of travelling in general. So, for the 100th edition, we decided to interview a renowned Italian intellectual who wrote a book about what he calls “the Age of Tourism”.

Marco d'Eramo is a journalist as well as a social theorist who collaborated with journals like *El Pais*, *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, *New Left Review* and *Der Tagesspiegel*, and published many essays – the latest being *The World in a Selfie. An Inquiry into the Tourist Age* (Verso, 2021).



How did you get to write a book about tourism?

Tourism belongs to that category of social phenomena, like sport or advertising, which are ubiquitous, familiar, but always undigested, unelaborated: they evade questions, neutralise reflection. As in the case of sport and advertising, the bibliography on tourism is now endless, but conceptual elaboration is fragmentary: texts abound, but new ideas are small nuggets in a huge mass of dirt. And truly original contributions can be counted on the fingers of one's hands.

At the end of the day, there are only two types of texts on tourism: texts by tourism professionals, which are internal to the sector, promotional, and never question its categories; and external texts, which snub it. Because tourism is difficult to take seriously, since people confuse tourism with tourists... and tourists are always a bit funny, they are always, literally, out of place. We always look down on them and blame them for the harm tourism brings; it's as if we blamed the workers for the pollution caused by factories. But we are all tourists sneering at other tourists.

Why do you believe we live in the “Age of Tourism”?

The creation of tourism required two revolutions to take place. A technological one, with the revolution in transport and communications that made travel possible, cheap and quick. And a social revolution, which created the travellers themselves. This was the product of hard-fought, interminable struggles to win paid time off. For human beings to become tourists, it isn't enough for them to have free time alone – after all, the unemployed have plenty of that. Never before in human history did a significant share of the population enjoy income in periods of not-working. Today almost all tourists are on paid holidays or on a pension.

And then you have to think that tourism has an immaterial goal: what you want is to see the Parthenon at sunset or the Machu Picchu at dawn, but to get this immaterial goal, tourism needs a very heavy, very material, huge infrastructure. In a sense, tourism is an industry that triggers all other industries. The pandemic demonstrated just what a crucial role tourism plays. That's not only true of countries with a particular niche for tourism like Italy, Spain and Austria, where this industry contributes around a 6th of GDP and employment numbers. Tourism is decisive

for the global economy as a whole. Without tourism, hotels and restaurants shut down, along with all the economic activities connected to hospitality. The aircraft industry disappears, the auto trade slumps, cruise-ship building sinks, and construction receives a heavy blow, too. When these trades collapse, they bring down steelworks, cement production and electronics with them. Four years ago, when I wrote in my book *The World in a Selfie* that tourism is this century's most important industry, I was taken for a blowhard who loves, well, making silly claims. But if this industry is usually belittled, COVID-19 has shown just how essential it really is.

Then there is also a subjective factor: the technological revolution and the social revolution transformed not only our lives, but also our intellectual categories. They made the possibility of travel the key element of our idea of freedom. With the pandemic, we felt how much we were missing not being able to get a change of scenery and go anywhere else. The will to travel is a demand for freedom.

In the West, we hadn't realised this before COVID-19. We ought to have known as much, given that in East Germany the demand for tourist visas was the spark that triggered the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. We hadn't realised that the need to move and experience different horizons was so intensely political. Only the repeated, prolonged lockdown, with the second and third waves of the pandemic, made us feel the impossibility of travelling on our own skin, a prison around us. For the first time, we were in the same shoes as the East Germans. To stop citizens from being tourists is to deny them a key element of their idea of freedom. So, you see, we live in the age of tourism because tourism shapes both our objectivity – economic living conditions – and our subjectivity – our idea of freedom.

In your book, you talk about the concept of “tourist city” and how a certain kind of tourism subtly kills cities, to paraphrase you. Can you explain?

To make a long story short, all our cities have transformed the centre of the town in a tourism district, which is a specialised form of entertainment district. That's why at the end of the day, when tourists leave these districts become dead towns. We saw it during the pandemic – without tourists our city centres were deserted, dead, ghostly.

A city becomes a tourist city when it has lost the other industries and economic activities that made it live. Venice discovered tourism already at the end of the 16th century, when it was declining as a world commercial power. It was then that the Venetians focused on Carnival, so much so that after a century the Venetian Carnival no longer lasted a month – like all carnivals in the world – but six months of the year. So, in the 18th century, Venice promised young noblemen from all over Europe a holiday full of culture, good food, and lots of sex, just like the carnival in Rio today. Today, port cities are all recycling themselves by turning their dismissed ports into tourist waterfronts. When they have lost their other activities, cities turn into a museum of themselves.

How is it possible to preserve a real diversity as well as an “authentic authenticity” in your opinion?

You know, authenticity is a nostalgic concept – you never ask if your home cooking is “authentic”. The problem of “authenticity” arises only when the “authentic” is in danger, when it is on the way of disappearing. That's the dilemma of tourism: the tourist is desperately searching for the authentic, but he knows very well that if he reaches it, it is because the authentic has already turned into the inauthentic – the mere presence of the tourist makes it so. That is why every tourist's dream is to be in a place without tourists. In short, the tourist wants to be in a place without himself.

Some cities go so far as branding themselves as “convention cities”, like Las Vegas. Do you think there's a difference between this business travel and leisure tourism?

Tourism is a multitasking activity. No one goes to a place for only one reason, or then they are not a tourist. For example, the holidaymaker who goes to Greece wants to relax by the sea, but also to do some culture and visit some ancient ruins. Business tourism respects the logic of multitasking because it wants to combine professional activity (scientific meetings, managerial conventions) with recreational activities in the true sense of the word such as in Las Vegas, or just escaping the routine and have a little fun. On the other hand, business tourism is more segregated than other types of tourism because wherever you go, you always meet the same people, your colleagues. A universe of colleagues. The drama of conventions is that the only human type present is the colleague, which makes them a little melancholic despite all the efforts. When you go to a restaurant, you immediately recognise the table of convention goers.

“ *The problem of “authenticity” arises only when the “authentic” is in danger, when it is on the way of disappearing.* ”



Reimagining How to Meet: The Latest Trends and Perspectives on Business Events

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, MAGAZINE MANAGER OF HQ

There are few things more tempting in life than predicting the future. What will I do next year? Where will I be working? Will my work withstand this snowball? It is part of human nature and the very reason why we set goals and champion our projects. In recent months, MICE associations, DMOs, CVBs and PCOs have been tireless in producing and launching research studies, white papers, statistical reports and strategic partnerships. In multiple destinations and for multiple planners and organisers, enhancing the event experience and exploring longer term outcomes that come from it, will be the crucial matter for reactivating a new visitor economy. But this new formula isn't just about adopting sustainable methods and recalibrating a multi-hub hybrid supply while government support is still in place; it's about expanding communities that have never been here with us, broadening the event's focus of interest and re-emerging its legacy related mission. What we leave behind!

The future of meetings

Yes, the whole framework surrounding the event industry is changing, but while some have taken their time to assimilate a compliant response, others have paved the way by empowering their teams and inviting a smooth transition in advance. The future of our conferences and conventions will depend upon leaders demonstrating value to their communities, rather than the mere consumption of our supply chains. A recent update of the innovation network **"Future Meeting Space"** proclaims that while business KPIs will remain the basis to compare events in the future, success measurements will be supplemented by new segments that take into account both soft and hard factors. These indicators should distinguish between the points of view of organisers and participants, as, according to the study, "only events that serve both can be considered sustainably successful". The

success factors of this networking must be seen in relation to the time spent and evaluated on the basis of experiences, that is, how much can be learned in relation to the time invested, in the interaction with other participants and in the event's own reputation. Quality over quantity.

White papers and surveys

A few weeks ago, the **Singapore Tourism Board**, **PCMA** and **UFI** partnered to launch a white paper entitled **"Reimagining Business Events - Through COVID-19 and Beyond"**, in what was the first collaboration between a destination and the main associations representing the exhibitions, conventions and meetings industry. Revenues have started to pick up in the exhibitions sector, which is expected to grow globally by 106% this year compared to 2020. Beyond digitalisation, the white paper highlights three innovation pillars to successfully reimagine the industry: business models, delegate experience, and talent and capabilities. The case studies shown in the survey also underscore the need for business event professionals to cultivate skills in high-demand areas including broadcasting, content production and cyber security.

The **Hybrid City Alliance**, a global network of destination partners, has also released a white paper exploring the design, sustainability and risks of hybrid and multi-hub hybrid events. The document aims to seek a definition of hybrid events and identify where they fit into the broadest and most vernacular offerings in the industry, providing ideas, guidance and considering the sustainability of this same multi-hub environment.

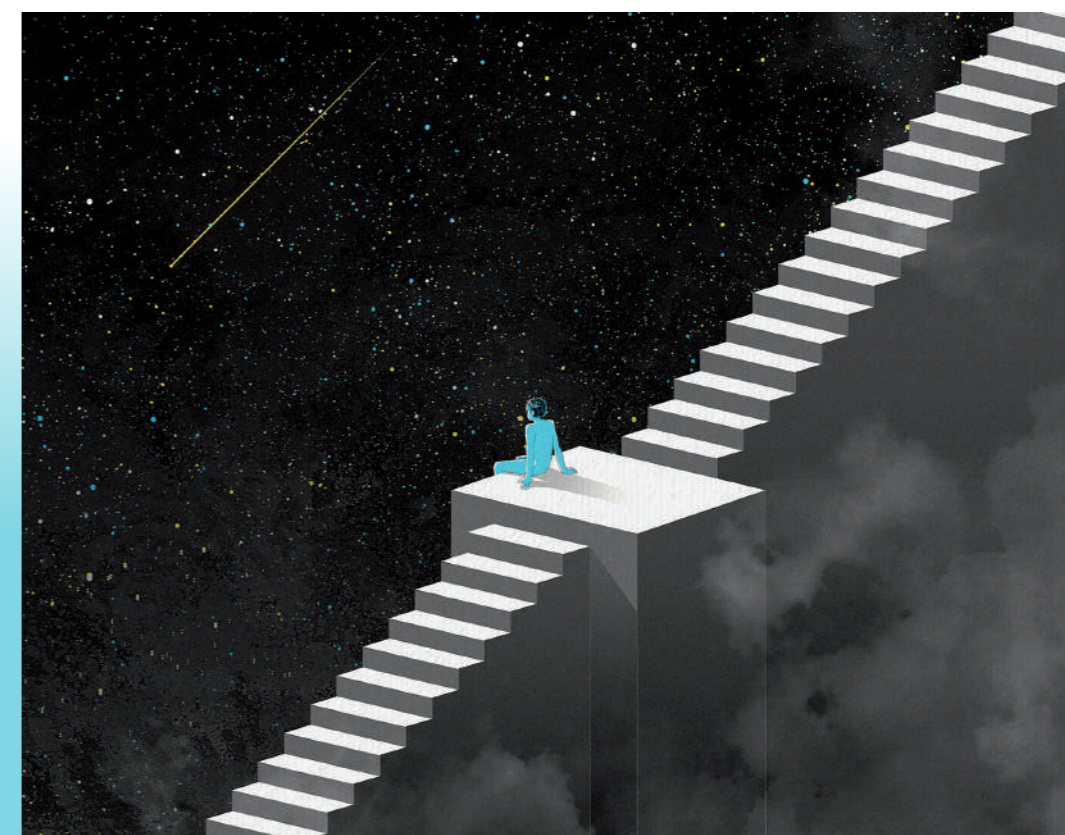
Regarding future events, **AIM Group International** published in June the results of the survey **"Events in-person, hybrid or digital? Trends and**

perspectives from the Sponsors". The survey captured the viewpoints from over 200 representatives of pharmaceutical and biopharma companies from across all therapeutic areas. Key findings of this survey determined that: half of the companies surveyed are ready to sponsor in-person events next autumn, only 16% exclude it as an option, the remaining 37% prefer to decide later; the budget for events in 2021 will mostly be allocated to in-person or hybrid events (43%) while digital-only events were preferred by one in three companies (35%); assuming participation in a hybrid event, the majority would prefer to participate in-person (52%), or both in person and online (31%), only a small fraction (17%) would choose to attend the event online only.

Virtual trade shows: What's next?

The organisation of virtual events and trade shows implies a transformation when it comes to planning, marketing, convening and making a professional meeting profitable. In line with the strategic digitisation process that **IFEMA MADRID** is carrying out and based on its experience of implementing the **LIVEConnect technology**, **Raúl Calleja**, director of professional events and business digitalisation, gives us a few takeaways to successfully organise hybrid events. "The concept of trade show has a series of attributes which

are intrinsic to face-to-face connections and cannot be 100% virtualised; for this reason IFEMA has made efforts not to digitise a show in itself, but rather to digitise its various functionalities, such as networking, access to leads that you cannot get in a traditional face-to-face event, the content, the novelties, or the branding and visibility of the participating companies, as well as sessions that can be held in the digital realm." Technology also makes it possible to offer added value to the face-to-face part of the event, monitoring how many meetings a visitor holds, how many contact requests an exhibitor has received, how many messages they have exchanged, etc. "All industries have some elements that can be digitised, but it is true that there are some attributes that can make the implementation of this digitisation easier, for example, at trade shows for industries that sell products, which work better than those of services; likewise, B2B is easier than B2C". On the other hand, there will be more opportunities in the digital field for events or brands that are more relevant. "A small event will be difficult to virtualise because there will be no critical mass to generate community. Relevance and reference in terms of content and volume of community, exhibition offer and networking, are the key to creating communities of value. If this is relevant, there will be room for digitisation," concludes Calleja.





Slowly and maturely, the industry is setting pieces for a full recovery but on the other side of the English channel, there's also a lot of work to be done. Spearheading representation to government and policymakers, elevating the hotel sector and championing sustainable changes, HBAA is the trade association for the meetings, events and accommodation industry in the UK. We spoke with **Juliet Price, consultant executive director** at HBAA, about the future of the industry, role changes, mental health and, of course, Brexit.

“Our sector will recover, however what remains of **concern** is that the industry **lacks an identity.**”

After more than a year of lockdown, what picture do you trace out of the fall-off in the hotel business and the MICE industry, in the UK and internationally?

The MICE and accommodation industries have suffered from bans and restrictions on running live in-person meetings and events in the UK and overseas for the past 15 months, and from a lack of specific and accessible financial support from government.

A recent HBAA report revealed that our agency community has lost almost 40% of staff in the past 12 months and, coupled with the widely reported redundancies in the venue sector, there are real challenges to be faced in meeting customer demand and expectations of service delivery.

During this time, corporates have re-evaluated their approach to travel, re-evaluated their employees’

accountability to climate change and implemented their own commitments to sustainability. Whilst these are positive and timely actions, they will have an impact on the way we travel to stay in accommodation and attend meetings and events as a delegate.

Hotels, venues and agencies have responded by implementing new protocols aligned to being COVID-19 secure, and invested in new technology to deliver hybrid events. Virtual meetings will in some cases replace in-person meetings.

There is great eagerness for the return of in person live meetings and events as nothing can replace the energy, atmosphere and connections that are made when people get together. But new platforms will complement physical events, providing greater reach and create choice for both organisers and delegates.

HBAA has been a recognised voice in the hotel and venue industry for 23 years. Taking into account the new guidelines and policies adopted by the entire ecosystem, how will your role and representation be defined in 2021?

HBAA’s renewed vision is: “Driven by leaders, united by collaboration and a significant contributor to an industry which delivers £70bn* spend into the UK economy.”

Our focus will also be on “spearheading representation to government and policy makers, elevating a sector voice and championing change and sustainable economic health.”

HBAA’s renewed vision is underpinned by four pillars – resilience, innovation, ethics and quality – to ensure it is fit for purpose and ready to help the industry bounce back. Members will always be at the core of the HBAA’s strategy with plenty of opportunities for them to get involved in the association.

What becomes more evident now is the toolkits that members require to revive their businesses and continue to build customer confidence to spend again.

We have continued to support members through this pandemic with valuable advice on how to deal with the new issues they face in surviving without an income. It has also directly and indirectly been their voice into the government. We have seen positive results from this including grants being awarded, business event site visits being permitted and a further extension to the furlough scheme.

Our resilient sector will recover, however what remains of concern and unchanged is that the industry lacks an identity. HBAA will continue to shine a light on our industry throughout 2021 and beyond and, in

collaboration with other trade associations, we are united in supporting and shaping our future.

Supporting future generations and the mental health in the event industry is part of the core values that HBAA drives in its membership vision. How can we shape the future of the sector with these values in mind?

Mental health awareness has been a core campaign for HBAA for many years and, following the impact of COVID-19 on the industry, it has never been more important for the HBAA to take steps to protect the mental health and wellbeing of our members and the wider industry. The impact of uncertainty on mental health is a long-known cause of anxiety and this affects every aspect of both work and personal life. We continue to run regular workshops on a variety of topics related to mental health and wellbeing and campaign for the industry to have more trained mental health first aiders.

As one of our charitable partners this year, we have selected **EventWell**, which is dedicated to cultivating better mental health and wellbeing, supporting and serving the industry community with the knowledge and tools they need to stay well.

17th May 2021 was a milestone for event planners, hoteliers and general activity in the UK as the country got back into full swing into the meetings industry. Are you expecting a sudden boom in shows, events and accommodation or a lingering pent-up demand in the near future?

There was a flood of bookings and confirmations after that milestone and the UK government was hoping to end lockdown restrictions on 21st June, the next milestone in the roadmap, but this has now been delayed to 19th July. There is a strong desire from the

“*We have seen demand for events in the domestic market rising from September onwards with a strong start in 2022 especially for larger bookings.*”

corporate sector to get back to face-to-face meetings and events, nothing beats it. We have seen demand for events in the domestic market rising from September onwards with a strong start in Q1 2022 especially for larger bookings.

The HBAA also relaunched the “Meet Safe, Meet Smart” campaign to reinforce the event roadmap and the hotel recovery in the UK. Can you talk me through the action plan of this campaign in greater detail?

We launched our “Meet Safe, Meet Smart” campaign with a supporting member action group to boost consumer confidence to kick-start the meetings and events sector. The campaign has showcased the safety features of meetings at hotels and venues which have invested in protocols to be COVID-19 secure. It has also highlighted the flexibility of contractual terms and conditions at all venues involved.

The campaign focused on providing facts, driving confidence and emphasising that booking these venues offers delegates and organisers tangible assurances.

After several studies and polls, what is HBAA’s official position on Brexit impact? Where does the UK Event Industry stand here?

HBAA carried out an annual survey of members on the anniversary of the Brexit vote and every year staffing and recruitment was seen as a big issue looming. Now, with visa requirements in place and exacerbated by the pandemic and restrictions on overseas travel, the UK hospitality and events sector is facing the harsh reality now that it trying to reopen with a tremendous skills shortage and alongside other major industry associations is asking for government help in making it easier to recruit from overseas.

**source BVEP events report 2020*



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“*HBAA’s renewed vision is underpinned by four pillars – resilience, innovation, ethics and quality – to ensure it is fit for purpose and ready to help the industry bounce back.*”

Association Meetings: Is it Time to Dust off Your Suitcase?

Probably not yet. However, the desire for live events and the chances of hybrid deals with various destinations, make associations increasingly aware of this fact. On the other hand, event planners are still keeping up with the speed of change, in an industry that is still groping in the dark. We went to speak with three association executives about the risks of this digital world and the new requirements that destinations must take into account in their next bids.

1. What were the impacts and consequences that the pandemic brought to your sector? How did you manage to connect with your members?
2. What do you expect from an event destination when faced with upcoming post-pandemic events? How will COVID shape your events?
3. What do you think 2021 and beyond holds for your association? What are the new demands on your organisation's board?

EUROPEAN INVESTMENT CASTERS’ FEDERATION

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CARLOS OLABE



1. The pandemic brought along an unexplored scenario to the networking activity. No physical international conference and exhibition produced all sort of collateral effects for the association, their members and stakeholders, including economic turn down. The alternative to sustain membership engagement was the enhancement of communication, via the online world. Virtual meetings, webinars, surveys, the magazine distributed digitally, even the formal meetings such as the General Assembly.

effects of the pandemic to the economic segments of the association activity provided with guidance and very useful information to members. In addition, a much more personalised communication with members did contribute to reinforce the identity of members with the association.

2. My perception is that the community around a certain association is aiming to meet physically again and, in this sense, the event destination has to be identified or perceived as a safe place to travel, with no drawbacks, included first class health system and certainty that the pandemic is under control – whatever the status of it.

In particular, surveys and studies outcome on the

Clearly COVID-19 perception shall be affecting events in the attention given to all the different health and safety

related aspects, including spaces and quality of venues in respect. Likewise, the destination infrastructure, hotels, transportation means, must be perceived as indicated.

3. Looking ahead for associations nowadays is to look from 2022 and beyond. 2021 is done in terms of solutions applied to engage members and provide them with the pledged benefits. 2022 represents as of today, the come-back to the physical world and, in this sense, associations efforts are aiming to build events that could satisfy the existing aspiration. However, as uncertainty still remains, solutions to build up the virtual community relationship and associated features

are being implemented as a sustained infrastructure, being one of the key elements of associations these days.

“*The alternative to sustain membership engagement was the enhancement of communication, via the online world.*”

EUROPEAN FLAVOUR ASSOCIATION

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALEXANDER MOHR

1. Like most associations, the impact was most noticeable by the fact that we had to cancel or postpone all our physical meetings. For trade associations, this is manageable for a certain period, but in the long run this will cause problems as not all physical meetings can simply be replaced by virtual meetings. We are a “peoples’ business”. Which means our discussions and interactions with stakeholders and members are at the core of what we do. These personal contacts are of great importance.

2. It goes without saying that the events need to be “safe”. But in order to plan and execute a successful event we need to keep in mind that we as associations can only hold a good event, if our members can or are also allowed to travel. If our member companies’ travel policies do not allow for travel, it obviously does not make much sense to hold any form of event. Therefore, I think it would be extremely helpful if event destinations can demonstrate that the event venue and logistics are safe and in line with government or regional guidelines, regulations, and best practices.

3. I am rather positive for the second half of 2021 and beyond. I think there is a high interest to return to face-to-face meetings with members, customers, and stakeholders. The first conference I attended in Southern France, in June, just confirmed this impression. Some issues just need to be discussed



in a room with people and face-to-face. Virtual solutions may play a bigger role in the future in our day-to-day work, but they will never replace the personal and direct contact with members. I do not believe in the term “new normal”. For me, it’s rather a “return to the future”.

“*Virtual solutions may play a bigger role in the future in our day-to-day work, but they will never replace the personal and direct contact with members.*”

INTERNATIONAL SANITARY SUPPLY ASSOCIATION

BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT, DIANNA STEINBACH

1. Being the global cleaning industry association, our sector was quite busy with requests on how to help reduce infection spread. The consequence was we had to quickly mobilise advice not just for our members, but for any type of facility or mode of transportation that they serviced. As a result, our network grew exponentially, not just in members but also with the customers of our members, and society at large. We quickly pivoted to virtual options to connect our experts, members and the growing pool of people looking for our advice. We did virtual peer exchanges to let members share ongoing solutions with one another, as well as free webinars. We also found a lot of members contacting us through LinkedIn, which we used extensively during the pandemic. We had to move to virtual exhibitions and conferences but did pull off one hybrid event in December 2020 that was well attended in person.

2. The destination needs to have a door-to-door approach for how it will help protect our participants, as well as strong communication elements to help us create greater confidence. We have an international event coming up at the **Veronafiere** in early September and they have gone through the **GBAC STAR** accreditation of infection prevention protocols, so we know they will be ready for whatever we might face after the European holiday season of travel and resulting COVID situations. We also will continue to use virtual speaking platforms to bring more versatility and lower costs to our education programmes even when returning to face-to-face events. We have found that to be an effective way to attract high level speakers who otherwise might not have been able to carve out enough time to travel to our event.

3. We now have a growing community of people who consume our association’s knowledge and education, but who are not traditional member prospects. So, we are looking at how we create a new association approach to address our traditional audience as well as the new audience. This offers a strategic opportunity, as our members want to connect with the non-members we have attracted. We believe the future is bright for our industry, which has shown its



relevance in the last year and now has more visibility in many sectors. In fact, we continued to grow into new countries and regions in 2020 and so far in 2021. We also are focusing on internal investments regarding back-office technology to make our operations more efficient. The goal is this will allow our staff to spend more time with members and customers, and less time handling administrative tasks.

“*The destination needs to have a door-to-door approach for how it will help protect our participants, as well as strong communication elements to help us create greater confidence.*”

All the executives featured in this Q&A belong to the Board of the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE), whom we thank for the opportunity.

“Stay safe, stay strong and may the force be with you...” that’s how **Mario Hardy** has said goodbye to his partners and collaborators as **CEO of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)**, last May. After its 70th anniversary and under the new leadership of **Liz Ortiguera**, this membership-based association is now trying to predict the course of any form of recovery for the travel and tourism sector in the APAC region. We caught up with the new leader about the challenges of guiding an association through a storm, new PATA events, and programmes to support business events in the region.



“Now is an **opportunity** to build back better – and it can yield **better margins**”

Asia-Pacific was the region where the pandemic first hit but also the frontrunner in containing its spread. How are the Asia-Pacific travel and tourism industries doing at the time of our conversation?

Most of Southeast Asia is currently in some form of lockdown and border controls are in place across most of Asia-Pacific and Australia-New Zealand are highly restricted. It’s notable that a number of countries in the East have much lower tolerance for case breakouts. As an example, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore will close city borders and impose lockdowns if case numbers are in the double digits.

We’ve just issued a midyear revision of our “**Asia Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2021-2023**”, and PATA still anticipates that the region will see a challenging year in the balance of 2021. However, we forecast a strong recovery occurring thereafter, albeit in a very uneven fashion. This recovery is however dependent on effective and equitable vaccine rollout programmes and mitigation of the threat of new variants.

There are a number of initiatives and events that PATA has been developing in order to restore confidence in the adventure and leisure industries. What has been planned to endorse

business travel in Asia Pacific this time around?

Throughout the pandemic, PATA has continued hosting both virtual and, more recently, hybrid events bringing together our diverse network of governments, enterprises, universities and NGOs. The focus of PATA has historically been the sustainable tourism development, but our forums convene all segments aligned on that mission. Through destination marketing support we are reinforcing confidence and knowledge in all forms of travel to our partner destinations. We can all anticipate that with increased border controls and health protocols, an increased proportion of trips will blend business and leisure. Trips will be fewer but more extended and multi-purpose.

How challenging was it to keep the relationship and support with your members intact at a distance?

The travel industry impact has been particularly hard. The team has done and continues to do a fantastic job of creating virtual sessions with our members and industry peers to keep them engaged, inspired and informed of the current situation. Over the past 12 months, PATA delivered 135 virtual sessions (webinars and live experiences) for the benefit of members and the industry at large. In addition, my predecessor and

the team hosted a vast number of virtual meetings and joined other organisations’ webinars.

And after an overwhelming experience with webinars, virtual tours and online campaigns mitigating the absence of face-to-face meetings, what will be left of this digital component for a travel association like PATA?

Virtual webinars and meetings are now an integral part of the new normal. That said, travel and many other industries are most empowered with in-market, in-person travel experiences and human interactions. Hybrid events will continue to be the norm but the strengths of both virtual and “in real life” experiences will be leveraged and blended.

Recently, PATA has become a signatory of “The Future of Tourism Coalition” to chart a more sustainable direction for tourism. Why did it take a pandemic crisis to wake us up to this factor?

Research has shown that government and industry regularly deprioritize disaster prevention and then need to spend a multiplied amount on disaster response. Organisations like PATA exist to provide thought leadership, put forward best practices and proactively drive a positive movement. Now it is an opportunity to build back better – and it can yield better margins. Part of our role is to identify and share great industry models that combine sustainability AND profitability.

According to your industry data, analyses and estimations, what will it take until the Asia-Pacific region returns to pre-pandemic levels?

Prior to the pandemic, the Asia-Pacific was the fastest growing region for travel. There is a lot of pent-up demand right now, particularly from large markets like China and Australia. With the recovery, that demand will get channelled into the targeted markets that control outbreak volumes, deploy vaccines broadly and restore consumer confidence.

For 2021, Asia-Pacific traveller traffic will languish given limited border openings and strict health and safety protocols, assuming effective vaccine deployment; however, 2022 appears to be promising. The region should have annual increases across the board in 2022, ranging from gains of 105% to 320% under the mild COVID-19 impact scenario, to between 8% and 75% even under more severe circumstances. The absolute volume of arrivals will still remain below the 2019 benchmark for international visitor arrivals in 2022, but will begin to fully recover in many markets by 2023.

You were recently named PATA’s next CEO, succeeding Dr Mario Hardy in the arduous task of leading the association through an industry-wide transition process. What was asked of you in terms of priorities and objectives by the Executive Board?

I was selected in particular for my diverse experience base. I started as a scientist/engineer in the pharma industry, worked with American Express in three divisions (with Card and Travel being membership business models) and spent the last 5 years working with start-ups. Today’s challenges require a multi-disciplinary approach to drive solutions. My focus will be on: reinforcing the value proposition to support our members through this crisis; incorporating innovation to create a more flexible, powerful network and member engagement model; leverage the strength of our diverse association network to support member and industry recovery.



Coronavirus VS MICE

Embracing **Hybrid Events**: The Basics **Planners** Need to Know

BY **FELICIA ASIEDU**, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER FOR **CVENT EUROPE**.

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As regional restrictions start to lift, and in-person events start to slowly return, hybrid events (which combine the traditional in-person event experience with a virtual online component) will take centre stage. And we expect not just for the short-term, but as a standard practice for the industry going forward. Why? Because the benefits include broader reach and accessibility. Hybrid events are one of the biggest forecast trends of 2021 and 76% of the planners surveyed in **Cvent's 2020 Planner Sentiment and Sourcing Report: Europe Edition** stated they would consider hosting hybrid events in 2021.

To embrace the trend, here are the basics you need to know:

- **Why it's one event, but two experiences**

Hybrid events are a balancing act. As content will be delivered differently to both groups, the virtual and in-person experiences will need to be planned individually – as well as collectively.

Tip: Just like with in-person events, the focus should always be on offering a comprehensive agenda with exciting speakers and great content that resonates with your target audience.

- **Why content rules**

Content is king, but arguably even more so at a hybrid event as both onsite and virtual attendees have to be engaged.

Tip: Utilise digital engagement tools such as live polling and Q&A within a mobile event app to interact with the audience – whether they're viewing in-person or online.

- **Why you need the right tech**

Hybrid events require higher levels of video production so that virtual attendees are provided a similar quality to in-person attendees.

Tip: Work with AV and event technology specialists that can help maximise the value that virtual attendees get out of your event.

- **Navigating networking for virtual attendees**

People attend events for two main reasons: to learn and to network. However, offering valuable networking opportunities can be challenging for hybrid events without the right tools.

Tip: Choose a virtual conferencing tool that allows you to organise attendees into online breakout rooms – either randomly or based on similar roles, titles, or industry. Also, use an appointment scheduling tool to block off times reserved for networking. Virtual and in-person attendees will be able to see availabilities on one another's calendars and network efficiently.

- **Sponsorship opportunities**

Hybrid events offer sponsors double the exposure for brand awareness and lead generation opportunities.

Tip: By offering more value, for example, sponsored content before key sessions and prime placement on the mobile events app, your event can attract more sponsors, which can help to offset the added technical costs of hosting a hybrid event.

As the industry forges ahead, hybrid events will be an integral part of a planner's total event programme toolkit alongside virtual and in-person events.

A new event technology infographic revealed an outstanding vendor landscape these past few months. The **EventTech 800** features 832 companies operating in the event technology space, and also displayed an astonishing 400% increase in event technology providers compared to last year. At the centre of this trend is the massive investment directed to the tech market, which changed the rules of the game. The EventTech 800 is a visual representation of this explosive growth, but it also lays bare the overwhelming feeling that overcomes many planners in sourcing event tech. To better explain these drifts, we asked the creator and CEO of Hoosh, **Fab Capodicasa** (pictured in next page), a few questions.

Virtual is Real: Event Tech Vendors Have Skyrocketed Over the Past Year!

The EventTech 800 infographic shows a clear trend towards the digitalisation of the market. How should the event industry react to this?

I think it's a positive trend because the event industry hasn't really been affected by the digital transformation yet. Every industry I worked in either facilitated or went through a digital transformation, but if you look at how events were run before COVID-19, most of them were limited to basic consumer technology, and for me that was the main problem with the event industry in the first place. It's the sixth most stressful job in the world. It is ripe for emerging companies that want to make this process less stressful by making it more manageable. That's where I see the true opportunity. I think what the industry realised is that technology is an enabler, a force multiplier that came to make your life less difficult by using purpose-built technologies for events - whether virtual, hybrid or in-person.

We all know what is behind this explosion but, assuming that in-person events will return soon, how would you define the balance between physical and digital events in the post-COVID era?

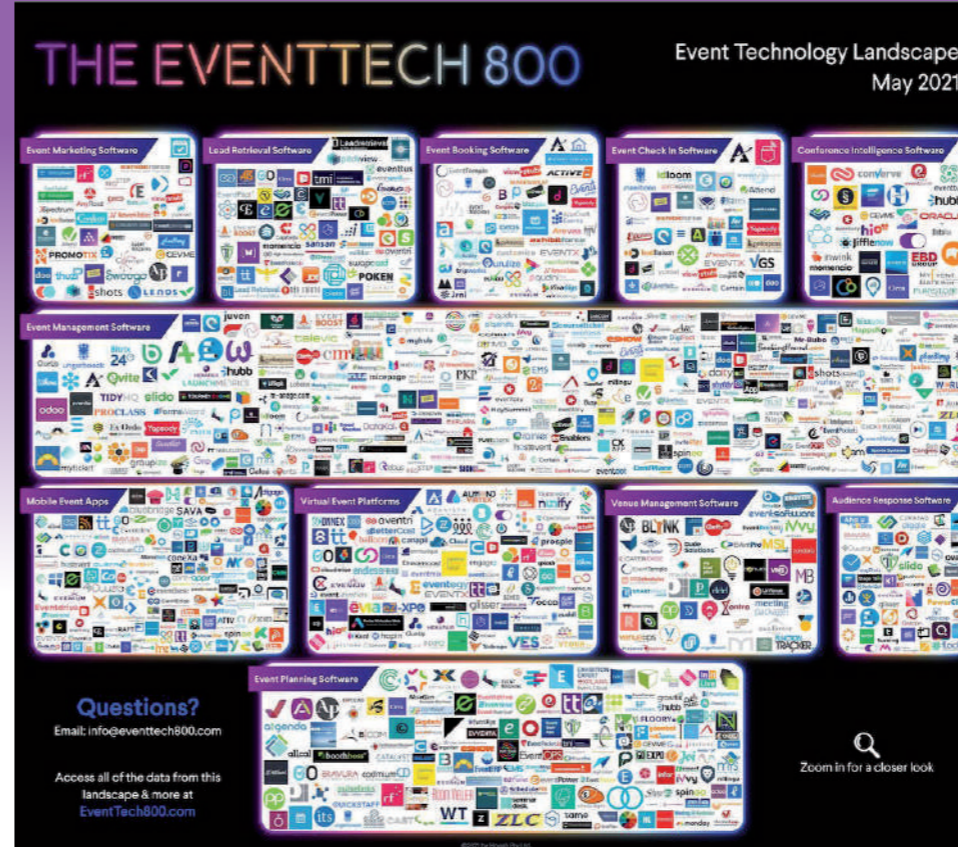
I think it's a spectrum, so there's no right and wrong answer. For example, what we're seeing now is companies

running events in a physical studio with a face-to-face element among the speakers, maybe a little audience, but that's essentially a television format, a live stream that people can watch online. That I don't think will last, simply because it's just not that entertaining. It's like watching a boring TV show. Why would you want to see this?

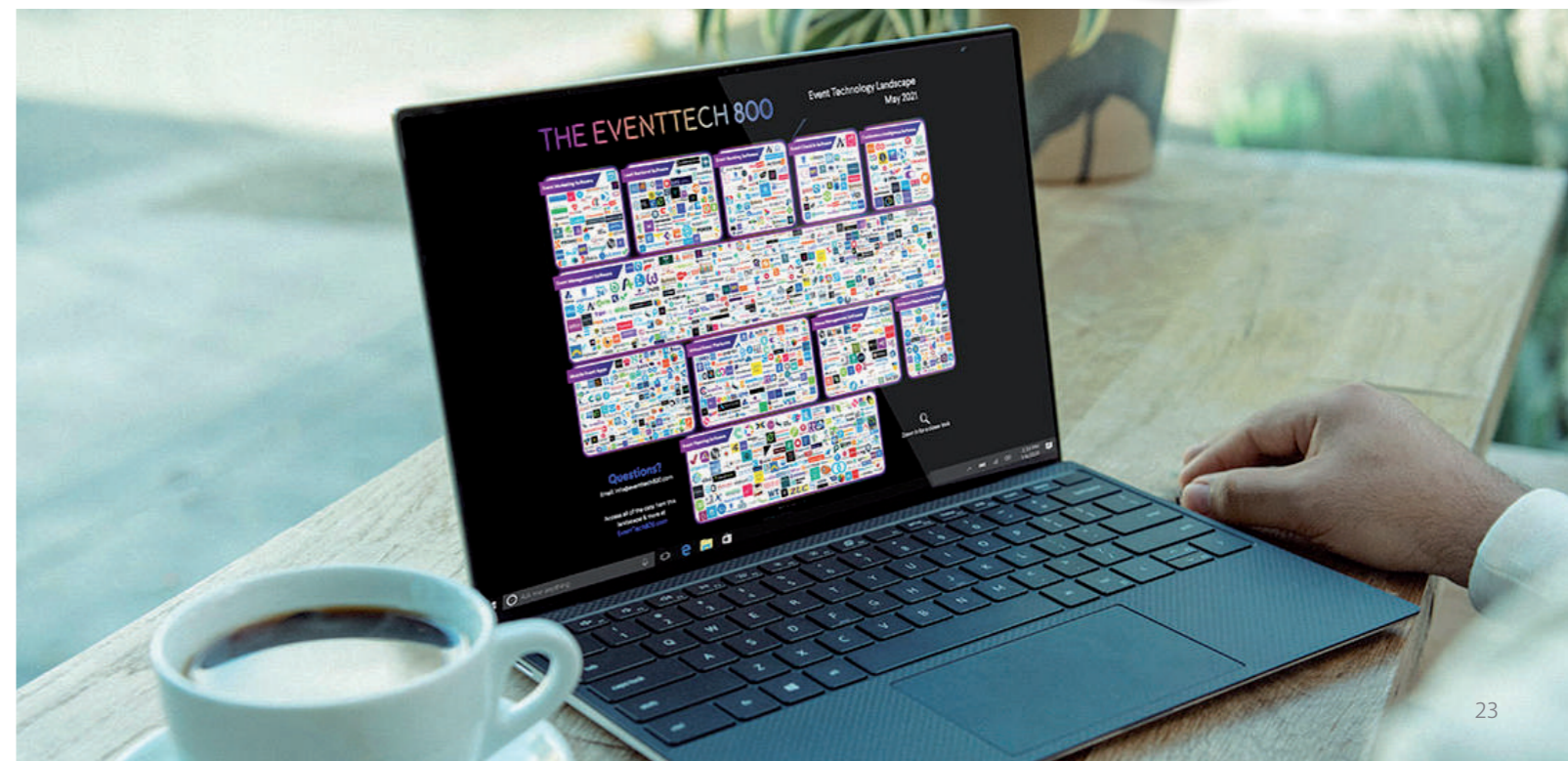
At the opposite end of the spectrum, I see virtual reality, simulated reality, with almost all the benefits of a face-to-face. And who knows, maybe VR technology gets to the point where you can simulate tastes, touches and smells. Imagine yourself simulating sound, physical presence, or touch and interaction in a 3D setting. If you can do all that, why do you need to go in-person from that moment on? What we have now is the lowest version of the hybrid, the more advanced version is yet to come.

We are slowly starting to decipher the potential of a digital event in the MICE sphere, but still a little far from imagining the scope of a pandemic-free hybrid environment. What does the future hold for us at this level?

It specifically depends on the audience you are targeting and the age groups. If you're targeting audiences across multiple time zones, you have to do something different. Many event professionals,



“Are we doomed to just be looking at screens? I don't believe so. There's a lot of late demand and I see even more demand going forward to do in-person events or a mixture, a mixture where you get the best of both worlds.”



strategists, planners, and top leaders are making it up, testing their creativity to find what works. We are still at an experimental stage. I think it will swing back to on-site because there is a lot of latent demand, but when it comes back, count on participants and sponsors asking: what about virtual? What about the people that can't physically make it? Customers will force change because they want the largest engaged audience possible.

Sponsors, people who are getting ROI, companies who are paying for events, will not allow to go back 100% in-person because they understand that there are advantages to doing both. The challenge then will be how to manage the double or triple amount of work required to actually run it. Hybrid events are not easy to do, they are more complex than both halves. There will be a lot of experimentation and some casualties, but in the end, I think it will be driven by maximising audiences.



Porto & North of Portugal: It is Time to **Wake up** Again!

Local tech and tourism partnerships have been established in Porto, which has united the sector and contributed for the international perception of Northern Portugal. After a year to forget, Porto is on the lookout for the meetings industry and the whole tourism ecosystem.

Like so many other destinations in Europe, 2020 was no different for **Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal (TPNP)** with the events industry suffering immensely. But since every cloud has a silver lining, many Porto companies took advantage of this break to shift into digitalisation by implementing new tech tools on their daily operations inside-out. “In terms of our own MICE projects, we’ve been working on some great and powerful content that we plan to launch very soon. We want to be in the minds of MICE organisers, create added value and desire for our destination,” tell us the **president of the Portuguese regional tourism entity, Luís Pedro Martins** (*in the picture*).

Last year gave TPNP enough time to plan and prepare the next stage for major events: the **UEFA Champions League final** and the **Social Summit** are just a few examples of this rising dynamic. “Time is now, and these opportunities have shown us that is possible to host large-scale events in a safe and organised way, with no negative repercussions.” According to the president, “Europe needs to unite, and the **EU Digital COVID certificate** is bringing hope to all destinations”, as different travel rules by country have increased uncertainty and lack of confidence to business meeting travellers. On that note, Portugal became the first European country to receive the **safe travel certificate**. Their national and international meetings fund is now being revised, and will play an important role in attracting new and old business to the region in a flexible way. This year’s launch of the new **M&I support programme**, and projects such as **Eventhology** and **Meethology** aim to position TPNP within the meeting industry most competitive secondary city destinations in Europe, in terms of innovation, digitalisation, and sustainable practices through the

voices of the local circular economy. “Our main goal is also to give a digital voice and look to the destination, and reaching our followers with educational and interesting content through the voices of our community players,” says Luís Pedro Martins.

Entities such as **Porto Digital** and many other local scientific and entrepreneurial hubs, contribute daily to the innovation movement throughout the region. Many venues, hotels, DMCs and PCOs are now much more tech conscious and have adapted to this new reality, looking for new solutions for their clients. “Connecting this footprint to the local tourism and meetings industry was a natural process, especially after the pandemic, through new digital solutions and partnerships.” How so? “Venues and hotels have now implemented permanent studios and digital tours, audiovisual companies are acting now as crucial experts for hybrid and digital meetings, and even restaurants and touristic attractions are also applying online and mobile focused solutions for their customers.” Furthermore, **Visit Portugal** has created **Tourism + Sustainability Strategy 2023**, in order to consolidate tourism as a hub for economic, social and environmental development, positioning Portugal as one of the most sustainable tourist destinations in the world. Other pioneering regional projects, such as the **Porto Protocol**, are key outcomes of the Climate Change Leadership Porto – a commitment by all participants to adopt and promote the principles and measures established at the climate summits. “These achievements urge entities to adopt sustainable best practices in a transversal way. Leaving an environmental and social legacy in each meeting has become mandatory,” concludes Martins.



Houston: How to reboot in one of **Texas' finest!**

The impact that COVID-19 had on the tourism and events industries knew no borders and spread rapidly to the other side of the “pond”. In Houston, teamwork is king and it really helped the city be in a position to welcome events and conventions back as soon as possible.

Many highly anticipated major international events due to take place in 2020 were postponed until next year. While the economy was in the midst of a recession, the travel industry was definitely in a depression. That said, **Houston First Corporation** successfully rebooked 92 percent of the citywide conventions into future years. The agency is promoting the Texan city as a premier global destination, building partnerships to improve the quality of life of Houstonians, and becoming a top generator of new revenue to the region. “We are open for business. Part of our value proposition here is we’ve already been able to successfully hold events. Not a lot of cities or communities have been able to do that,” says **Michael Heckman** (*in the picture*), **acting president and CEO** of the city’s official destination marketing organisation.

Houston is preparing for a bumper second half of 2021, with a record amount of conventions already scheduled. In fact, the city is expecting a record-breaking six-month stretch of conventions compared to the same timeframe in 2019, with 32 events scheduled from the 1st of July to the 3rd of December. Let’s break these numbers: 31 of these events have an attendance of more than 1000 people and are considered **Impact Events**, acting as demand drivers for hospitality businesses; 17 of these same events are considered **Citywide Events** which have contracted more than 1500 hotel room nights on peak days and either the use of key **George R. Brown Convention Centre (GRB)** or the **NRG Park**.

Right from the beginning of the pandemic, Houston First was at the forefront in reacting to changing market conditions and government restrictions, by quickly applying the highest standard of health and safety protocols to all its events and venues. “The city’s

events and hospitality industries mobilised in order to adjust to the new Covid-safe way of doing business, as well as prepare for the eventual slow return to normal,” added Heckman. **The Houston Clean programme**, for example, a collaboration between the Houston events and venues taskforce, was a baseline of agreements across all of those participants who have made a general commitment to the recovery of professional events. But their approach went beyond this, extending to installing state-of-the-art antiviral systems in the city’s key GRB. “We spent a lot of money at our convention centre, covering sanitisation, temperature checks, touchless payments and door entry,” says Heckman. For Houston First, as vaccine deployment becomes broader and restrictions begin to ease, an important part of hosting events and conventions will be defined by how comfortable people feel getting on a plane and attending a live meeting.

EventMB’s State of the Event Industry report confirms that Houston’s efforts have been in the right place, with “safety standards” (36.8 percent of respondents) being the top priority for the events industry in choosing a destination to hold their event, followed by “no travel restrictions” (31.7%), and “low cases” (18.9%). An increasing amount of these events will also be some sort of hybrid between in-person and virtual events, and that’s why the GRB now has a virtual studio, giving event planners even more flexibility in how they operate their conventions.





Thailand: A Handful of Projects, a Mind Full of Ideas!

Thailand did not stand still during the pandemic. The whole community embraced the setback and chose to focus on getting ready for the future. Facilitating success through education and connecting global opportunities remain key drivers for the local CVB.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the **Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)** has acted quickly to develop important measures, and this has turned out to be a determining factor in supporting the local event industry. During the first recovery steps, TCEB launched the **MICE COVID Info Centre**, and established funds to activate domestic MICE activities and to support venues in improving their hygiene and security. In response to the pandemic through the qualification and diversification of its products, the **Virtual Meeting Space** was also created to support virtual and hybrid events. “We have also explored new opportunities for collaboration, both within Thailand and internationally. For instance, we are working closely with Convention Bureaux in Asia to develop opportunities to revitalise regional business through the Asia Convention Alliance,” says the **senior vice president, Nichapa Yoswee** (in the picture)

But that doesn’t stop there: TCEB has established a **Convention Task Force Committee**, bringing together ICCA Thailand members and industry partners to share market insights and best practices suitable to a preferred

convention destination in Asia. As another initiative, the Thailand tourism sector, including TCEB, joined forces and launched the **Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration** that supported hotels, venues and service providers to comply with sanitation requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, TCEB teamed up with 16 partners and a set of public and private entities to create the memorandum of understanding “**Unlock MICE Cities with High Standard of Safety**”, to promote safe meetings, exhibitions and events in Thai cities. Through this memorandum, “we will put into practice our **MICE Venue Standards** and new health protocols to create a safety standard for all events,” adds Yoswee. “In collaboration with the **Department of Disease Control** and the **MICE Academic Cluster**, we have also developed training courses to build event agencies and other MICE suppliers, with knowledge of public health monitoring, control and evaluation standards.” These courses allowed for 33 DMCS and 90 employees to safely



attend foreign businessmen under a special government regime. Furthermore, TCEB is organising road shows across various cities to educate further on COVID-19 prevention, and support local entrepreneurs in each of these destinations.

Regarding incentives, TCEB has extended a support scheme for associations and PCOs planning to meet in Thailand. The **Convene Plus** is a newly curated convention programme that aims to serve ever-changing demands and formats of global conventions, whilst implementing a dynamic service portfolio as well as simplified criteria with redefined value propositions. According to Yoswee, “TCEB’s focus has always been about people. From people’s wellbeing to ensuring that the Thai business events industry flourish for generations to come.” Looking forward to the economic recovery, they are putting together another strategic campaign that positions TCEB as a natural partner for the associations. The **Regenerating Legacies Recovery Roadmap** introduces three pillars that will define their actions, and aligns a development strategy as a destination with recovery goals in mind. As the global community continues to manage restrictions and the altering COVID-19 strains brought on by the pandemic, “the first step of our three-year roadmap aims to engage impactful conversations with partners and customers,” explains Yoswee. “A united voice fuelled by diverse and inclusive perspective will help the industry to enhance the future. We want to first focus on the journey and not worrying about the outcome until people feel safe travelling again.”

For much of 2020, domestic events took place normally in Thailand which allowed venues to implement new practices for safe events. TCEB launched the **Thailand, a Safer Place for Meetings** campaign to encourage and attract domestic meetings which resulted in 1,049 events with 62,555 participants. “Our convention centres, hotels, venues and event providers used this time to update health measures, obtain safety certifications, invest in the upgrading of facilities and upskill staff; all of this to respond to the changing needs of our clients.” TCEB’s **MICE Capabilities Development Department** has partnered with two global associations (**MPI** and **PCMA**) to expand career opportunities for Thai MICE operators, having now 23 certified event designers and 40 digital event strategists. In particular, the partnership with PCMA provided numerous opportunities to learn from different case studies around the world. The digital transformation started right away with **Thailand Redefine Your Business Event** in late 2018, having culminated with the aforementioned Virtual Meeting Space – a project that supported Thai MICE

entrepreneurs in the retraining of their workforce. “In February of this year, we’ve debuted our first **Thailand Virtual MICE Expo**, which generated over 580 business-matching sessions, giving international MICE buyers and stakeholders a timely update on the Thailand market,” tells Yoswee.

TCEB has been championing sustainability in the MICE industry for nearly 10 years already. Their MICE Development Department has rolled out various awareness activities, crafted **sustainable events basic guidelines** and **event management standards** to provide a responsible framework for MICE entrepreneurs across the industry value chain. “Our duty as global citizens is to leave a healthy legacy for future generations. This notion is evidenced in our Convene Plus support scheme whereby Thailand’s three key transformational impacts – economic, social and environmental – will remain the key criteria.” For five decades, the value of business events in creating jobs has been recognised. However, they consider that this human connectivity cannot be disrupted to rear more business transactions and industry-wide evolution. “We think that a time like this offers us an opportunity to engage with underexplored industries and leverage our nation’s excellent intellectual capital. The collaborative effort of a wide range of target sectors will ultimately increase Thailand’s win rate from a sustainable point of view”, concludes Yoswee.





Adelaide Convention Centre: Business Remains on Their Books

An advocate of change and local economic engine, the Adelaide Convention Centre remains committed to the full conference experience. For them, the successful delivery of domestic events can provide greater confidence to event planners overseas.

While COVID-19 has certainly impacted business, the South Australian experience at large has been vastly different to other places around the world. Through travel restrictions, contact tracing and government guidelines, South Australia (SA) managed to curb the spread of COVID-19, safely reopening to business events in August 2020. As a sign of ongoing recovery and upward momentum, earlier this year **Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC)** welcomed 10,000 delegates across five events during a single week. “We’ve always enjoyed a reputation as a safe, clean, green destination, and these elements will continue to define the Adelaide experience moving forward,” says **ACC General Manager, Simon Burgess**. More recently, the venue hosted three major national conference events in May, including **Ozwater’21** – the world’s largest water industry conference in 2021 and Australia’s largest conference and exhibition since the pandemic started. Currently, ACC has a healthy pipeline of 30 conferences scheduled from now until the end of the year.

While events held at ACC have been predominantly local, they are now entering a recovery period for national events. “At the height of the restrictions, we were fortunate that meeting organisers chose to postpone their events rather than cancel them.” To provide confidence and a safe environment, they are equipped with a government-approved **COVID Management Plan**, and continue to work closely with **SA Health** too. In terms of identifying new international events, bids have continued throughout the COVID period given their longer lead time; “we’ve witnessed the confidence to book two years out remains.” And as confidence continues to grow, the SA venue is seeing the release of pent-up demand for live, face-to-face events, which is fuelling their future calendar. “The primary concerns

expressed by meeting organisers have largely centred around the flexibility of venues, and whether they can play a role in partnering with the event to help alleviate some of the risk elements,” stated Burgess. This was the case with the **38th International Symposium on Combustion**, which was quickly adapted from a live event to a hybrid, and finally switched to a fully online format due to travel and attendance restrictions. In fact, the venue continues to invest in technology as reflected in its hybrid studio, which includes video and web streaming to extend their reach to external delegates. “We have also developed a new **Technology Production Suite** which will make the planning process easier by enabling event pre-visualisation and virtual walk-throughs” – a tool that will be particularly helpful for interstate and international clients.

As the social demand for their services soared, **Adelaide Venue Management**, operators of the Adelaide Convention Centre, has repurposed their commercial kitchens to help local community catering organisations. “From April to June 2020, we prepped, cooked and packaged more than 250,000 meals to support vulnerable South Australians via local organisations including **Meals on Wheels SA, Multiple Birth South Australia** and **Baptist Care SA**,” says Burgess. Sustainability has always been a key focus for the team at the Adelaide Convention Centre. “We were the world’s first convention centre to register for the global **Earthcheck Certified** programme, and in 2018, became the world’s first convention centre to achieve the coveted **platinum certification** reflecting 10 consecutive years of best practice in business & environmental sustainability,” concludes Burgess. In the next few years, ACC will seek to secure Earthcheck Master status.



Liverpool:

The *Brit* Events Incubator!

In April, the UK government announced that **ACC Liverpool** would host a series of pilot events in a science-led research programme, to reopen the MICE and business sectors.

Three months later the venue is proud to have set a safe path for British events.

The **Good Business Festival’s** launch event, **Change Business for Good**, was the first in-person live business event to occur in England without COVID-19 measures in place. From the very beginning, ACC Liverpool joined with other organisations and governing bodies within the events industry to lobby the government for clearer guidance on reopening. “The data gathered will be used to determine how festivals, shows and conferences can take place again with large audiences. It is hoped the pioneering event will help pave the way for a return to more normal activities,” told us **Faye Dyer** (*in the picture*), **managing director** of the **ACC Liverpool Group**, operator of **ACC Liverpool, Exhibition Centre Liverpool** and **M&S Bank Arena**. Liverpool Public Health officials have found that the city’s pilot events have caused no detectable spread of COVID-19 in the region, which has spurred rapid optimism that events could be reopened shortly thereafter. In fact, from May 17 some larger performances and events in indoor venues with an event capacity of 1,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number) can take place. “Right after the relaxation of rules, we hosted the **European Health-Tech Innovation Week**, a one-day hybrid conference and exhibition which virtually connected delegates across Europe,” says Dyer. This was followed by the virtual event of the **Royal College of Ophthalmologists** and, later on, the **Royal College of Nursing** in September. A series of on-site corporate conferences are also in the pipeline.

Reassuring news after some very challenging 14 months for ACC Liverpool: ensuring close contact with customers and rescheduling future events were constant concerns for the waterfront’s venue during the lockdown. “Throughout the crisis, we’ve worked hard to protect and support our talented team of

event industry professionals, and took full advantage of all government initiatives including rates relief, furlough and cultural recovery funds,” explained the ACC Liverpool Group’s managing director. The venue also had a chance to host events in December, when government restrictions eased, continuing to trade its products throughout the pandemic and planning for the future. As a trusted, award-winning venue, ACC Liverpool is projecting a return of confidence in the conference market, particularly for corporate organisations, and has bookings from May onwards. “The response to the Good Business Festival proved how the public are keen to get back to attending live events, and we hope this will help to reignite the live events industry.” They are tech ready too: any of the venue spaces can be converted into a professional hybrid studio, and can also ensure multiple stream sessions with different panels and locations.

Summoning its corporate social responsibility, ACC’s priority was to work with **Liverpool City Council** to support their pandemic response, while trying to mitigate the impact on local communities. “Using space across both the M&S Bank Arena and the convention centre, we operated as a logistical distribution hub, with thousands of items a week distributed to vulnerable households across Liverpool, including essential food and goods,” says Dyer. Furthermore, the exhibition centre has been deployed for COVID-19 mass testing since November up to date. The campus is relatively new, opening in 2008, built with leading sustainability credentials, and committed to invest in environmental standards. “While CSR and sustainability has always been at the heart of everything we do, we are in the process of developing a future focused **Social Value Strategy** which addresses local and global challenges like diversity, pandemic recovery and climate action,” concludes Fyer.



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ASSOCIATION & PCO



COVID-19: **Eight Facts** Associations Need to Understand for **Successful Future Meetings**

The pandemic of the last year has left no global industry untouched, least of all the meetings industry. What were once the cornerstone of any association’s activities, conferences and congresses all but came to a screeching halt in 2020-2021. Associations and their usual organising partners, including PCOs, venues and sponsors were left scrambling to redefine their meetings and, consequently, their mission. As the world ever slowly gets back to normal, where do association meetings stand, and what can associations expect for the near and, possibly, far future? We asked several partners of the World PCO Alliance to offer their insight.

until the end of 2021, and while he is slightly more optimistic about 2022, “uncertainty persists.” For **Gregg Talley** of **Talley Management Group Inc.**, hybrid events are planned for most clients in the third and fourth quarters of 2021, depending on audience, location and local restrictions. As he points out, “It’s still a challenge assessing attendee expectations and attitudes, as things keep changing.” **Caroline Knies** from **Sweden’s Meetagain** says they are organising their first hybrid meeting in November, and **Kitty Wong** from **Taiwan’s K&A International** is also optimistic about the fourth quarter of 2021, as more and more people get vaccinated.

1. Progress will be slow

While everyone is eager to return to large, international gatherings, Alliance partners warn that the transition will be slow. **Alain Pittet** of **Italy’s Ega worldwide congresses** says that he is expecting international in-person events to only begin again in early 2022. **Andre Vietor** of **Spain’s Bco Congressos** says that they do not foresee any face-to-face meetings

2. Member engagement is the current focus

Without a major meeting in the calendar, associations have invested their effort into communicating with membership. “Not celebrating an announced meeting was the least of an association’s concerns,” says Vietor. “Creating a sense of community was key, either through ordinary newsletters, social media, webinars or other channels, such as “working groups” focused

on a specific topic. Knies’s clients have also increased their activity on social media and are sending out more frequent newsletters.

3. Going online

All Alliance partners cite online events as the compromise that has allowed associations the ability to continue fostering relationships with members and sponsors. The digitalisation has not been restricted to meetings, either. Several partners have seen associations deliver webinars as a source of continued education for members as well as important content. But the shift online has not been an easy one for all associations. “Going virtual was the natural choice, but it was a giant step, as they were not prepared for it,” says Vietor. “And I mean it in every sense: mentally and technologically. In some ways, we can call it a non-voluntary tech revolution.”

While Vietor and many other PCOs have been urging associations for years to adopt innovative technological solutions, they were reluctant. Vietor points to several reasons, including an aged board member structure, an inability to see the advantages and benefits, as well as the financial bottom line. **Noel Mitchell** of **Ireland’s Keynote PCO** has observed many associations incorporating a digital element (as well as an increase in newsletters) but feels that the full potential of technology remains unexplored.

4. Hybrid + Creativity is the new formula – at least for a while

Nina Freysen-Pretorius from South African partner **The Conference Company** says that all their conferences have had to convert to hybrid or fully virtual, with a number of elements to render the meetings more dynamic. “We like the Events Air solution with 3D exhibition ability,” says Freysen-Pretorius. “We also make sure the meetings feature live and pre-recorded programmes as well as

“*Going virtual was the natural choice, but it was a giant step, as they were not prepared for it...And I mean it in every sense: mentally and technologically. In some ways, we can call it a non-voluntary tech revolution.*”

networking engagement opportunities.” Knies and her team have also gone all digital, with a mixture of live and pre-recorded sessions, and providing all recorded sessions on-demand. “Variety is important in the digital format. A nice mix of panel discussions, interviews and seminars works well,” says Knies.

Vietor has observed some associations using virtual meetings as an opportunity to deepen the association’s relationship with its members. “Many virtual conferences are offered free of charge to members.” Equally important, says Vietor, is to establish closer partnerships on an institutional level. “This was a big shift for some associations that traditionally approach companies for congress-related sponsorship only.” Even when we do eventually shift back to the classic formula of in-person meetings, the hybrid format can still be ideal to discuss current “hot” topics which cannot wait ten or more months for the live conference. But **Jean-Paul de Lavison** of **Canada’s JPdL International Inc.** points out that there is a cost element to the hybrid format that associations need to take into account. “There is the ‘studio’ production, whose costs need to supplement the face-to-face meeting production. Virtual requires an approach different from face-to-face, so there is the implication of double work.”

5. Associations need to think “small”

Several Alliance partners predict that those events returning to the in-person format will do so on a smaller scale. “In-person attendance will be much smaller in size,” says **Nancy Tan** from **Singapore’s ACE:Dayton’s Direct**. “An initial phase would be to target strategic countries. Then, as global vaccination rates increase, we can see meetings opening up to the entire world.” Talley agrees. “I’m seeing more ‘micro meetings’ and smaller events in multiple cities.”

Pittet says the multi-hub model can work well, where attendees are scattered across continents. There is a conference chair at the centre to manage the flow of the meeting, and every continent (time zone) has a smaller in-person meeting which is connected virtually to one big (hybrid) conference. The predicted smaller scale has obvious implications for venues. “We anticipate that the overall required amount of space at a venue is going to shrink in the years 2022 and 2023, as physical attendance might be less than in pre-COVID years,” says Vietor.

6. Be prepared for higher expectations

One of the biggest unknowns is how readily people will begin attending live events. How will travel restrictions develop in the short-term, as well as the overall perception of the value of an in-person conference versus a virtual option? According to Mitchell, “This is why it is so important to clearly present the benefits of the physical meeting, while still enabling some level of virtual participation. The same considerations will need to be given to sponsors.” Attendees are also expressing higher expectations of what an association can provide, in terms of education and the content congress online. These expectations are also affecting venues, which are being asked to offer state-of-the-art technological solutions.

Another factor to consider is that associations will be competing for attendees’ time and money like never before, especially in the post-COVID reality of potential lower budgets and attendee willingness to travel. The Return on Relevance and Experience will have to meet a high bar for employees to get approval and to be willing to travel. “Associations have to entice attendees and deliver like never before. This means they will be looking for more ideas and examples from destinations and production partners,” says Talley.

7. Flexibility and safety are the key destination criteria

According to Nancy Tan, every association should examine the following criteria when assessing a destination: strong infrastructure, high level of hospitality and telecommunications networks, and a high vaccination rate. Flexible contracts are also becoming the norm. With nobody in a position to predict where we will be in a year or two, associations are considering future in-person meetings with a layer of caution. Many associations are delaying contract signing with both venues and PCOs, and asking them to be flexible with regards to cancellation and

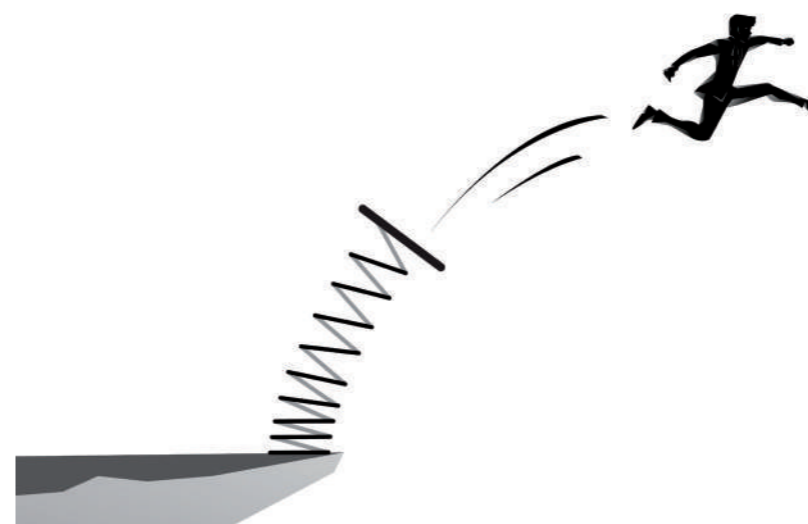
postponement policies. Says Pittet, “Cancellation terms must provide lower costs if participant numbers drop, and there should be no cancellation fee if a conference has to be postponed due to governmental restrictions.”

Knies sees other destination criteria gaining in perceived value, including sustainability, diversity, ethics, safety, digitalisation, and cooperation. Talley adds mission alignment to the list. “Basically, how flexible and cohesive is the destination to help us make this work in an uncertain time and place?” Freysen-Pretorius also encourages associations to examine a destination’s commitment to the conference topic, along with safe access to the destination and competitive pricing.

8. PCOs are more valuable than ever

PCOs have always made it their job to offer astute guidance in selecting destinations, approaching partners and negotiating supplier contracts, and this expertise has probably never been more valuable. “The PCO can accurately describe/secure the best from the venue and destination while also presenting the path to success to the association client, the delegate, and sponsors,” says Mitchell. PCOs also enjoy longstanding relationships on the local level that can be leveraged, particularly now. “We are well connected with the local government agencies as well as different industry stakeholders locally and have the know-how to execute the events better than the associations,” says Nancy Tan.

With the right PCO by its side, an association can navigate all these changes knowing that their best interests and finances are at the top of the list. “During this crisis, PCOs will be the ones who will be helping associations negotiate with venues and contractors,” says Talley. “We have broader knowledge and experience in this new space than any single client, and we have the relationships that will be even more critical for successful events.”



World PCO Alliance

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BUILDING COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE BY SHARING, LEARNING & MEETING

European Cities Marketing (ECM) launched in this February a communication series called “Power of Community”.

Last year, 2021 seemed like a goal, more precisely in the sense that it would mark the end of 2020. Of course, troubled times don’t magically disappear overnight and earlier in the year it seemed we were in for a rocky ride, as the pandemic challenges continued to unfold despite the promise of vaccines being distributed across the world. We were also only starting to really understand the potential long-term repercussions of lockdowns on businesses, on footfall and the liveliness of our cities, on the mental health of us all, on the world’s connectedness and accessibility, and on the future role of DMOs.

Of course, we see light at the end of the tunnel, but the journey towards it seems long too. What gets us through a long journey, however, is usually our travel companionship. That is why ECM kickstarted a series of knowledge sharing, of best and next practice, of recovery planning and of celebrating the ECM community heroes. We called it “Power of Community” and it is about **ECM members**. All of them. As each

other’s companions on this rocky road. It’s about how we can use the ECM community to build collaborative advantages by sharing, learning, meeting, and through that growing both as a community and as individual destinations and destination leaders.

“Power of Community” is for ECM members and by ECM members. When we ask what ECM members want, they always want to hear more from each other – what is everyone else doing? How is everyone else facing this challenge or juggling these conditions? How are they measuring their progress, communicating with their stakeholders, planning their marketing, involving their local residents? ECM members are the power and fuel of this community and ECM really wants to hear from all of them today, tomorrow or anytime: do they have something to share with the rest of the community? Do they have a wicked problem that they need inspiration or new data to address?

Webinars, *fast food for thoughts* inspirational newsletters, and focus on our **Community Heroes** are what makes *#ECMPowerOfCommunity* a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for ECM members and allow them to prepare for the future!

COMMUNITY HEROES: A FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE COMMUNITIES!

An important part of ECM “Power of Community” communication series is the **Community Heroes** series!

The secret of any strong community?... People! ECM community is powered by members and partners working to not only stand stronger together, but also run faster and smarter alongside each other. With Community Heroes, ECM puts focus on its members – its community heroes, who contribute their valuable time, experiences and resources to power the community and through that provide value and inspiration to all.

The Community Heroes series started by zooming in on one of the core building blocks of the ECM community – the **ECM Knowledge Groups**. It is through knowledge groups that we build collective insights, share experiences and inspire new ideas and solutions. But it also zoomed on the **ECM Mentor Programme**, a free industry supported initiative created to secure networking, relation-building and knowledge-exchange between newly-appointed and advanced professionals in the meetings industry.

The Community Heroes videos are available for all on ECM YouTube channel.

#WeAreECM #ECMPowerOfCommunity



THE ECM SUMMER SCHOOL REINVENTS ITSELF AGAIN

After 33 physical editions of the **ECM Summer School** dedicated to the newcomers in the industry, last year’s edition went digital for three days and was dedicated to established professionals of the meetings industry. The first edition of the ECM Summer School 2.0 has been a vibrant chance to learn and to get filled with good vibes and interactions. This event has clearly shown the relevance and power of virtual and hybrid meetings.

But what about this year? Should we go back to the ECM Summer School dedicated to the newcomers or continue with the ECM Summer School 2.0 for meetings industry’s established professionals?

Neither! Or rather both! Everyone sticks together in this period and we need different perspectives. This year’s ECM Summer School will be for ALL Meetings Industry professionals working in convention bureaux, hotels, PCOs, DMCs, airlines, conference venues, congress centres, convention centres, exhibition centres, suppliers of ancillary and other products – whether they are newbies or veterans. This online edition will be held August 24-26, 2021.

There will be plenary, parallel and breakout sessions on the themes of **people** (inclusivity, diversity, wellbeing at work), **places** (destination legislation, virtual & hybrid events, legacy, sustainability) and **business** (bidding, business plans for virtual events, data, keeping business during a pandemic, tradeshow), that will allow interactions between participants.



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As HQ celebrates its 100th anniversary, we say huge congratulations for achieving this milestone and for the valuable contribution HQ has made to associations around the globe.

This is a good opportunity for us to pause for a few moments and consider the impact the last 18 months, never mind the last 100 years, has had on all associations, regardless of size, location and area of speciality, and how each of us has adapted to continue to serve our respective memberships and communities.

Defining and Communicating the **Value Proposition** for Associations

AUTHOR: **MARTIN BOYLE** (PICTURED BELOW), CEO, IAPCO

The past 18 months have been a period of significant uncertainty, risk, despair but also of hope. Hope that governments take decisive action, hope that collaboration between scientists and drug manufacturers develop and distribute vaccines across the global population, and hope that communities come together in new and valuable ways.

Many governments continue to do their part in distributing vaccinations across their citizen groups, the scientific community continues to develop and manufacture vaccines, and associations around the world continue to foster initiatives that are bringing their communities together, perhaps more so than ever before.

But how do associations effectively measure and communicate their value proposition, especially in this complex ecosystem and during such challenging times?

Leaderships' role

Joan Garry, former CEO of GLAAD and now fearless author, consultant, blogger and CEO of the Non-profit Leadership Lab, believes that leaders must lead with purpose. She cites that association leaders need

to focus on what actually matters, be a champion of purpose and have fun doing what we do.

A priority for all leaders is to understand the interests, desires and motivations of members and community partners within an association, federation or society. In doing so, programmes and partnerships can be targeted to address these needs and communications about these initiatives can be clearly shared with that community.

It is not uncommon to hear of situations where the value proposition that an association brings to its members is interpreted differently between the associations' leadership team and its members. What actually matters to one may not matter to another. Appreciating this is the first step in matching value to needs.

There are a number of accepted methods that most association leaders and their teams use to listen to their members, to learn of their current situation and future



needs. Surveys, polls and focus groups continue to be the most common and easier to administer as we are all very familiar with the purpose and methodologies of each.

Measure membership sentiment

Regular touch points throughout the year with certain membership groups within your association, can also ensure relevant information is gathered and analysed. How often do you speak with your Board members, not about the strategy of your association but rather about what individual leaders need from your association, for their own organisation and teams? Do you have other official or unofficial groups within your association community that could be called upon throughout the year to feedback on specific initiatives? Perhaps young leadership groups, ambassadors, champions and volunteers?

Identifying potential “pain points” of each of these groups and how they or you measure such pain points can be an eye-opening experience but is essential. The trick is in how you measure the response or feedback and then, how you measure your output.

Deliver success

Understanding how the member or group currently accesses and interacts with an association and its programmes in their current state provides a much more in-depth measurement. For example, do they or their teams place value on professional development? Are they aware of the programmes you offer? How do they measure their own professional development? Do your members value recognition across their peer groups and if so, how do they measure that against your awards, certification or scholarship programmes? Do they value not only the direct network across your membership base but also the wider community for potential business development, collaboration and partnerships? How do they measure a potential business lead from such networks?

If, for example, business development leads from one member to another is a key objective of members, then perhaps the development of a tool to facilitate and measure the number of leads shared between members could be helpful.

If it is more about gaining new insights and training for members, then you may consider creating professional profiles for each member in a CRM system that tracks each course or seminar attended, article read or interaction experienced at your annual event.

In addition, looking at potential partnerships with other associations that provide education and training not captured in your own programmes, but that could be offered to your members at reduced rates, may be an attractive solution for them.

Whatever solutions you create, it is critical to translate and communicate these solutions referencing the same units of measurement as your members' or stakeholders' pain points into workable actions, activities or initiatives that clearly demonstrate value for them.

A measurable value proposition that is clearly articulated by leadership and understood by all members and stakeholders, will deliver mutually beneficial results every time. Never underestimate the importance of communicating each in a clear and concise manner focusing on the benefits that will result, and never underestimate the importance of repeating that message.

It is through consistently communicating that value proposition to its members that an association will continue to drive engagement, commitment, and growth.

IAPCO is the international accreditation member-driven association for Professional Congress Organisers around the world. Its remit is to raise quality standards within the meetings industry with 139 company members, representing 10,230 meeting professionals.



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The annual AIPC member survey provides the AIPC Community with unique insights on what is happening in convention centres worldwide. The detailed results of this year's survey were presented at the AIPC Annual Conference and as a contribution to this very special edition of the HQ magazine, we wanted to share some of the key insights with the wider event industry.

The 2021 AIPC Member Survey Results: **Growing Trends in Convention Centres**

AUTHORS: SVEN BOSSU (PICTURED ABOVE) - AIPC CEO

MICHAEL HUGHES (PICTURED BELOW) - MANAGING DIRECTOR RESEARCH

& CONSULTING AT ACCESS INTELLIGENCE

The **AIPC Member Survey** report is a unique analysis, which continues to identify and track the impact of multi-year trends on the convention centre industry around the world. It has been developed by AIPC, in close collaboration with **Access Intelligence**. This year, the study focuses on the impact of the pandemic and – more importantly – on the steps taken to prepare for recovery and host in-person events and meetings again. Below, you will find a summary of the key insights from the new survey.

After a very difficult period of pandemic and disruption, the AIPC membership has entered the industry reactivation and recovery phase. The pace of the industry re-start and recovery varies significantly around the world. And even as of mid-2021 some centres are still essentially closed, or are only partially open and working under significant attendance capacity restrictions. To say this has been a challenging period for the convention centre industry around the world would be a severe understatement. In fact, this has been a very severe time for the industry with no modern era comparison on such a global scale.

While the events and meeting industry was essentially completely shut down for nearly a year around the

world, the good news is there is well-documented evidence of major pent-up demand to get back to live, in-person events and gatherings both by businesses and general attendees/consumers. And the number of events and group meetings being held in AIPC member venues around the world is continuing to increase. That multiple vaccines have been developed that work extremely well is absolutely critical to starting the industry on the path to a sustainable recovery.

It may still be hard for some venue management teams and their destination marketing partners to imagine, but the outlook for the industry in 2022 -2024 and beyond is potentially strong. It is not out of the question that in three to five years, and maybe even before, the convention, exhibition and meetings industry could potentially enter another boom period similar to what was experienced from about 2014 to 2019. But clearly there is still at least another year ahead of disruption, challenges and new situations to navigate for the industry.

The 2021 survey provided six key insights:

1. Over 90% of AIPC members expect pandemic-related centre capacity restrictions to be lifted by

2022 – and over half expect to be fully open by the fall of 2021;

2. Important client events and meetings held in 2021 have drawn 58% of pre-pandemic attendance levels;

3. Nearly eight out of ten AIPC member centres are investing in new or upgraded audio-visual studio spaces and digital communications technologies;

4. The biggest risks facing centres are the potential for extended government capacity restrictions, difficulty forecasting in-person event attendance levels, and event and group re-scheduling challenges;

5. Forecasting in-person attendance and corporate travel restrictions are the top two challenges impacting centres' post-pandemic plans;

6. Local corporate meetings are expected to be the strongest client segment over the next two years.

As shown in the research insights above, the survey provides a clear indication that, while the market outlook is still unbalanced and uncertain at this moment, convention centres are confident that business will pick up again.

At the same time, the digital investments planned by centres and the outlook that local corporate events will be the growth engine over the next two years, indicate that the future industry will be a different type of business compared to the pre-pandemic era. In combination with the risks described above, it will require convention centres to remain agile, to adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances.

Doing so successfully will require talent at all levels. That is why AIPC launched its new talent programme – **Future Shapers** – during its 2021 Annual Conference. The goal of Future Shapers is to support the AIPC Community in attracting, growing and retaining talent. The free-of-charge 12-month elevated management programme will help train a small group of individuals to become a true community of future leaders, with all the skills needed to shape the future of venues.

At AIPC, we firmly believe the future of organised events is a bright one and that by embracing the changes ahead, the membership community will turn challenges into opportunities, and continue to innovate to better serve the event and meeting management industry and our diverse audiences around the world.



As we get back to the beginning stages of normalcy in many parts of the world, maybe we should be looking beyond the return of leisure travel, conferences and meetings, increased tourism, and association gatherings.

Why not us?

Why would I suggest looking “beyond” those things in a magazine that is dedicated to increasing worldwide tourism and international meetings?

Because now might just be the right time for the hospitality industry to exert some real leadership. Not leadership in the form of the most bookings, the newest facility, the hottest destination, or the biggest conference. I mean, why not take what we have (hopefully) learned from what the world has been through in the past two years and exercise some real **global** leadership in improving our world?

I've been honoured to write articles and opinions in *Headquarters Magazine* for more than five years now. I've seen the power and passion of the international meetings and hospitality industry accomplish great things, bring value to clients, members and customers in many forms, and provide incredible insights into the marketplace.

What if, in the coming years, we, collectively, harness that power and passion to change the world for the better? We all want some person, some entity, some government, some group to do that.

Why not us?

Who is better positioned to be a change agent for how different nationalities and different cultures and different ideas interact and communicate with each other? We do that every day, bringing people and organisations and decision makers together, with no judgements, no prejudices, and complete inclusiveness.

Who is better equipped to bridge the barriers between people and countries than the industry that owes its success – indeed, its very existence - to being able to negotiate win-win situations for all the stakeholders?

Who has more experience coordinating the advancement of education at all levels and in all parts of the world? Each year we bring millions of people to technical conferences, advanced learning forums, safety and security discussions, standards-setting gatherings, student achievement events, and educational enhancement meetings.

Who is more aware of the need to work together to protect the environment, the atmosphere, and the inhabitants of our planet? We accommodate and help coordinate the events and meetings that address these issues. But someone has to take a leadership role in assuring that these issues are addressed by initiating these activities in the first place.

Why not us?

The travel industry can bring people together, face-to-face (not just screen to screen), and provide the mobility needed to get to the right people in the room, exhibit hall or conference centre.

The hospitality industry and its suppliers can assure the safety and the comfort of participants, can coordinate with the technology community to provide for universal access to information, and can extend its hand to those who need to participate but may lack the resources to do so.

“*Why not take what we have (hopefully) learned from what the world has been through in the past two years and exercise some real global leadership in improving our world?*”



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: DC Metro Area Chapter.

The association industry can bring value and content to these efforts by maximising the vast reservoir of human resources it represents. The best minds in every field; the best thinkers on every issue; and the best communicators at every level are members of these international professional, trade and technical associations.

So how do we bring all of these forces together to make real change?


We focus on outcomes, not process. We agree on sharing risk as well as rewards. The bottom line is that there is no bottom line, because that is no longer an outcome.

We establish measurement criteria that have nothing to do with heads in beds, seats in seats, guarantees, or attrition clauses. We don't wait for others to create a timeline, we offer a timeline to others. We commit to things that others think are “not in the realm of the meetings and hospitality industry” because doing the right thing to advance our common well-being is exactly what our realm should be.

The American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that “there is no limit to what we can accomplish if no one cares who gets the credit.”

Someone needs to seize on that philosophy and make a real impact on our society. **Why not us?**

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Once upon a time the world changed entirely. In January 2020, we faced the first of severe lockdowns to contain the emergence of a worldwide pandemic. Tourism, events and the MICE industry were hard hit as was the hospitality and service industry. Nearly two years later we are limping towards recovery with little idea as to what that will look like but all trends, research and forecasting are saying it points to a sustainable future where the impacts of our being have less impact.

Out of the **Ordinary Education** to **Transform** our Sector

AUTHOR: MELISSA BAIRD, HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS, GDS-MOVEMENT

The research that Booking.com brought out this month is showing what the **GDS-Movement** has long expected; that consumer attitudes towards sustainability issues (83% of global travellers think sustainable travel is vital, with 61% saying the pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future) would change and take centre stage. The pandemic has made us realise what is truly valuable and as much as we review our business strategies, we are also reviewing our relationship to things and the impact they have on us and our environment. At the same time the transition to the sustainable economy is accelerating at an unbelievable rate.

Governments all around the world and especially the US and UK have significantly increased their ambition and brought forward their carbon neutrality goals. Last year we saw a 90% increase in sustainable investments in the stock market. This shift in attitude, policy and finance will and is already catalysing a major shift in the redesign of our products, services and systems to be far more regenerative and sustainable. The events, travel and tourism sector is playing catch-up.

The **GDS-Academy** has been in incubation for some time and its recent launch offers hope for professionals seeking to develop new skills. The role of education in changing perspectives and recreating narratives that will enable equitable knowledge transfer and co-creation of new ideas is vital. The

interactive learning platform will deliver a curriculum of the latest progressive perspectives and practical application to accelerate learning amongst DMO professionals, and equip a new generation of business leaders who are adept, skilled, resilient, responsive, able and who have a healthy dose of fearlessness.

The ultimate goal of the GDS-Academy is to enable positive social, environmental and economic regeneration through tourism and events. It is the DMO professionals who co-create these events and promote tourist destinations so their leadership and enhanced learning will be the driving force for change based on a refreshed understanding of what it will take for the sector to thrive.

By using regenerative frameworks and fostering networking and collaboration, the GDS-Academy will bring much needed new learning to enable destination professionals to adapt to the ever-evolving conditions brought upon by massive shifts in the sector so deeply affected by the global pandemic.

The GDS-Academy offers education as open-enrolment online classes for professionals, and online/hybrid learning for organisations and destinations. The two initial formats are:

- **The GDS - ICCA - ECM Certificate in Regenerative Destination Management:** This powerful 16-week learning journey is designed

to help experienced destination professionals to rethink, reimagine and redesign their destination's tourism and events strategy;

- **Masterclasses** are four module sessions that are action focused, deep-dive learning experiences created to enhance skills and capacity in various critical subjects:
 1. Impact Strategy and Measurement;
 2. Planning for Recovery and Resilience;
 3. Regenerative Event Management;
 4. Storytelling for Regeneration.

All Masterclasses are delivered in partnership with education partners **Travel Foundation** and **#Meet4Impact**.

The faculty are experts in sustainable destination management and thought leaders in regenerative management practices and communications. Together they facilitate dynamic learning experiences that accelerate professional growth using design thinking processes that are immersive, engaging and fun.

The GDS-Academy is brought to you as a dynamic collaboration with **ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association)** and **ECM (European Cities Marketing)** who are the strategic and certificate partners.

Guy Bigwood, the **managing director of the GDS-Movement** has long held the dream of creating an academy that provides unique and specialised learning to service the needs of the destination marketing and management organisations. Regenerative tourism models have infinite promise and teaching how to achieve them is a priority. This milestone is a result of the deep commitment and great collaboration

with partners at **ICCA, ECM, Travel Foundation** and **#Meet4Impact**

Senthil Gopinath, ICCA CEO, recognises that sustainability is simply essential for the future of our industry. As such, it is vital that the association meetings community takes an active role in developing and implementing sustainable event strategies that are of the highest standards and fully aligned with the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals**.

Petra Stušek, president of European Cities Marketing and **CEO of Ljubljana Tourism** is in full support of the GDS-Academy and they are delighted to partner with the GDS-Movement to develop an inspiring, inclusive, positive transformation for a more resilient economy, society and future. The GDS-Academy rounds of the activities and projects of the **ECM Sustainability Knowledge Group** which has positively contributed to the development of the DMOs of tomorrow as well as sustainable urban tourism destinations.

#Meet4Impact is a partner on the **Impact Masterclass** for DMOs and this offers a unique opportunity to join forces with the best-in-class in destination sustainability. This knowledge transfer will contribute to DMOs developing a purposeful pathway towards social and environmental regeneration through the visitor economy.

Travel Foundation also joins the faculty and will offer unique perspectives and considerable expertise and experience to help destinations plan and deliver bold recovery plans and strategies. This helps to future fit and enables challenges that put people and the planet front and centre, to be met.



Membership Engagement: When Your Member's Voice Really Counts



Members are the lifeblood of an association. Fully engaged, they make our associations thrive, have impact and offer a meaningful experience. But having active involvement can be hard – and when it dips, so do membership, morale, finances and results. So, how to boost engagement?

We're investigating engagement strategies – what's 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?

Jeffer London speaks with **Trip DuBard** and **Pam Miller** of **Democrats Abroad Belgium** about ensuring their member's voices are heard. Trip chairs their board while Pam manages member mobilization, together with the 47 other chapters, they've activated their community with postcards, movie nights and apple pie – while shaping the elections of America.

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

Pam Miller: We make it easy for Americans to vote from abroad. Our goal is to get out the vote. We do that by sharing information, as well as serving a community of 9 million Americans abroad, 6.5 million of whom are eligible to vote, and at least 11 thousand in Belgium which is our chapter's focus.

Trip DuBard: As Democrats, our organisation works to advance ideas of equity, growth and community. Specifically, we as Democrats seek to do that through improvements in health care, civil rights, public education, tax systems and governmental accessibility and accountability. Also, we all remember Republican Donald Trump's election without a popular vote majority, his principle-destroying presidency, the ongoing rejection of facts by the Republican Party and that party's continuing efforts to suppress voting. If you care about America, then it makes a lot of sense to help the party opposing those Republican moves – the Democratic Party.

PARTICIPATION How do your members get involved?

TD: As expatriates working for improvement in our home country, we're used to remote action. During the 2020 election, Democrats in Belgium wrote postcards to other Americans in Belgium encouraging them to register to vote, did phone banking to American Democrats around the world encouraging them to vote and helped candidates in the US.

PM: Yes, we colour postcards. We also do weekly virtual happy hours, film and discussion nights, go out walking together, and make member-made films – set in typical Belgian places, talking about how they live in Belgium and vote in Florida, Oregon or New York. Americans who are living abroad often have a wider view on US politics, yet they may feel estranged and less apt to vote. We frequently do voter registration drives, where we seek to reach any unregistered American – Republican or Democrat – and assist them in registering to vote.

TD: I think of it as “hooks and handles”. We make it easy for people to hook on to our mission and grab hold by joining a little project. People might start with a joining a social, then entering a raffle or working the phone bank, and eventually taking on a leadership role. We like having a bunch of low cost, low risk activities that people can grab on to – then we simply notice when a volunteer with a certain talent shows up.

PLATFORM How do your members connect and collaborate?

PM: We have task forces, councils and caucuses, each with their own focus. We reflect the issues of the party, and host groups on topics relevant to our members' situations. Taxation is prickly subject for our members, and that taskforce has been active for 10 years. We also have caucuses by identity, like youth, LGBTQ+ or veterans, which exist to engage members with a particular area of interest in campaigns, initiatives and advocacy projects.

TD: These are the formal structures that help us advance our cause. If you would like to get involved or join Democrats Abroad, the link is www.democratsabroad.org/join – this will put you in the membership list of the appropriate country chapter. To register to vote, Americans should go to www.votefromabroad.org to prepare their Federal Post Card Application and send it back to their Local

Election Official. Best to do this every year, because as we have seen this year, you never know when an election might pop up.

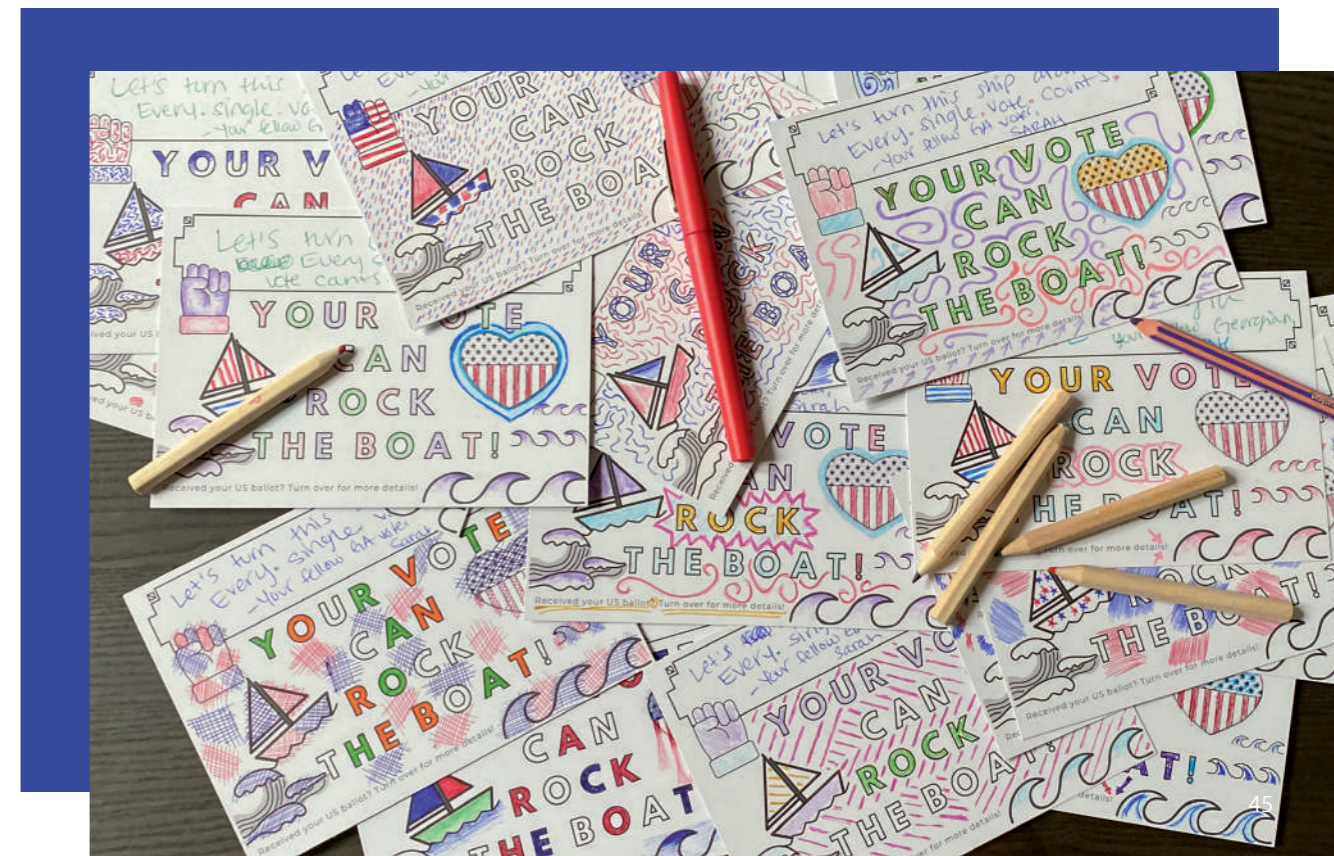
PM: Our collaboration rose with the pandemic, as we were all pushed online. During COVID, our members volunteered to manage communities on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp – with groups on everything from “Volunteering Opportunities” to “Ramadan Recipes.”

PROGRESS How do your members move things forward?

TD: We notice the participation in events, followers and engagements, survey responses, people's off-the-cuff perspectives, and votes, of course. Votes from abroad were approximately double in 2020 than 2016.

PM: We see the vote numbers, by state and by country. Banding together with groups like **Texans Abroad** has mobilised people and influenced elections. The 2020 outcome in Georgia, was thanks in part to our activity – the 12,000-vote margin would not have been made without voters abroad and that tipped the balance blue.

TD: Our members are passionate about America and progressive ideas. They support Democratic candidates in their own states and elsewhere. They



participate in global Democratic policy meetings, shaping discussion for the larger party. At home in Belgium, they initiate fundraisers, talks, walks and ways to connect with Americans in Belgium.

“Give people an easy handle to grab on to your mission. It can be as easy as coloring a postcard, then watch for other talents to emerge.”

PROMOTE How do you recognise member’s talents?

TD: We don’t recognise members’ contributions enough. We say thanks a lot, giving many informal “shout outs” to the volunteers who keep us rolling. Your question has gotten me thinking about how we could celebrate people formally and publicly.

PM: American stuff, like Thanksgiving, Halloween and apple pies are hooks for us. You never know where a volunteer will pop up, and they often surprise us with their goodwill. One of our members baked 30 pies for thanksgiving, sold them via the membership, and donated the proceeds to us. People love that personal touch. Who doesn’t like pie?

POSTSCRIPT Any other advice for creating engagement?

TD: Make it enjoyable and not transactional. People have many other things they could do, and yet they choose to support certain organisations with their limited time. Leverage the sense of purpose and passion. Tap into people’s desire for positive change. These are choices people are making, not jobs that they have to do.

PM: Create a sense of community and allow people to feel connected. Listen to their story, and let people know they are not alone. We recognise that when you live abroad, your friends become your family.



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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The IAF promotes facilitators and all who use facilitation to help people work together effectively. Looking for better facilitation? Check out IAF-world.org or talk to Jeffer directly about facilitating leadership teams and association-wide engagement initiatives.



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ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Many thanks to Trip DuBard and Pam Miller for speaking with us. Trip is the chair Democrats Abroad Belgium (DAB) and Pam is the Head of Member Mobilization Committee. DAB is the official country committee for US Democrats living in Belgium.

If you know Americans abroad, in any party, let them know they can vote by going to democratsabroad.org or [@demsabroad](https://twitter.com/demsabroad).

More info at democratsabroad.org/be or [@demsabroadBE](https://twitter.com/demsabroadBE).



DEMOCRATS ABROAD

What's the Deal with Hybrid?

We can all agree that *hybrid* is a current buzzword without a fundamental definition or business model that can be scaled for different types of meetings. Hybrid events are an exceedingly expensive endeavour with constantly changing factors that are hard to predict or plan for. This reality challenges event professionals to shift their focus away from meeting design, and towards assessing complex logistical issues. Only then can they examine the most effective way to deliver content – the core reason for holding an event in the first place.

While the future is certainly somewhere between virtual and in-person meetings, the answer is not necessarily hybrid. Looking at hybrid vehicles for example, they clearly state the use of multiple types of power, say electric and diesel. The definition is evident for everyone – the manufacturer, the user and the mechanic. In our industry’s case, however, the fact that event organisers and owners recognise that a hybrid event caters for both online and onsite audiences simultaneously, is not necessarily true for their audiences.

Hence, the definition of hybrid remains vague. Even though in the past countless events held broadcasts and streams for their online audiences, we didn’t refer to them as hybrid – think pre-pandemic IMEX and PCMA’s Convening Leaders. **Does this mean that we’ve been in a state of hybrid for a while and are now simply complicating matters with new fancy words?**

The power of in-person events derives from the depth of emotion that the participants experience, engaging all five senses. For a few days they are part of a larger community, be it due to their physical location or a set of common values and beliefs. Much like a dance performance, once the moment is gone, regardless of what was captured in digital form, they will never experience the same feeling in the exact same way.

Virtual events, on the other hand, allow participants the freedom to choose the time and place of the event experience or even the number of times the experience will occur. They take place in a new reality in which each element can be altered and personalised, compensating for the lack of emotional depth.

So, is the future of the event industry hybrid?

Referencing back to hybrid vehicles, the first hybrid cars were very expensive and could not cater for everyone. It took many years before they were priced similarly to petrol cars, and the number of buyers grew significantly.

In much the same way, we believe that events will continue to exist and grow in the virtual realm more than ever before. The virtual experience will evolve, and with it so will the terminology.



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