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NOVEMBER 2021 #102 BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY



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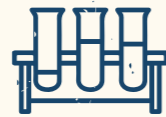
AUSTRALIA INNOVATES REDESIGNING WATER SOLUTIONS FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES



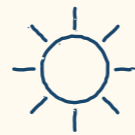
Process engineer Sachini De Silva has co-created a sustainable, off-grid solution to provide access to clean water in remote locations.



Access to clean drinking water is a challenge in many parts of the world.



Gilghi, which means 'place of water' in the Barkindji Indigenous language, is a containerised water treatment system designed to provide a continuous supply of clean drinking water in remote locations.



Housed inside a shipping container, Gilghi uses solar power to operate the plant and charge the batteries during the day.



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Combining renewable energy with water treatment, the Gilghi unit provides access to sustainable, clean water to assist global communities and industries, while creating local jobs.



Gilghi can produce up to 28 kilolitres of water per day and can be applied in a number of settings, such as areas experiencing drought, oil, mining and gas sectors, local agribusiness and even disaster response across the world.



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Luxembourg: All About Connecting You

Since its creation in 2019, the **Luxembourg Convention Bureau (LCB)** has been supporting associations that organise congresses and conferences in the country. The LCB knows that one of the most important ingredients of any successful meeting is getting in touch early on with the right people, so that facilitating connections becomes one of its core services.

“Over the years, we’ve developed very close relationships with leaders from every key economic sector,” said **François Lafont**, CEO of the LCB. “These are valuable relationships that we strengthen on a daily basis, and it’s our mission as well as our pleasure to put visiting associations in touch with these contacts.”

Not that making connections in Luxembourg is difficult, given its comfortable and reliable size, free public transport, and experts from all sectors nearby and accessible – sometimes literally just a handshake away. This closeness, along with its international character and openness, is one of the reasons why the country is such an attractive destination for associations.

This ease of knowledge-sharing and networking in Luxembourg also factors into its robust economic growth and diversification in recent years – a transformation boosted by the government’s commitment to research and innovation. Key sectors

that range from space mining and ICT to agriculture and high-tech manufacturing are also a huge draw for associations.

Still, a simple introduction can go a long way, even in a country as interconnected and open as Luxembourg. LCB sales manager **Sarina Migge** recalls recently creating a working group for a visitor who was taking part in a site inspection for an awards ceremony.

“The event was about the world of art and design, so we arranged to have him meet seven or eight of our partners from the creative cluster,” she said. “We really wanted him to have access to the right people early on.”

Indeed, it sometimes just takes that one introduction to make everything fall into place, and that is why the LCB makes connecting people a priority. Its experienced and motivated team members work hard to develop and maintain close relationships with local partners across all economic sectors. In short, they know who’s who, and it is their goal to make meaningful connections happen.

“We do everything we can to put you in touch with local experts and key players from your sector,” Mr. Lafont said. “And of course, we also do everything we can to find you the best event organisers, service providers, and everyone else you need to ensure your congress or conference makes a splash.”

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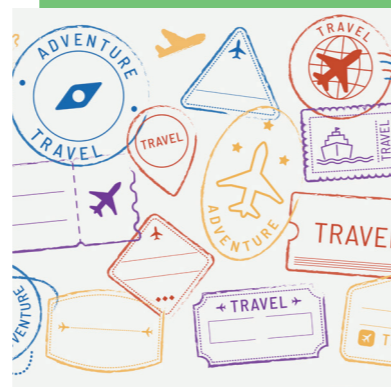


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The World is our Household

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

Political statements are not just necessary to ensure that we live in a beautiful, clean and healthy environment. Man has always set the bar high in this regard and will continue to do so. If in the past we were just doing this on our own, now we are starting to transition to collective thinking. This planet is our household, so even when we travel, we are at home. In our industry, there are clear shifts taking place. The word “obvious” is no longer in vogue here, but the word “challenge” is more and more. As in many industries, the so-called “first movers” – those who go beyond expectations – are the ones who get rewarded by clients and investors. It strengthens a brand or the positive image of an event or congress.

Event or conference organisers have an overfilled profession anyway. An extra “burden” by paying attention to food origin, grouped travel options, the type of fuel used, and so on. Therefore, it is appropriate to do what is possible, adding a layer each and every year. There's no point in putting in a lot of effort if you can't figure out your plans, so make sure you decide what you're going to measure before you even start. This can range from the percentage of waste that can be avoided – or recycled – to the amount and type of diesel you use. This extra “burden” can be reduced by delegating tasks to your project team, but handing them over to contractors can free up time across your organisation. The best moment to get a contractor's input is when they are bidding on the job, so make sure your environmental impacts are an important part of the selection.

Don't forget to include clauses in your contract that require caterers to serve their F&B in recyclable tableware. The trash can at a trade show or conference can also indicate to attendees whether or not there is a concern about what we've left behind. Make waste separation at these places a clear and simple story and check with your contractor about what happens to your waste and whether it will be recycled. Reflect on what kind of transport and sharing possibilities exist before, during and after a conference. For your catering, make sure all your contractors use the local food providers you've instructed them to use. You can even introduce participants to producers that offer sustainable products. This can be so fascinating and educational with the potential to make everyone's experience unique and, above all, fun!



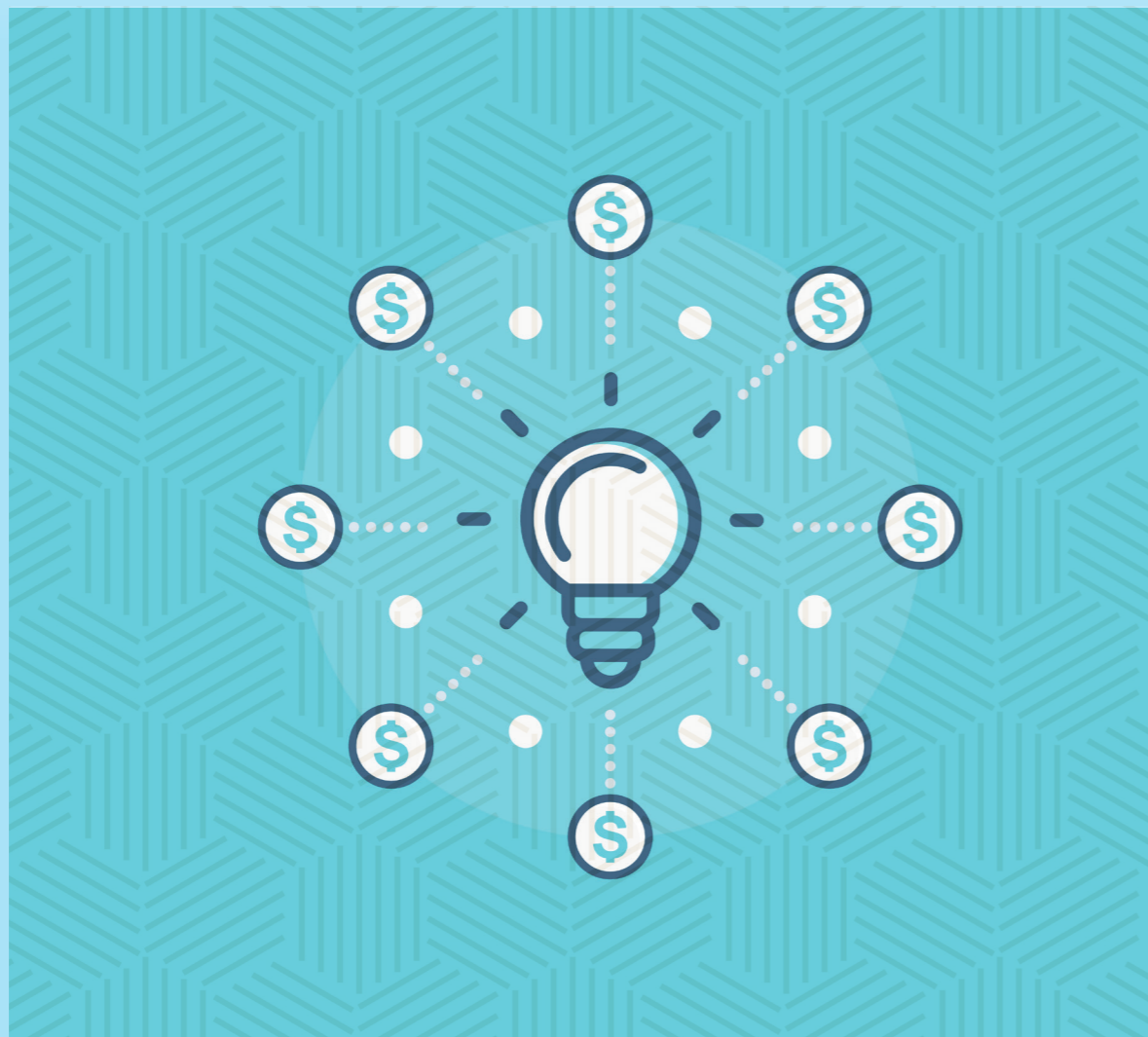
HO ESSENTIAL & INTERVIEW

The New Event Marketing Opportunity

How event marketing has changed and why it offers a more strategic way to think about your event programme.

BY FELICIA ASIEDU, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER FOR CVENT EUROPE.

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According to a recent Forrester survey, 66% of event managers said they executed events independently of their organisation's marketing campaigns. For years, marketers and planners have worked in silos, potentially leading to countless missed opportunities. The good news is, however, whilst the pandemic put in-person events on hold, the roles and responsibilities of marketers and event planners converged. Traditional marketing channels, such as webinars, became integrated with virtual and now hybrid events, allowing planners and marketers to work more closely and uncover new, and often better, ways to plan and produce their meetings and events.

This enhanced marketer/planner partnership has laid the foundation for the new event marketing opportunity, which advocates the notion of thinking about your total event programme as an integral part of your overall event marketing channel. This new opportunity offers event and marketing professionals the potential to collect a wider, more robust data set that can help support more targeted marketing efforts, paint a clearer picture of potential clients or members, and deliver a deeper understanding of your existing customers, members, or alumni.

In short, the new event marketing opportunity offers a more strategic, impactful way to think about your total event programme. Here's a summary of what you need to know:

- Marketers have leveraged the events channel for years; in-person conferences, trade shows, etc., have proven to be invaluable for building relationships with the right audiences. What makes the new event marketing opportunity different is its holistic approach - encouraging marketers to

also integrate virtual and hybrid experiences into their total event channel strategy.

- Virtual and hybrid events easily integrate with other digital/online marketing tactics. You can set goals, achieve key objectives, and measure outcomes in the same way as other digital marketing tactics such as social media, website landing pages, shareable online content and more.
- Due to increased audience expectations and technology innovations, in-person events will become more digitally connected, and virtual events will become more interactive and experiential.
- Marketers specialise in setting, measuring, and delivering on, revenue-based objectives. This expertise can help planners incorporate events into the broader marketing mix for better reporting and results.
- Events generate a lot of data and require specific technology to help capture and measure it, but the process doesn't have to be complex. There are event solutions that can deliver powerful results through a single platform and that integrate with marketing and CRM technologies like *Salesforce* and *Marketo*. By integrating event data with your marketing automation solutions, you'll get a better picture of attendees' interests as they interact with your marketing channels, as well as cross-event/channel visibility, which ultimately makes your event channel more impactful.

In this new era of events, event professionals should leverage their marketing colleagues and take advantage of the new event marketing opportunity to drive results.





Let's Talk About **Money**, Shall We?

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” There was not here or there in Buckminster Fuller’s mind when he decided to break away from pre-existing models and stereotypes of design and architecture. The evolution of a company/industry/profession operates on a basis of constant change and friction and rarely moves according to our wishes. Why would it be different in this post COVID-19 pandemic? The greatest and most powerful revolutions usually start very quietly, don’t come out of the blue, and remain hidden until the final blow. Whether you call it transformation, transition, or disruption, they all imply and interpose a shape-shifting on the timeline: nothing will be quite the same. This “iceberg”, which is only now showing its summit, is the representation of a new *modus operandi*, inspired by dictates and concepts submerged by the main script of the industry and that will affect your return on investment.



Basically, all issues related to sustainability, hybrid events and telecommuting point to an even broader discussion about a new-fangled business model that will affect associations and destinations. That’s the operative word here: business. In a statement to this *HQ magazine*, **Frode Aasheim**, director of events at **Visit Oslo**, adamantly states that we are still a very conservative industry. At the same time, subvention remains a rather dubious and opaque topic, raising dispute about where it comes from and who it should go to, where many just see it as an ill-justified incentive or concession in a destination’s sales strategy. In a recent survey, done by **Rob Davidson** of **MICE Knowledge**, “the Impacts of the Pandemic on Convention Bureaus in Europe”, we see that 31% of convention bureaus were negatively impacted and suffered cuts in their government funding with a lack of direct RFPs coming in and a reduction in costs and staff. Now, with this digital transition and sustainability gaining ground in the events sector, it may be time to clarify this and bet on a new economic management model. For starters, if the majority of events to be held in the future will be in a hybrid format, it is essential to allocate a cost for your participation. Online does not mean free, and associations should take this into account when promoting their content. Content will also be a holy grail for associations as far as their event programmes are concerned. If your conference doesn’t have anything innovative to show, breakout sessions remain outdated or if networking is just a boring mirror of the past, why should I attend? As we all know, probably three-quarters of associations’ revenue come from their annual convention, or their mid-year conference. In-house content and information will undoubtedly be one of the most valuable assets to leverage your event participation and that organisation’s economic success.

If hybrid events become the standard and claims for more sustainable events become the norm, it means that destinations’ business strategy will be severely constrained. Once again, the transformative capacity of these businesses and the reshuffle of revenue streams will be crucial in adapting to clients’ requirements. In the same way that event planners have become accustomed

to having a production team for the live meeting, they will likely have a production team focused exclusively on the virtual experience. This will open a lot of doors both in the event typology and in the dual access system. This hub-and-spoke groundbreaking model will complement satellite events or regional hubs with event headquarters on frequent broadcast to multiple locations. Although the profit margin can be equally explored, this logistical change will imply a new network of suppliers that will work together for the event’s success. Will this make a conference more expensive? We don’t know yet, but it will certainly be more convenient for the participant and effective in recruiting. The competition for sustainable destinations won’t be merely one less “caviar” in your event’s catering. It’s becoming part of the narrative and not just a final line in global forums. The ability of a convention city to climb rankings and win bids for future associative conferences will be proportionally linked to its eco-friendly policies and the environmental awareness of its actions. If you haven’t thought about it, think about it now. We are no longer separated from the (in)visible reality that an event drives for the community and for the client’s own reputation. So, don’t be surprised if food waste or downtown pollution becomes an “unexpected” factor causing you to lose your next contract.

As for sponsoring? Well, expect many more digital companies working side-by-side in your market and gradually investing in your event, either in financial or in-kind sponsorship. Event sponsorship, by allowing organisations to host bigger and better events faster and at lower cost, could lead to better partnerships and to strike bids on a consistent basis. Before investing in a sponsorship, make sure the sponsor is aligned with your goals and strategy, showing how it will benefit your business. Remember, at both ends of sponsorship, mutual recognition will continue to be the first step for a healthy relationship. Your event’s legacy will also be conditioned by how you recruit your sponsors. Be aware of that! Ultimately, the balance and demand between the value of your content and the consistency of your image will only strengthen your business and your position in this ecosystem.





Grace and Refinement to Entice *Bleisure* Events in Northern Portugal

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

Tourism of Porto and North of Portugal is at stake for several markets, adjusting its offer to the latest trends and different visitor profiles. In early October, we were able to attest a strong investment that aims to change the face of the region.

With the global events market showing the first signs of reopening, many destinations are taking the first safe steps towards a much-desired economic recovery. So, when we received an invitation from **Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal (TPNP)** to witness its renaissance and participate in its presentation FAM trip, the initial excitement gave way to an intriguing curiosity. What would be the marketing strategy for a first wave of business travellers? Porto and neighbouring cities were witnessing tremendous growth in leisure tourism – result of an investment in infrastructure, air connections and high quality hospitality – until the debacle of 2019. With the business reset and the reopening borders in the middle of this year, it made perfect sense for this late bloomer to transfer some of this tourist inflow to the meetings and events sector. Thus, were born

the **Porto and North Travel Series** – a set of episodes to showcase what the region has to offer in different segments – and the **Majestic Adventures of Ofelia de Souza** – the new marketing campaign that the agency has prepared to highlight these Portuguese destinations on MICE platforms.

Our journey began in the foyer of the **Pestana Palácio do Freixo** and its stunning views over the Douro river. Located 3 km from the city centre, this national monument turned into urban resort has 87 rooms and 6 main meeting rooms, perfect for dinners or medium-sized meetings. From there we immediately move to another historical building that is currently the topmost venue for exhibitions, corporate and cultural events. **Alfândega do Porto Congress Centre** was the stage that introduced the new campaign dictating the

goals and strengths of Porto and North of Portugal in the coming years. It was there that **Luís Pedro Martins, TPNP Chairman**, welcomed the new promotional film that reinforces the guidelines of the region as a privileged destination for the meetings industry. The **Majestic Adventures of Ofelia de Souza**, is an extravagant *art nouveau* incursion through the experience of a sophisticated meeting planner that aims to share the concept of *bleisure* (business and leisure) in Northern Portugal. “Returning to the meetings industry is fundamental for us, due to the multiplier effect of this product, both in terms of tourist consumption and in combating seasonality,” stresses Martins in a statement. In addition to this campaign and the Travel Series (*which we have been sharing on our website*), TPNP has also shaped two destination marketing programmes: **Meethology**, a series of interviews and field trips that lead entrepreneurs, business, innovation and sustainability to the forefront of the region; and **Eventhology**, a virtual site inspection for international planners allowing to decide where and how the event will go next.

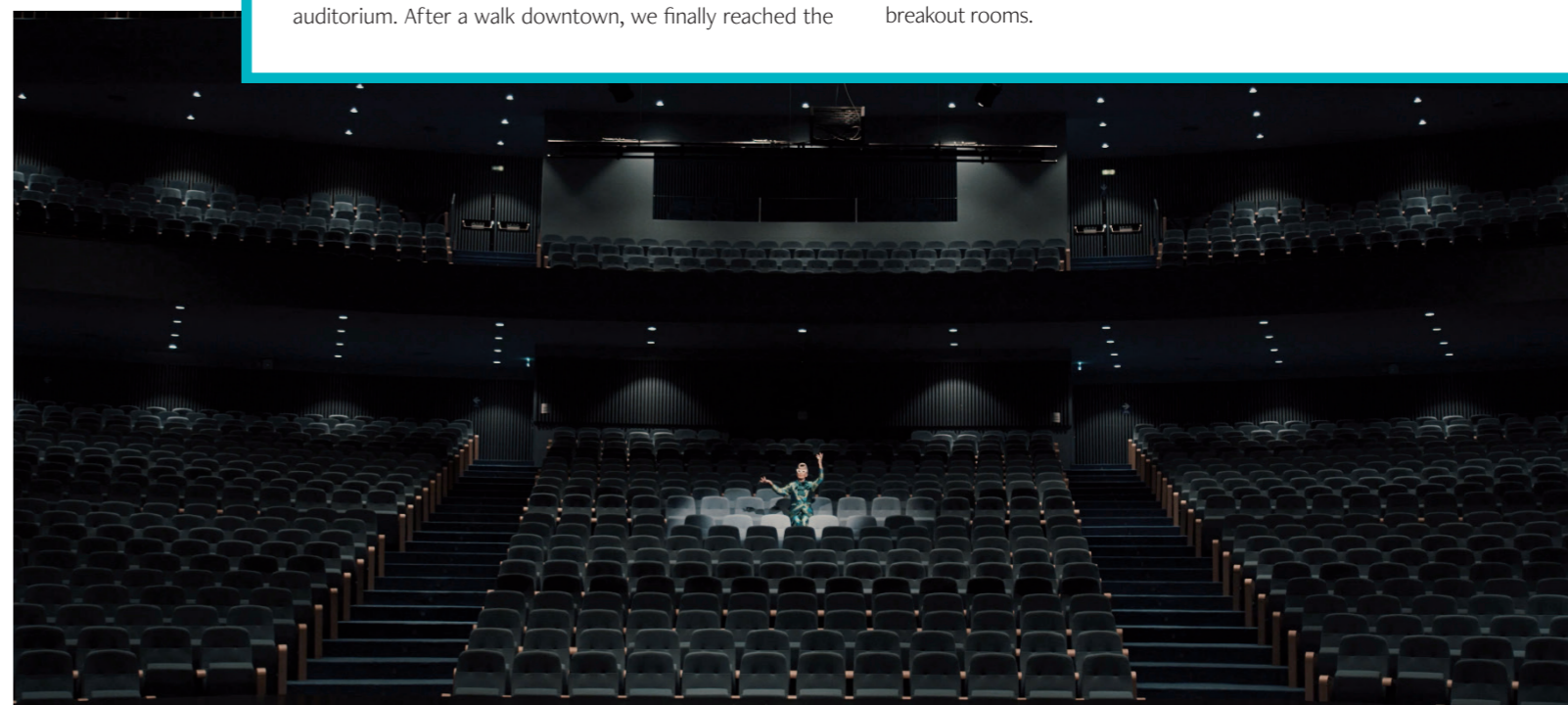
Day 1

Back to the fact-finding visit, we stand at the city’s former customs house that has now been converted into an award-winning multi-purpose space with 36,000 m² of flexible area and 22 multifunctional spaces. Specialised in exhibitions, trade shows and cultural events, **Alfândega** has the capacity for congresses up to 3000 people, exhibitions up to 10 000 m² and concerts up to 1200 people. By the afternoon, we got the chance to visit another icon of contemporary architecture. **Casa da Música** is a sumptuous concert hall that makes it possible to hold small events and meetings, perfect for VIPs in the winding rooms and corridors that flow into the main auditorium. After a walk downtown, we finally reached the

third Porto summit: **Palácio da Bolsa**. Built from the ruins of a convent, this neoclassical-style building is also a cultural and conference pivot of the city with impressive qualities for events, ceremonies, and trade shows of all kinds. The options between the majestic Hall of Nations (506m²; 700 pax), the exotic Arab Room (315m²; 300 pax) or the overwhelming General Assembly Room (153m²; 150 pax), are mesmerising.

Days 2 & 3

Next day, we headed straight to the banks of the Douro Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where a luxury hotel awaited us. **Six Senses Douro Valley** is nothing less than a haven of peace engulfed by the bucolic cliffs of Douro. A selection of rooms, suites and villas, spa, restaurant and swimming pools are just some of the many amenities on offer. After a Port Wine tasting at **Quinta do Vallado**, we left again just in time to check-in at **Hotel Vila Galé Collection Braga**. With 123 rooms and suites, this charming hotel is the ideal space to kick-off your business meeting in one of its 8 event rooms. Together with the **Melia Braga Hotel & Spa**, Vila Galé represents the premier accommodation aimed at major events at the **Altice Forum Braga**. Inaugurated in 2018, this convention centre was born from the redevelopment of the Braga Exhibition Park, and has retained a pavilion with capacity for 12,000 people, a large auditorium with 1454 seats, and several meeting rooms. After a few stops between the cities of Braga and Porto, we arrived at the **World of Wine**, the creative quarter on Douro riverbank that includes several restaurants, a guest exhibition space and bespoke meeting rooms. Finally, the **Sheraton Porto Hotel & Spa** perfectly combines discretion and refinement in a 12-floor building with 266 rooms and suites, an area of 1750 m² for conferences, eight event rooms and 11 breakout rooms.



This period of seeming inactivity proved to be the opposite for **VOK DAMS** during the peak of the pandemic. The events agency produced over 50 digital events, along with sales conferences, partner summits and award ceremonies for the likes of the European Patent Office, Miele, Vodafone, Merck, Pfizer or ServiceNow. Even though the future of events is hybrid, now it all comes down to what the agency calls "New Live". Come decipher this and the concept of campfire gene with CEO **Colja Dams** (pictured right).

“There is **no equivalent** communication with the same **emotional impact** as **live events**”

As one of the leading live marketing and event management agencies in the world, what trends do you anticipate occurring in terms of event services?

Hybrid events have experienced a real boom in the past year and their immense potential is far from exhausted. When it comes to brand experiences, the topic of hybrid events remains hot. However, the powerful impact of events is based on the deep human desire to socially interact with others. We call that the campfire DNA. There is no equivalent communication with the same emotional impact as live events.

Yet, digitalisation shouldn't be an afterthought to "Live". Certain live events are made for digitalisation, others depend on interpersonal face-to-face interaction and others again are optimal as hybrid events. It will be the agency's task to find the right balance. From a sustainability point of view, the digital element should be part of any future event setup to lower the environmental impact of certain parts of live events. Sustainable events with less travel, less product and less energy use, will be more important in the future. Another important aspect of producing live events the coming years will be agency agility. The agile process allows responding quickly and efficiently, with short decision-making processes and extreme flexibility.

Do you expect to see your business model changed in a short time by this worldwide digital explosion?

The digital integration and use of online communication channels has always been part of our business model and shaped our client offerings. For us this "digital explosion"

is part for course, but the pandemic has accelerated the acceptance of online aspects of live events on the client side, making it easier to get hybrid events approved.

After nearly two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, VOK DAMS is experiencing a strong increase in demand for live events around the world. Do you think this push around regional smaller events will trigger the larger scale ones?

The rise of smaller regional events replacing the central large-scale events is a result of the COVID-19 induced travel uncertainty. With travel restrictions coming in force, clients were not willing to take the risk to have a large percentage of their guests not being able to attend.

Bringing everyone into one central location to experience the same event at the same time is still the preferred solution for the majority of our multinational clients. It's easier logistics, more time efficient for management and much more impactful for guests.

Early this year, VOK DAMS published a new white paper based on learnings from 439 digital and hybrid events, and pointing out six factors for their success. After a few months, what has changed or been reinforced by these February findings?

All six success factors mentioned in the February white paper – co-creation, autonomous choice, timing, content, haptic moments and personal dialogue – are still valid for successful digital and hybrid events. While producing face-to-face events in the past months, we have learned that a number of pandemic related aspects are having



an impact. Strategy, planning and production need to be readjusted to the new client and guest requirements. That's what we call the "New Live".

These aspects include the "zoom mindset" of event attendees during events. Today's event attendees are always online and ready for the next video meeting, even during exciting live keynotes. The new COVID-19 routines – integration of vaccination/recovery certificates into guest management systems and on-site PCR testing – are also part of the "New Live". Stumbling supply chains require agile working methods and long-term planning. Further convincing staff acquisition is more important than ever in the "New Live", as many employees left the event industry permanently during the pandemic.

Do you think that public and private investments will get tighter and more wary due to the stagnation of the last two years?

Investments in the live marketing industry came to a crushing halt during the pandemic, as there was no certainty about when situation would change for the better. With the positive impact of the ever-increasing vaccination rate and the amount of successful recoveries, it's clear that people are keen to meet in person again. The social aspect of live events is of such importance for the majority of people that they are willing to endure the added administration of testing and vaccination passports. This thirst for live events of the majority of the people makes investors more comfortable investing again.

The pandemic had a profound impact on the profitability of many companies and therefore the amount of investments might be lower in the beginning, but there's no doubt that the live event industry will be a profitable investment environment again. Large-scale events like **EXPO Dubai**, **Munich IAA** and **Las Vegas IMEX** show that we are on the way back.

In a recent study, 83% of B2B marketers said that they will increasingly invest in data analysis. From a client perspective, what are the risks and actions to be taken in data management with hybrid events?

Data is collected for automated, promising marketing measures. The aim is to obtain a comprehensive picture of the interests, information and buying habits of the target groups and to find out which measures generate attention. In this way, marketing measures can be evaluated and specifically selected to address potential customers in a promising manner.

This is only possible if relevant customer touchpoints are identified, controlled and all data is collected in one single system in order to finally analyse it. So far, data generated by events has not been fully integrated into the marketing automation process – this gap has been closed with our offer of **Live+ Marketing Automation**. The technology for safe and secure data transfer and storage is widely available. All our marketing hubs, open platforms and guest management systems have high levels of security and protection. A necessary requirement, highly appreciated by clients.



As in so many other industries, sponsorship has undergone a dramatic turnaround in its business model towards an increasingly digital economy. By instance, Zoom is now worth more than the world's 7 biggest airlines combined, benefiting enormously from this unusual period. The **European Sponsorship Association (ESA)** aims to inspire, unite and grow this diverse sponsorship industry, through education, representation, certification and by sharing best practices and performances. **Stuart Wareman**, ESA Board Director, painted a positive picture for the industry.



“More **tech and e-commerce companies** have got involved in **sponsorship**”

How did ESA manage to survive this global shutdown and keep up with its members?

ESA has been very fortunate. We've actually grown our membership base by 28% since 2019 by doubling down on providing more benefits and staying engaged with our members. The sponsorship industry as a whole suffered more than most during COVID-19 with events cancelled, postponed or curtailed, and many employees on furlough. Our role at ESA was to provide help, guidance, and content for our members to show them they were not alone and we would pull through together as an industry.

We immediately pivoted to providing regular webinars on matters related to COVID-19, NFTs, influencers and highlighting best practices in key areas. We hosted 19 webinars with over 2,000 attendees from around the world, giving our members the chance to show what they could do. We also provided a number of exclusive “round tables” under Chatham House rules where small groups of Brands, Agencies or Rights Holders could get together and share common challenges. These have proved incredibly popular at a time when traditional networking was impossible.

Our marketing efforts, meanwhile, focused on member feedback via regular pulse checks. ESA's **Sponsorship Sentiment Tracker** led to significant editorial and social coverage as it reflected what the industry itself was thinking about its own future, and identified the key issues it was facing.

In your opinion, what can we expect from the sponsorship sector in 2022? What will remain and what will change most significantly?

Each year we ask our members what key trends they're witnessing. 2021 was obviously highly influenced by the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, but it made for a fascinating read. The pandemic has accelerated some underlying changes that were already happening: a move towards more digital and content sponsorship activations; a sharper focus on measurement and accountability for sponsorship investments; and the rise of e-sports as a credible and important sponsorship genre.

Meanwhile, other trends included a greater flexibility in sponsorships to allow for unforeseen circumstances, and a sharper focus on purpose- and community-based sponsorships to demonstrate what brands stand for. As

live events continue to come back throughout 2022, we will likely see a hybrid state of events complementing each other. This will help engage those who can't attend in person as well as those who have a pent-up demand for mass live events.

According to one of the latest AIM International Group surveys, 80% of corporate sponsors are interested in investing in virtual events but need interaction and support. Are you driving this big market shift to innovate your association's services?

To survive – and even thrive – during the pandemic, all industries needed to adapt and digitise to stay relevant and engage fans. F1 did a brilliant job by quickly creating nine virtual e-prix with celebrities and F1 drivers participating with more than 30 million tuning in to watch across linear TV and digital platforms. Mass events such as the London Marathon pivoted to all-virtual for amateurs with over 37,000 participating from around the world.

Significant sponsorships have been forged with relatively new technology providers that are leading this change. Teamviewer, based in Germany, has signed up with Manchester United, and Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team, while Zoom is now a sponsor of F1. Digital innovation was the only way rights holders could offer value to sponsors and one of the only ways brands could activate their sponsorships. At ESA, we changed the way we provide member engagement and now hold more webinars and digital experiences.

What are the main trends that will guide the recovery and what is the overall sentiment tracker in light of the spoils of the crisis?

The sponsorship industry is pretty robust and has weathered many storms in the past. When one particular sector, for example tobacco sponsorship, falls out it is often quickly replaced. More tech and e-commerce companies have got involved in sponsorship since the pandemic and this is helping fuel confidence in the industry.

Our Sentiment Tracker has been a really helpful guide to the industry and, for the most part, has remained fairly optimistic about its recovery. We are likely now to see a far greater emphasis on digital rights and activation and a greater degree of flexibility in sponsorship contracts.

There is a noticeable focus on education and training programmes for professional development

in your association. What kind of certificates and programmes is ESA providing for partners and members?

We believe we have a best in class programme, underpinned by the ESA Diploma, the only professional qualification in the industry. This eight-month part-time course fits around a busy modern work lifestyle and is increasingly seen as a mandatory qualification for those seeking to develop their career in sponsorship and sports marketing. ESA pivoted the Diploma in 2020 to become online-only and ran two courses to accommodate demand. There's clearly great appetite as we saw a 90% increase in graduates in 2020 versus 2019 and attracted candidates from countries including the US, South Africa, UAE and Singapore as well as our heartlands in Europe.

This year, in an effort to support greater diversity in the industry, we are offering an ESA Diploma Scholarship so that funding doesn't become a barrier to entry. The ESA Sponsorship Sales Certificate is becoming a must-have qualification for those who work in sponsorship sales and this too pivoted to online courses, and we held double the number usually run in one year. Finally we also run the ESA Leaders Programme, aimed at more senior industry professionals and includes executive coaching.

Do you consider that more than ever it is necessary to reward the best performances and policies within your sector today?

In tough times, we believe recognition and reward matters more than ever. Many in our industry have suffered a great deal and there's been so much innovation that we created new categories for the ESA Awards – Best Use of Virtual Experiences and Best Ethical Response to COVID-19 – with a very healthy number of entries. We simplified entry requirements and the standard of entries continued to rise. The ceremony was virtual in 2021 but we plan to return to an in-person event in 2022 as we've all missed those major networking opportunities.

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A lot of things have come to fruition these past few months for a hotel industry that has survived the last two years in dire straits. The **Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI)** is a global organisation founded in America in 1927, but which also has a presence in Europe through an institutional arm with its membership on this side of the pond. It is also committed to business growth for the events and travel industry, and is one of the industry's leading advocates for smart and sustainable development at regional and European level after the pandemic. **Ingunn Hofseth, President and CEO of HSMIAI Region Europe**, was the association's spokesperson for this conversation.

“It will take a **few years** for business travel to return to **pre-pandemic levels**”

HSMIAI was born out of a commitment to growing the business for hotels and their partners and providing the tools and support to hospitality professionals to drive sales, inspire marketing and optimise revenue. After two such tragic years, what kind of work are you doing to assist the industry and your membership in terms of funding and sponsorship?

HSMIAI in Europe has supported the industry by arranging more than 30 different complimentary digital webinars, conferences and training sessions for our members. Our initiatives included redeveloping one of our programmes – the **Excelling at Customer Centricity Programme** – into a five-week online programme. In addition, we have executed several other online programmes in areas relating to sales, marketing, branding and revenue optimisation.

HSMIAI has also suffered financially over the last 20 months. Fortunately, our members and sponsors have realised that sales and marketing are critical to recovery. As such, they have reinforced their interest in HSMIAI

Europe, and are supporting our agenda and programmes for the coming year, starting with several European events in London on January 25 and 26, at the InterContinental London Park Lane. (See chart on page 17)

According to one of the latest polls by HSMIAI Europe, more than three-quarters of the surveyed membership firmly believe that customer experience, rather than profitability, will be a central focus for overcoming the crisis. After two years in which the financial solvency of several hotels has been called into question, how great is the hotel industry's ability to invest in customer experience and bespoke services instead of optimised revenues?

During the recent series of **HSMIAI Europe Day** local events, held in six different European countries, industry leaders indicated their intentions to continue to personalise the guest experience. The industry clearly sees that this investment is vital in increasing guest satisfaction, resulting in higher sales and profitability. However, investments will be directly related to

forecasted revenues as the industry continues on its path to recovery.

On your website, there's a very interesting article about why post-pandemic market segmentation is going to be “more important than ever” and the benefits of data collection for different types of hospitality. Based on the latest studies and forecasts, what will be the reach and share of business travel and MICE for the resumption of hotel activity?

As European governments relax travel restrictions, reduce testing and discontinue quarantine requirements, business travel has already started to pick up. However, the lead time for small/medium events is shorter, and this part of the segment is already very active. For large events, clients continue to be cautious so bookings are better into the longer term, since this part of the segment remains subdued. Under the best of conditions, it might take a few years to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Back in September of 2021, HSMIAI Europe launched its first “Student Council” to support hospitality undergraduates’ and graduates’ professional growth, to harness their entrepreneurial skills and directly assist in the transition to the job market. What role within your association do you assign to education and talent acquisition to raise the profile and prestige of the industry? How vital will it be in the coming years?

Talent acquisition, development and retention have always been important to the hospitality sales and marketing function. Pricing and distribution evolve so quickly that hotel corporations require a steady stream of new talent to succeed. HSMIAI Europe has undertaken a major new initiative to start promoting careers in this sector, whilst students are still enrolled in schools. Developing emerging leaders for the hospitality industry has never been more important than now, and HSMIAI Europe will play a central role in achieving this goal.

With the **HSMIAI Europe Student Council** we aim to help students build a network beyond their usual scope, stimulate their professional growth, and create a sense of belonging within our magnificent hospitality industry. The HSMIAI Europe Student Council is a student-driven initiative that puts students’ needs at the centre of its operations. Its aim is to be a project for students, by students, guided by inspiring industry leaders.

Not too long ago, applications were also open to join the HSMIAI Europe Board of Directors, in order to shape the strategic direction of the hospitality industry in the post-pandemic era. How did this open call end up going?

HSMIAI Europe was overwhelmed with the interest to serve on its Board of Directors. Through a meticulous selection process, we recruited an all-star board of senior enterprise leaders. The board is diverse in terms of nationality, industry sector, functional responsibility and gender. And we will expand it for the coming year.

“*The industry clearly sees that customer-related investment is vital in increasing guest satisfaction, resulting in higher sales and profitability.*”



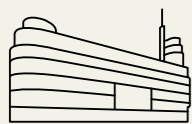
2022 Dates	Event
25/01	“Culture as Strategy for Growth” 1-day Workshop facilitated by Annicken R. Day
25/01	HSMIAI Europe Marketing Strategy Conference - Renew. Rebuild. Recover. An HSMIAI Europe Commercial Strategy event
25/01	By Invitation Only: HSMIAI Europe Chief Sales Officer Roundtable
25/01 evening	The HSMIAI Europe Awards
26/01	HSMIAI Region Europe Revenue Optimization Conference, ROC 2022 - Renew. Rebuild. Recover. An HSMIAI Europe Commercial Strategy event



Coronavirus VS MICE

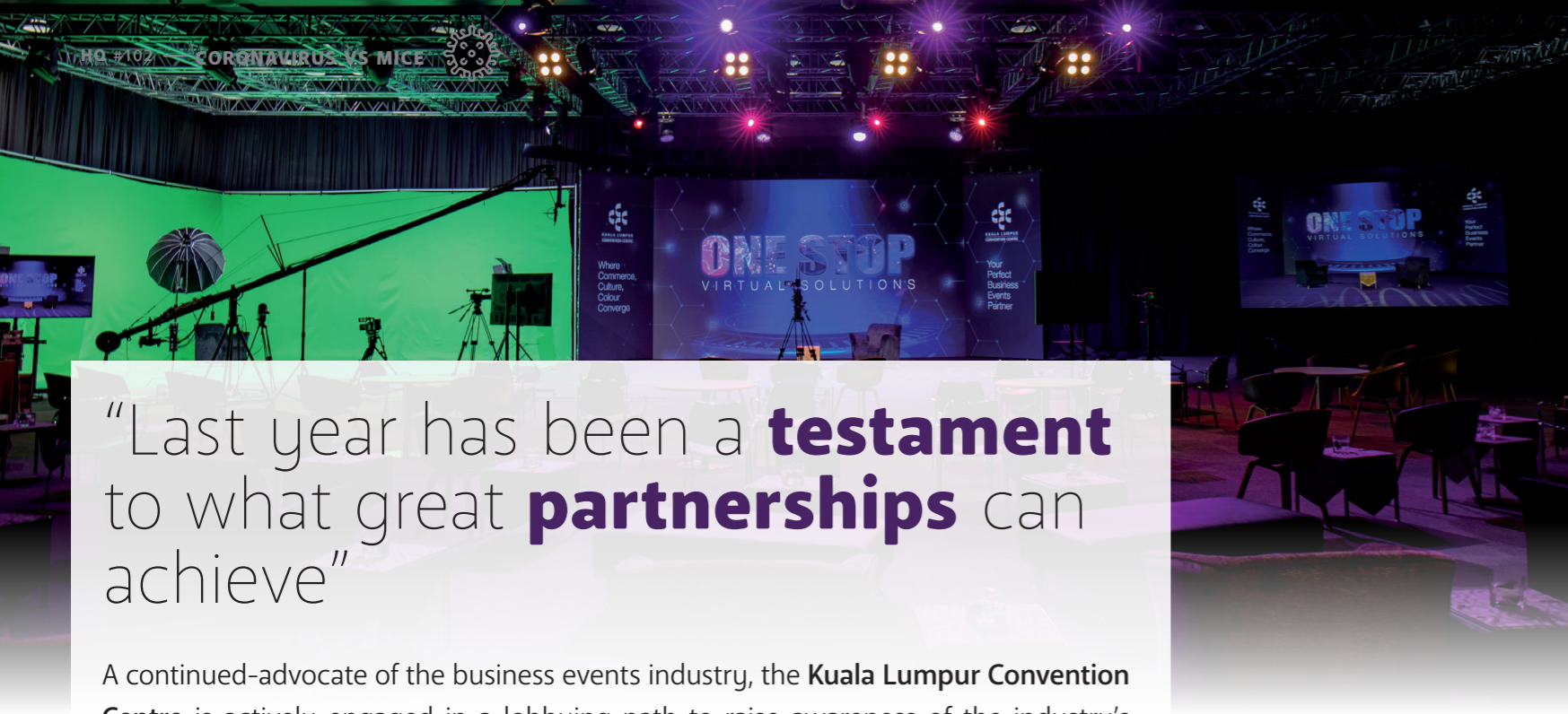
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“Last year has been a **testament** to what great **partnerships** can achieve”

A continued-advocate of the business events industry, the **Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre** is actively engaged in a lobbying path to raise awareness of the industry's value and its benefits to the local community. Like so many other settings around the world, these past two years have been very difficult for the Centre's bottom line and activity as Malaysia's premier venue. For that reason, we asked general manager, **Alan Pryor** (pictured below), a few questions.

Malaysia has a four-step National Recovery Plan that will only allow business events to reopen in the final stretch. Do you think this period can serve as a laboratory for new international events from 2022 on?

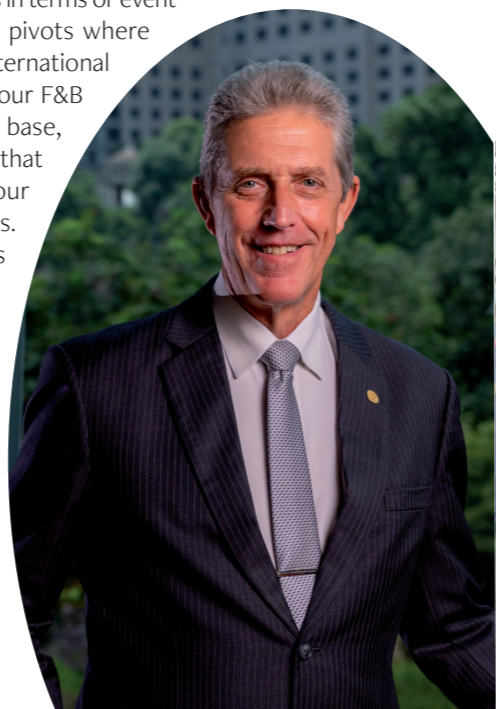
Yes, we do regard this time period as a testing ground, meting out trials and errors and best case practices to continuously improve our event delivery through full-proof SOPs when the global industry fully reopens. Malaysia recently launched the **Travel Safe Alliance (TSA) Malaysia** certification programme, to boost travellers' confidence and ensure them a safe experience. TSA Malaysia, a public and private sector partnership supported by the **Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture**, will provide the industry with safe travel solutions and guidelines, comprising the Travel Safe label for travel and tour arrangements, "Clean and Safe Malaysia" for hotels, and "SafeBE" for business events and convention venues. As part of the TSA Malaysia programme, the Centre is the first Malaysian venue with the SafeBE certificate that recognises and verifies the venue's expertise and capability in delivering a safe, regulated and controlled event environment.

How important will domestic events be in your recovery plan?

Domestic events are currently where our top-most priority lie as inter-state travel restrictions has just been lifted. We have over 60 events from all segments which are mostly hybrid, already confirmed between January and December 2022. A portion of focus is also placed on securing APAC and international events targeted for the last quarters of 2022.

We are continuing to assist our clients in terms of event postponements, cancellations and pivots where necessary for both national and international events. We are further developing our F&B offerings, targeting new customer base, to encompass a range of services that includes a further expansion of our off-site catering and in-house outlets. We are also exploring opportunities in developing a portfolio of owned-events, in partnership with other industry players and long-time clients in order to rejuvenate the meetings and events market.

What kind of incentive packages are being prepared to entice association meetings in the future?



We have developed new packages that provide a range of affordable and customisable solutions that includes cost reduction on F&B and venue-hire, specially dedicated to the local associations. Due to the need for a larger space, dictated by physical distancing rules, cost is a major concern amidst this pandemic-driven economic downturn. This package mitigates the budget-challenges faced by associations and enables them to proceed with planned meetings without further disruptions.

For our international association clients, the main concerns lie around travel restrictions and quarantine requirement post-travel which are very much dependent on government and global regulations, as well as SOP compliance. We are confident that our SafeBE certification, strict compliance to SOPs and its enforcement, will attract international conventions to the Centre once countries and governments ease post-pandemic worldwide travel restrictions.

Where does the Centre need to focus to further support its supply chain?

The Centre's main focus is on stringent SOP compliance to ensure the continuation of business once reopened. As a purpose-built venue and event facility, it is our duty to ensure the supply chain is in full comprehension of each step and measure put in place with strict adherence, based on the new norm terms. We became a venue with **One-Stop Virtual Solutions** that offers a range of new event solutions, provision of tools and the right infrastructure complemented by a team of in-house technical experts, all under one roof. The Smart Meetings industry is very quickly becoming a saturated market and often clients are nicked for time when pivoting from one event format to another. We don't only provide the solutions and infrastructure but will also ensure the nitty-gritty details of event production, allowing organisers to

focus on doing what they do best while our team do the other half of the work. The last year has been a testament to what great partnerships can achieve – from developing a comprehensive business events industry SOPs, influencing the government move to reopen the meetings sector to stimulating the events economy by co-organising on risk-sharing basis.

What kind of social role did the Centre have to take on? Do you think that the global pandemic ended up bringing your venue closer to the local communities?

Quite recently, we were appointed as a mega vaccination centre to expedite the national immunisation agenda where over 800,000 people of Kuala Lumpur city got their full vaccination, contributing to the overall goal of inoculating 80% of Malaysia's adult population by September. In 2020, when the industry was briefly allowed to operate, the Centre hosted "Live Aid", a series of concerts and comedy shows, in support of live entertainment events sector, through joint-partnership with **Arts, Live Festival and Events Association**.

The unforeseen closure of the Centre resulted in lots of food wastage that were donated to the needy through our partner, **Food Aid Foundation (FAF)**, which fed over a thousand people.

How is the venue preparing to embrace this imminent "Smart Meetings Industry", using new technologies?

The Centre understands the importance of connectivity and technology in supporting events and over the years has been progressively investing in smart technologies to provide our clients with solutions that are backed by critical analysis of real-time data collected at the venue. But more important than any piece of event technology is our investment in people as even the most sophisticated automation requires a person who understands its language and is able to leverage its benefits. Our dedicated in-house technical and production teams are able to provide end-to-end solutions for virtual and hybrid events by working closely with clients to assist them, enhance their event and participant experience.

We are currently putting in the final touches in further enhancing our virtual and hybrid event technology and infrastructure, to include some innovative and ground-breaking element into event design and delivery, which we are looking forward to sharing with you soon!





A “City of Kings” Reigning in South America

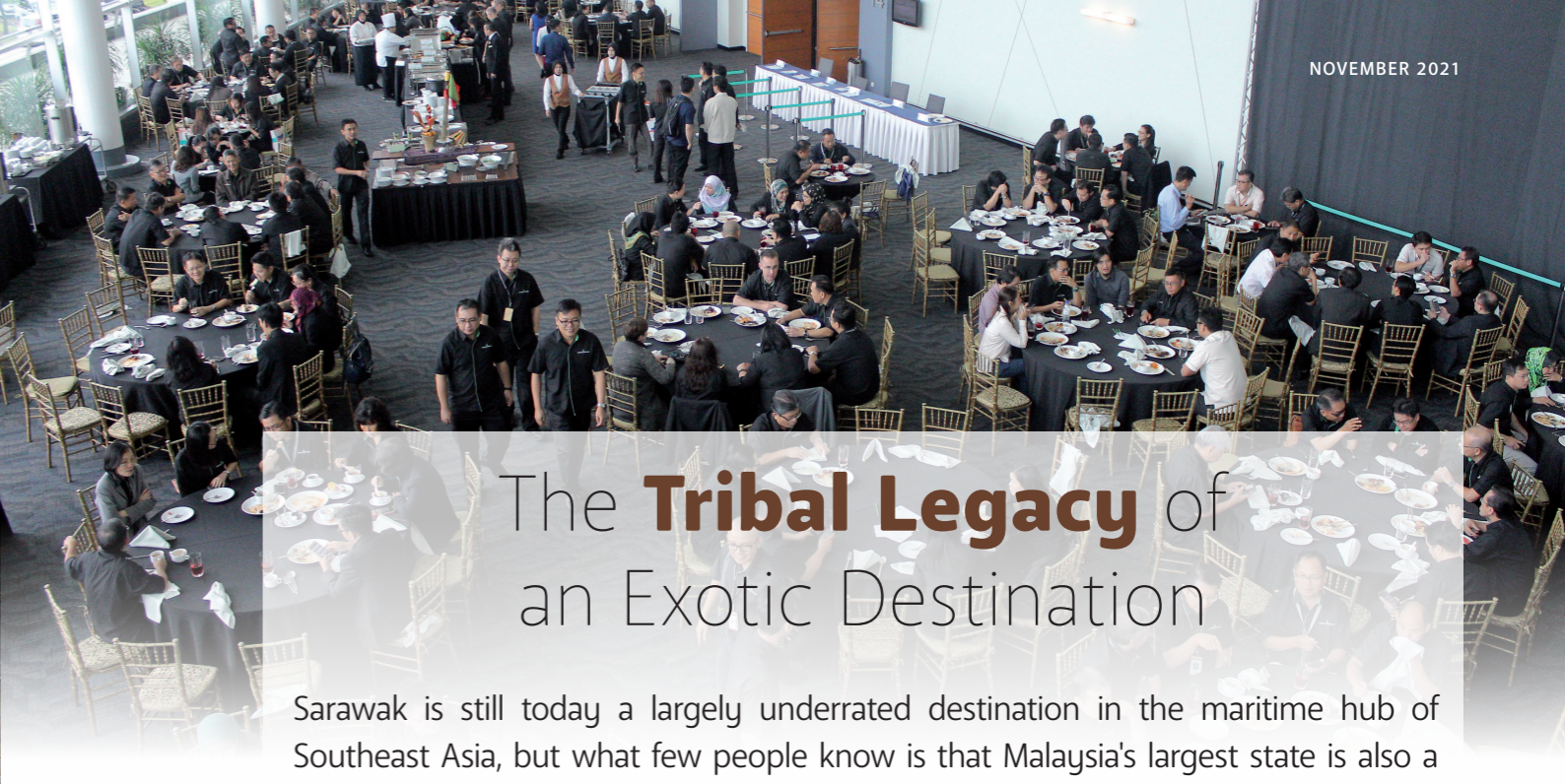
Lima's presence in the MICE global market is an increasingly palpable fact that has been creating traction since 2019. The 2022 target leaves no room for doubt: to get back to face-to-face events as quickly as possible with the precious help of virtual tools.

The capital city of Peru is one of the most important hubs in the Pacific region of Latin America, which benefited from a large investment in hotels, infrastructure and incentive travel due to the economic stability that the country has experienced in recent years. On June 22nd, **Lima Convention and Visitors Bureau (LCVB)** set up a hybrid event - “Peru Events are back” - with 9 hotel members, highlighting the security protocols for the development of corporate events and outlining the city’s strategy for the comeback of in-person events. “As a large part of the events scheduled for 2021 were postponed, we took the opportunity to start planning the “new normal”, maintaining permanent contact with all our clients”, says the **LCVB’s executive director, Denisse Mac Cubbin** (pictured right). With vaccination in full swing, the Peruvian government authorized business events in Lima, applying all safety protocols without disengaging from the technological resources. For Lima, it is appropriate to include virtual innovation as a new growth opportunity since it anchored operations during the lockdown.

In 2019, Lima reached US\$400 million with the increment of its MICE segment, placing it second among the most visited cities by business travellers in South America. Participation in international fairs has been a must to leverage turnover, with **IBTM Americas 2021** sitting at the top of the list. “In both days of the event, the Peruvian delegation made more than 360 appointments with international hosted buyers and generate an expected \$31 million in future business opportunities”, adds Mac Cubbin. Since approving the reactivation plan, Lima has worked together to make the public and potential clients aware that events are safe, moving forward with

its hybrid and in-person events agenda. All of this with the support of its associates and carrying out a promotional work with the public sector – **Promperú, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of Lima**. “Today more than ever, public-private partnerships are essential to move forward with the destination.”

Lima is part of the **Global Destination Sustainability Movement** and the local bureau hopes that this will transform the capital into a sustainable tourist destination and regional benchmark within the sector. As part of this initiative, key actors in the conference and event field will meet to draw up a promotion strategy for the reactivation of the tourism and economic sectors in the long term. “Our members are already into the industry’s path hand in hand with sustainability. Some of them have recently registered in the **Peru Carbon Footprint** platform, which reflects their responsible attitude in caring for the environment and reducing their carbon emissions in their daily activities,” says Mac Cubbin. “Finally, special mention for the **South American MICE Alliance** that was born during the pandemic and of which Lima was one of the founding members.” An initiative that enabled a lively exchange of experiences at the continental level, encouraging all professionals and also governments to define safe events and common goals. “We have carried out joint actions such as the survey that gave us an actual event roadmap, and we’re currently making ourselves known as a MICE region with some business opportunities lurking around the corner,” concludes Mac Cubbin.



The Tribal Legacy of an Exotic Destination

Sarawak is still today a largely underrated destination in the maritime hub of Southeast Asia, but what few people know is that Malaysia's largest state is also a shining star in the MICE global industry.

During the first attempt to resume events in Malaysia, Sarawak wasted no time with various support packages for local planners to carry out more events. Business events bring a lot of knowledge, partnerships and innovation to the table and that’s what Sarawak can leverage when strategically crafted. To help sustain the hotel industry, they have been supporting home-grown events thanks to flexible funding. “Besides incentives for local events, we have been prioritising the educational needs of our industry partners with the certification of their services,” says **Amelia Roziman**, CEO of **Business Events Sarawak (BESarawak)**. Recently, 26 partners were awarded the Certified Incentive Specialist designation, and many others are taking their Digital Event Strategist course. In line with the Sarawak government’s recommendations, the Malaysian state has also started to digitalise its services and improve existing BE technology. As a result, **Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau** and **BESarawak** forged the largest collaboration at business events in Malaysia while also announcing **Kuching** as a member of the **Hybrid City Alliance**. “There are pros and cons to virtual events. Delegate expenditure is definitely compromised and the virtual experience will never be able to match that of an in-person event.” For Amelia, no matter how creative you might be producing a virtual event, face-to-face is still the best way to connect. However, “virtual has allowed us to reach a wider network of people and, in turn, new businesses and other opportunities for our community.”

During this period, **BESarawak** also provided funding incentives for national and international events, with

additional support to ensure that they comply with all stipulated “new normal regulations”. Based on these procedures, they launched the award-winning commercial short-film “**Sarawak – New Normal for Business Events**” that highlights the main precautionary measures taken when participating in business events. “We strongly believe that planners, delegates, and industry partners will feel more assured that safety is a priority for our destination.” What’s outstanding about their 13 key priority areas, part of the **Post COVID-19 Development Strategy 2030**, is that Sarawak’s industry is focusing on the legacy impact of conventions. This strategy is designed to recalibrate Sarawak’s economy and contribute to the state’s overall development to achieve economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. **Legacy impact** is recognised by the Sarawak Government to support the aspirations of the recovery strategy and is also the turning point for the global industry. “It is our mission to ensure that business events hosted in Sarawak have the opportunity to create legacies by delivering at least 50% of impact results,” says Roziman. They will be launching the Legacy Impact this month, so keep an eye out on that.

In addition, several hotels have diversified their activity to become quarantine hotels, assisting the community in managing infections – by instance, **Borneo Convention Centre Kuching** opened as a temporary vaccination centre to speed up the vaccination process in the capital. Sarawak is currently in the assessment phase of the GDS Index to gauge its current sustainability status and engage in new activities.



Norway: Events Around the Northern Lights

The Nordic country is in the forefront of this MICE revolution and has been quite at the top when it comes to digital tools, sustainability, and meetings legacy. *HQ* went to Oslo to speak with representatives of two MICE investment agencies, and uncovered the reasons for this continued success.

AUTHOR: MANUEL A. FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

Sandwiched between the North Atlantic and the Scandinavian Peninsula, Norway is accessible to most European cities and offers an invaluable combination of high-tech facilities and breathtaking landscapes. Systematically ranked as one of the most developed, peaceful and happy countries in the world by various global reports, the country is also a prominent player in diplomacy and international cooperation serving as a stage for a number of summits and international conferences. Despite being perceived as a restricted and somewhat expensive place for international membership, the Nordic country continues to lay the groundwork for its event experience and the progress of the MICE industry. As of September 25, the Norwegian authorities decided to lift domestic COVID-19 restrictions and facilitate international travel, ending capacity limitations for businesses, services, and events. However, as soon as the pandemic hit them in March 2020, agencies and MICE organisers had to cancel and/or suspend all planned activities virtually overnight. “We even maintained a certain level of MICE clients going into digitalisation, where we broadcast some webinars and workshops, but the biggest challenge was associations and PCOs who were in huge trouble,” told us **Frode Aasheim** (pictured right), Director of Meetings and Events at **Visit Norway**. For this reason, it was difficult to get in touch with associations and suppliers, which led to a business break and the interruption of the sales cycle. “We are proud that we have chosen digital solutions to spark new

fam trips and site inspections, albeit in a much smaller number.”

On top of that, just before the pandemic outbreak, the national convention bureau took a budget cut, putting pressure on staff and resource constraints. The challenge was twofold, led to some adjustments in their international offices and which also affected the **Visit Oslo Convention Bureau** and the work of its director, **Kristin Overvaag** – “We are gaining momentum with all the activities that have emerged in digital format to reconnect with our clients, but also to advocate on behalf of our partners.” Oslo, being the capital and largest city in Norway, attracts more than 50% of all the international meetings, and is very much aligned with the national strategy. “Now more than ever it is important that the conference delivers genuine meaning, as the content will play a key role. Something you can’t find on YouTube or Google. I think that will be crucial for the future of the conference industry,” adds Overvaag. For our speakers, some of these changes will be permanent with a growing concern with sustainability, the profitability of travel and a new digital literacy. “I think we are still a very conservative industry with all these travelling and in-person meetings. Hybrid is here to stay but it hasn’t taken away the importance of meeting physically.” Furthermore, the fact that the associations are now quite tired of the pandemic routines and all this digital fatigue, helps to see how the situation will move towards the “new normal”. “I think

the big conferences will likely be smaller or in a hybrid format in the future. You don’t need to go to Colombia, for example, if you can be part of a European hub in Norway where everyone follows their meeting agenda,” warns Aasheim.

Doing hybrid versions down the road will ensure that delegates who really need to meet do so, but also that many more attendees get a chance to follow the content of the meeting. This is definitely a game changer for the Norwegian MICE sector. Many of the congresses that should have been taking place there for the past 18 months have been moved forward. “That’s another challenge as with events piling up, the calendar will become even more jam-packed and with few slots to book,” says Aasheim. Two subject-matters that the national bureau intends to highlight are sustainability, which is crucial for a new travelling profile, as well as reliability and security – as we are talking about a small and sparsely populated society. “Our opinion is that Norway is likely to become an even stronger post-pandemic MICE destination, especially within Europe as the continent will look more inwardly,” says Overvaag. If there’s one thing Norway is known for, internationally, its landscape and nature. Now, they are pushing this envelope tweaking it a little bit with a new narrative. – a heritage that serves a Norwegian experience by definition. “We found out that for PCOs, hotels and especially associations, the surrounding aspect is very important during the bidding process. A business event combined with these wild environments is a must experience in this country,” says Aasheim.

Norway has just launched a tourism strategy, where MICE is a vital part, focusing on aspects such as carbon footprints, legacies, and trying to inspire the background knowledge of participants. “In the field of associations, Norway has enormous potential,” the director tells us. “We have many Norwegians who are part of all these international associations. Our aim is to entice these executives and make these conferences reach Norway.” Part of their strategy is not to work

with abstract numbers, but rather with clients who stay longer in business, are more productive and value this system of ideas. During the pandemic, Visit Norway also established a new tourism strategy to reduce 50% of CO2 as recommended by the Paris agreement. This is something that Norway has promised and it applies to the field of conventions as well. With this, they hope to win twice as many international conferences by 2030 regardless of size or number of attendees. “Our main goal is to work with key players in Norway to convince them of our advantages, show them how safe it is and the good partnerships they can get if they decide to take this step,” says Overvaag. On the other hand, an industry influencer can also be the professor at the University of Oslo, who is more motivated by the quality of the event than by the intricacies of the industry itself.

In the meantime, all the convention centres had to start rethinking – “What do we have to do now?” Some of them turned out to be vaccination centres and temporary hotels. Fortunately, the Norwegian government stepped up with several rescue packages that ended up in VisitNorway, which is also **Innovation Norway**. “It helped their bottom line, to keep themselves with greater or lesser difficulty. They wouldn’t have survived if it wasn’t for the rescue packages that the government issued.” And then, they had to come up with a new, different set of ideas like **Norway Trade Fairs** by instance: “In addition to setting up a space for vaccines, they also struck a deal with Tesla to become the vehicle storage centre for new owners. They needed some financial liquidity and it worked out for both parties,” explained us Aasheim.

These rescues also served to remodel their exhibition spaces and technological equipment such as the studios that began to pop up in Norway. “This is a safe and politically stable country. If an association is planning a five-year conference, there are guarantees on the table to find an orderly destination. Everything we signed up for, will happen,” ends Aasheim.



HQ INSIGHTS



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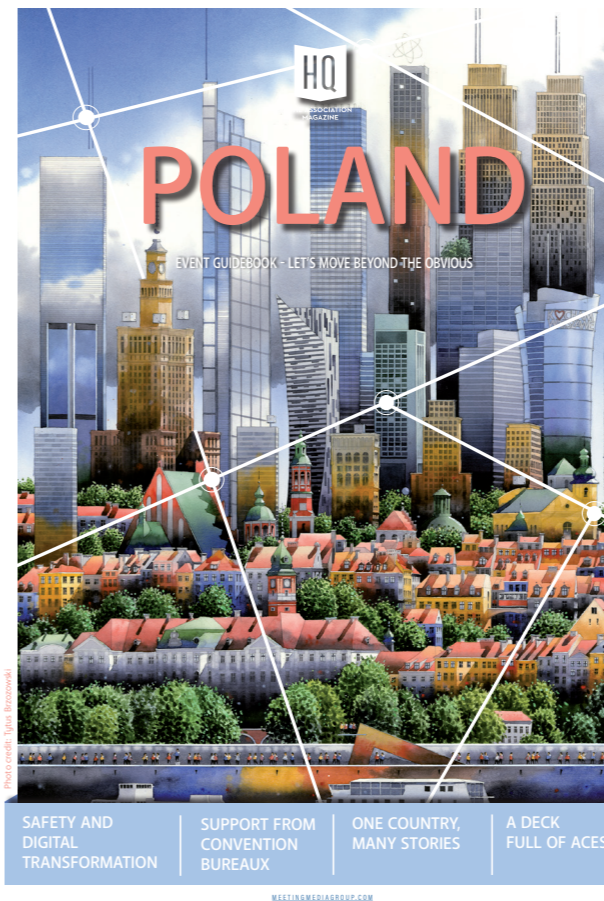
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REPORTS



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The GDS Index celebrates the 73 destinations that benchmarked their sustainability performance and progress. Having survived 2020 was a huge challenge for many DMOs but the results show that despite the hardship, there are a host of incredible achievements to acknowledge.

The GDS Index Results 2021

All are winners in this respect. In 2020, there were 44 destinations that benchmarked, so to have 29 new and returning destinations stake their intent towards developing destinations, meetings and events that have a positive impact and can contribute to regenerative outcomes is testimony to the tide turning. Destinations that show significant sustainability credentials are the ones that will attract meetings of the future and engender a new level of conscious tourism.

It is important to remember the GDS Index is a performance improvement programme enabling destinations to track their progress, manage the areas of growth and enable strategic interventions and stakeholder engagement. It is not a marketing programme although the results are vital in delivering communication campaigns about the impacts of the strategies and collaborative efforts that are being made. The goal of the index is how to make cities better places to live, work and be in. Four key categories guide the goal: the city's environmental and social supplier performance as well as destination management performance.

The GDS-Index Innovation Award was decided by a panel of industry experts. They chose Wonderful Copenhagen's impactful **Copenhagen Legacy Lab**. It is designed to help international associations achieve long-term, positive impacts from their global events and was developed for the benefit, transformation, and enrichment of the association, its communities, the host destination, and society at large.

There is a new entrant from Southeast Asia, Sarawak, new joiners in the top 10 – Lyon and Bordeaux – and Tirol and Middelfart made it into the top twenty, followed by Skelleftea, Bilbao and Valencia even though it is their first-time benchmarking with the index.

A tremendous insight into climate strategies shows 26% cities integrating tourism and events into their climate strategies. This leaves a huge opportunity for other DMOS to follow suit and to reach out to municipalities to get business and local tourism on the sustainability agenda.

In the supplier category, a decrease was predicted due to the pandemic especially for hotels and venues that were hardest hit by COVID-19. Certifications decreased from 40 – 35%, and venues showed a smaller decline from 48 – 47%. Airport certifications however have increased from 52 – 66% and event agencies with sustainable policies have grown from 19 – 24%.

Circular economy initiatives are on the rise in accordance with the GDS-Index focus and there are more programmes for hotels and food waste projects – a rise by 30% this year. However, despite this increase, many of the results of the initiatives are not tracked (only 15% for rest and 10% hotels). This shows the greatest area for future development and action. Destinations should celebrate and demonstrate their achievements to date.

Sustainable governance within the DMOs is on the rise – 33% had dedicated resources last year, but now 64% do – which is the largest proof that DMOs are taking this seriously and investing in it long term.

DMO management is the largest category of the index with thirty questions. This is the category that has the most control and guides enhance performance year on year.

Lyon Office du Tourisme & des Congrès du Grand Lyon are delighted with their win and note they have done an excellent job by joining forces and actively supported by all the tourism professionals. Keeping track of the numbers are important to communicate the change but behind each number is a plethora of actions and initiatives that have had to be done beyond the score.

The experience of the top performers is testimony to the collaborative approach that is needed when shifting the direction of a DMO, in terms of how it attracts new visitors and events.

As **Goteborg&Co** noted, there is no single key, so if anyone presents a simple solution to a complex challenge, ask again. There are challenges to overcome, so it is vital to have a common vision and long-term goal with stakeholders of the destination and to collaborate for stakeholder relations that are authentic. Management in this respect is more vital than marketing, although the need and opportunity to tell remarkable stories exists within each action and step made.

Conclusion:

Sustainability is a competitive advantage but there is more to it; it is a collaborative advantage and how we bring that together and work with that is the magic of what the GDS-index catalyses. Its framework and criteria enable destination management teams to establish leadership and groups that deliver optimum functionality, as well as driving new mind-sets and skill-sets via the GDS Academy masterclasses and certificate course.

We are also seeing the progressive shift from sustainability to regeneration. The idea to sustain past processes is no longer good enough. If we are to deal with social and environmental challenges we must fix, rejuvenate, and regenerate. This all starts with effective strategies that are measured and improved upon.

Overall results

2021 GDS-Index Award Winners

- Leadership award – Gothenburg – Goteborg&Co
- Innovation award – Copenhagen – Copenhagen Legacy Lab
- Most Improved award – Lyon – Office du Tourisme & des Congrès du Grand Lyon

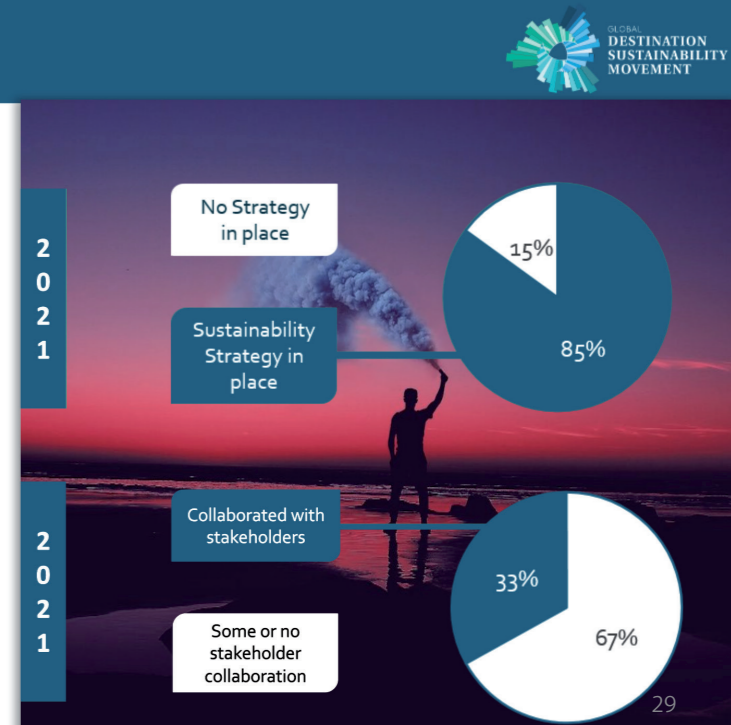
For an outstanding fifth time Gothenburg won the Leadership award for its consistent improvement, followed closely by Copenhagen, and a sterling performance from Aarhus and Glasgow. Tirol and Lyon entered the top ten.



DMO Strategies

More strategies for sustainability than ever before

More collaboration on strategy development



The ECM Autumn Conference, held in September 2021, was the opportunity for the 300 registrants to listen and be inspired by the more than 80 speakers coming from many different circles - city design & development, learning from nature's genius, e-gaming, education, creative studio, podcast, art, etc.

Creating Change Outside the Comfort Zone!

“This is not a tourism conference” focused on setting new agendas, taking time to ask the difficult questions and discussing some of the uncomfortable truths that are needed to create change: climate crisis, social tourism & citizen empowerment, racism & stereotypes in tourism, destination wellbeing, new business of events, attractiveness of the tourism career path and so on.

After the Pandemic: the Whats and Whatnots

The Pre-Conference gathered experts of data, trends, marketing and decision-making that helped answer many questions for what's next. The fast-paced exploration started with the fresh **ECM Benchmarking Report** results, demonstrating the immense impact of the pandemic on European city tourism with cities more impacted than nations in term of bed nights in 2020. Then, attendees dived into what data can tell us about the next normal of travel behaviours and patterns: the short-term rentals industry has recovered worldwide with good

occupancy rates (40% in 2021 vs 48% in 2019) and an increase in the length of stay (+39% 2021 vs 2019), thus creating more visitors' expenditure. Outdoor activities are also on the rise, more and more last-minute trips' planning, and hotel occupancy rates slowly grow back.

This is just the Beginning...

“This is not a tourism conference, because how could it be in this VUCA times, how can we talk about tourism as an isolated phenomenon that needs its own conference when we are facing complex challenges across all kind of sectors, across all aspects of life where either we all win or we all lose,” began **Signe Jungersted, Conference Lead Moderator, Group NAO**.

The conference explored the beginning of the era of hybrid crises – pandemics, climate emergency, political unrest, social instability, to name a few. It was about the challenges we face and the action and changes, we can and should make. From DMOs taking climate action, to behavioural changes and



new technologies, from acting against stereotyping and empowering citizens to develop new models of collaboration to build community and strengthen destination stewardship – attendees were in for a full day of challenge and inspiration.

“How fast we act on climate change will determine the future that we get,” claimed **Rodney Payne, CEO, Destination Think**.

Regarding the importance of socialising tourism, we should think in term of local cities and local ecologies, and no longer of hosts and destinations. The DMO should be more than ever integrated in the local community, have a place for visitors to get them thinking they have a role in the system. “To socialise tourism is to make tourism responsive and answerable to the society in which it occurs. It involves putting tourism in its proper place; at the service of the local community,” said **Dr. Freya Higgins-Desbiolles, Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management, University of South Australia Business**.

About stereotyping and racism in tourism, **Stephanie M. Jones, Founder of National Blacks in Travel & Tourism Collaborative** concluded: “When we know better, we should want to do better and make a conscious choice for change, a change that can be sustainable and beneficial to everyone. We must not ignore people because of their social economic level or because of the colour of their skin, but to recognise that every single person in our destination adds value and makes us a stronger destination for people who want to come, visit and really have an authentic cultural experience.”

The Art of Reframing

Attendees also made sense of their changing businesses, people and cities. They explored new business models of events and the different demands and possibilities for host cities – e-gaming, hybrid meetings, etc. Participants debated the imperative of always learning, discovering, and adapting, and discussed the most important lessons of the past and how they could shape the renaissance of tourism.

Reframing is definitely essential for the tourism and meetings industry to survive, adopting a true learning

mindset. **Avinash Chandarana, Global Learning and Development Director, MCI Group**, also warned that “What you learned 10 years ago is obsolete and half of what you learned 5 years ago is almost irrelevant today and that is speeding up in terms of diminishing skillset over a short period of time [...] It doesn't matter how much expertise you have, you should always continue to learn and grow”.

Four tourism experts came together to discuss what the renaissance could, would, and should look like.

“We've been driving the tourism bus using only the gas pedal, by that I mean using just marketing as a control mechanism. We need to aim in the direction of a new success measure which is visitor experience, local life quality, environment sustainability, and the local economic impact of the tourism spends... not just ‘more visitors.’” explained **Doug Lansky, Travel Writer, Author, and Destination Development Advisor**.

To the question on what destinations should do, using their leadership, to come back more sustainable and more competitive than ever before, **Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir, Owner, Speaker & Consulting, Inga Hlín Consulting** answered: “We need to show that we care for the local community, for the visitors, and we need not to forget to take a learning point from this crisis because we have the climate change crisis going on. I think we need to be the change”.

As a note to the conference, **Petra Stušek, ECM President**, said: “This ECM Autumn Conference *#ThisIsNotATourismConference* was all about stepping out of our comfort zone, taking inspiration from outside our normal circles and thinking differently! To me, it was THE most important conference in a long time and I am really proud of all the content and inspiration that was shared between the speakers and attendees.”



ECM AUTUMN CONFERENCE
ONLINE
September 23 - 24, 2021



In a previous edition we discussed how associations and other not-for-profit organisations have an opportunity to be true change agents in the post-COVID world (whenever that occurs). We said that “partnering” would be one of the keys and discussed some of those key stakeholders in the hospitality industry with who we could partner. This is a good time to follow up on that concept and talk more in detail about one of the most important partners we have - our sponsors.

NOW is the Time to Turn Those Sponsorships into True Partnerships

When we think of our industry sponsors – destinations, properties, suppliers, technology companies, etc. – the first thing that comes to mind is the age-old “what’s in it for me” question. Associations have long been aware of the need to create win-win situations when communicating with current and potential sponsors.

So, we approach them to provide us with financial support (in this case 25,000 USD), in return for which they will get:

- Exposure to 7,500 expected Conference attendees;
- 20 complimentary registrations;
- Advertisement in programme book;
- Company logo on Conference website;
- Complimentary exhibit space in exposition;
- Promotional materials in registrants Conference bags;
- Article in one edition of the organisation’s monthly journal; etc.

(Note: this list is taken from a sponsorship “opportunity” offered by an international technical society)

Now, depending on the sponsor and the organisation/

industry/profession, this might seem like a great investment... and it is. However, we must consider if we are selling a product – the buying potential of our members – or creating a lasting partnership with this sponsor. Both are beneficial to your organisation.

Which one would you rather have? Can you have both? Of course, you can.

You just need to do your homework. In addition to researching which companies or entities have an interest in your profession/industry/members, and how much they might be able to contribute – through donations and sponsorships – spend time researching what they are all about. Create a profile of each sponsor or potential sponsor before you approach them about supporting your organisation or sponsoring an event or activity.

- **Check out their website thoroughly.** Look at their organisational mission and goals. Many (most?) companies and institutions are trying to become better and more involved corporate citizens. Can affiliating with your organisation help them gain that branding?
- **Look at the bios of their corporate/organisational leaders.** Many times, people prefer to give/support because of personal experience or affinity to a community or profession. Find out where the priorities of their decision-makers lie. What was their previous

company/position? What credentials and/or recognitions have they earned? What Board or leadership positions have they held with other not-for-profit entities?

- **Take careful note of what affiliations they already have – associations, charities, etc.** – Most of these will be on their website. Is there some synergy between your organisation with any of these? Are you in “competition” with any of these? – if so, be prepared for the “we already support a similar organisation objection.”
- **Check out their social media presence.** What are they highlighting – is it the product/venue or is it something more community or service oriented? Do they recognise their employees via social media? Would they be interested in your organisation and/or its members liking or reposting their social media content (where appropriate)?
- **Let them be seen as well as heard.** Give them a “special” on your organisation’s YouTube, or corresponding platform channel. Let them talk about their company’s community involvement, charitable activities, environmental efforts, without selling anything to your member. Help them create a special brand within your organisation.

- **Clearly identify what metrics are being used to measure success.** If possible, find out what the sponsor’s expectations are when creating the partnership. While there are rarely any numerical guarantees you can give – regarding member response to the sponsorship – you should try to understand what the sponsor will be measuring to help determine repeat or upgraded sponsorships in the future. This will help you point out what additional value the sponsorship has provided, via the things we discussed earlier.

Here are the keys: promote impact in ways other than just eyeballs on ads or clicks on a website; help make the sponsorship/relationship more widely valued by your members; ask the right questions of the sponsor to determine the best perceived return on their investment; don’t assume it all boils down to a numbers game – sometimes their affiliation with your organisation is actually a valued part of their company identity.

This is a critical time to solidify current sponsorship relationships and reach out for new ones. It is also an opportunity to broaden the scope of what being a sponsor for your organisation provides.

It is an exciting time not just for sponsorship development, but mainly, for relationship development.

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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.

Realising **Sponsorship Potential** in Digital Events

AUTHOR: LINE JUBERT, ASSOCIATION MANAGER



With virtual and hybrid events in full swing and in-person events slowly returning, associations are taking a deeper look at sponsors' expectations and how to format content and deliver value in these settings. Virtual event tech may be fun to explore but what if your sponsors are reluctant to go digital or aren't willing to invest in it at all?

The truth is: not all sponsors are sold on virtual meetings or know how to make the most of them. So, let's take a look at what drives sponsorship decisions and how we can accelerate the shift to a more valuable paradigm for all.

Content rules and always will

We often consider sponsors solely as financial contributors, but there is much more to gain. Sponsors can be valuable content partners! Many are experts who are ready to add value to your event as thought leaders in their own right. Pre-recorded, on-demand videos and live streaming increases the shelf life of sponsored content in ways traditional in-person conferences never could. This is an area where sponsored content will shine even brighter in the presence of expertise and without a sales pitch.

Networking - who doesn't miss it?

Everyone loves networking, and the good news is that thousands of platforms offer innovative ways to connect: virtual exhibition spaces, video and text

“*The truth is: not all sponsors are sold on virtual meetings or know how to make the most of them.*”

chats, meeting scheduling, and online interest groups, plus many more. From the humble Zoom meeting to sophisticated immersive platforms and networking tools driven by artificial intelligence, it pays to ensure your networking is designed with sponsors in mind and to use new technology creatively and to the fullest.

Data matters and sells

Here it is! One of the first things sponsors will ask: “Is the participant list included in your sponsorship package?” Lead generation is a core marketing metric



“*Sponsors can be valuable content partners! Many are experts who are ready to add value to your event as thought leaders in their own right.*”

and a key decision factor for many. Analytics may be a simple participant log or detailed information on delegate profiles, interests, and event engagement patterns. We recommend that you check the sponsor expectations with your technology provider to make sure you get the most intelligence out of digital data.

Don't forget privacy

Be aware that participants' personal data is subject to privacy and data protection regulations, such as GDPR. This means that participants need to give explicit consent regarding the use of their personal data. If your privacy policy hasn't been reviewed in a while, now may be the time to do it. Make sure your sponsorship brochure details exactly what sponsors receive (or not) to keep everyone's expectations in

check. “Participant lists” can mean different things to different people, and if your delegates don't agree to share their personal contact details, you will not be able to disclose them to your sponsors.

Don't make (too many) assumptions

Associations that run recurring events may take their sponsors for granted or have trouble reinventing their sponsorship offer. Ideally, no event should be designed before in-depth market research is conducted with prospect sponsors and participants. Use your conference committee as a sounding board once your market study is done, rather than as your single source of market insights. Companies would never launch a product without doing market research, why should associations?

In conclusion...

With new post-pandemic meeting solutions on the rise, sponsors are naturally looking more critically at return on investment. While we can no longer take their support for granted, attractive content and networking opportunities combined with a clear business case will go a long way to convince them to invest. In this challenge, there is also an opportunity.

DGA Interel – Association Management

Advancing Associations

We are an expert-led, internationally accredited association management company (AMC) that helps membership organisations succeed in an increasingly complex international environment.

As trusted partners to association boards and secretariats, we pride ourselves on providing informed insights, purpose-built non-profit strategies, candid advice, and results-oriented association management – all underpinned by a commitment to quality, shared values and the highest ethical standards. As part of Dentons Global Advisors, we offer our association clients access to a global network with local expertise, providing nuanced counsel on strategy, public relations, communications, and regulatory affairs. Our partnership with Dentons, the world's largest law firm, means clients can draw upon integrated legal expertise and high-end advisory services when and where they need it.



FACILITATION IMPACT AWARDS 2021



Participation, volunteerism, and collaborative events put the energy into our associations – but how to measure the impact? The **Facilitation Impact Awards** do just that.

The awards are hosted by the **International Association of Facilitators (IAF)** and are open to all organisations. This year, sixteen organisations and over 90 facilitators were honoured at the awards ceremony on 25 October 2021.

Is one of your projects be making measurable results? Think about nominating for an award. Besides the prestige, it is also a great way to track your progress, build facilitation skills and celebrate your collective impact.

Celebrating the **Impact of Members**

If you are making an impact through facilitation, consider nominating for an award. The awards go to organisations who can illustrate quantifiable results, change and progress. Organised by an association that promotes facilitation and facilitators, successful nominees put group process work in a positive light.

This year, awards went to organisations the world over – each have been recognised for using facilitation to make change and progress happen for their organisations. The diversity of projects emphasises that expert facilitation can play a major role in any type of project, in any sector. “The remarkably wide range of projects receiving awards demonstrates our belief that good group process facilitation can be used in any context to help people change the world around them and have an impact,” shared **Julia**

Donohue, IAF Board Member and project leader for the awards.

Among these award-winning people and projects, there are many ideas that associations can adopt. Here are three of their stories to learn from:

Turn stakeholders into partners

The **S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation** received an award for bringing their stakeholders into conversation and partnership. The San Francisco based group struggled with a classic problem of control and empowerment – how can a grant maker ensure grantees deliver the best possible mission, and not simply to fulfil the foundations stipulations?

The challenge was to support these organisations to become partners and allies, learning from one another and working together to strengthen the broader field of positive youth development. A “system of supports” was developed that included deep relationships with the foundation’s programme staff, access to field experts, communications assistance, and training in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

By inviting diverse organisations into deep conversations, they brought about true partnership – a fact validated by external evaluators, in an independent retrospective that analysed the quantitative and qualitative results. 100% of the organisations participating stated positive impact, and the initiative was featured in the **The Foundation Review** article titled, “How to Encourage Sustainable Change: A Reflection on How Philanthropy Can Partner With Grantees to Build Organisational Capacity”.

Involve local communities

The **Asian Leopard Specialist Society**, in Tehran, Iran, received an award for their active involvement of local communities to establish the Persian Leopard Monitoring Scheme. The project established an innovative and sustainable platform for the long-term monitoring of the Persian leopard population and habitat suitability status in Iran.

This community-based programme started when a key challenge was identified during the project which was funded by the **GEF Small Grants Programme** at United Nations Development Programme. After conducting a probabilistic sampling, they realised

that most of the sites they needed to monitor were outside the protected habitats where logistics and human resources are readily available for monitoring purposes.

To monitor leopards in this wide region, they involved local communities to collaborate in monitoring activities as well as developing a financial mechanism to support the expenses of the monitoring programme. By sensitizing people to the issues, equipping them and making it a worthy activity, the project was able to extend its footprint – and the leopard’s as well.

Consult with your members

The **Asdee Community Development Association (ACDA)** in Listowel, Ireland, received an award for the way they engaged with the community to revitalise village life. The project reached out to every household in this village to invite them into a consultation process on a subject that is impacting all of them: what positive future can be possible for them despite issues of rural decline and a dwindling population?

The facilitated consultation process brought people together, built community relations, and generated a sense of enthusiasm. From more recent residents to long-term members of the community, everyone was afforded the opportunity to identify and collaborate on the proposed development projects for the area. The project led to productive working relationships with the local county council, county councilors, and other state agencies who became partners in their plan. They also got worldwide attention from other villages facing similar issues as well as individuals seeking the lifestyle they had to offer.

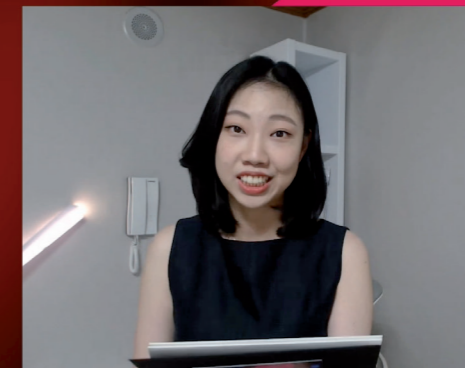
The programme attracted new inhabitants, grants, and improvement projects. Besides the quantifiable results, the process brought about recognition, celebration and creativity. The plan they launch featured in local and national radio coverage, and in numerous local and national newspaper features. It is a story of people pulling together to reinvent their future – that started

Platinum Facilitation Impact Award

S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation, United States
Rebecca Goldberg, Senior Program Officer

Project
Convening diverse organizations to enable collaboration and partnerships

Facilitators
Michael Randel, CPF
Paul Cooper, CPF
Heather Berthoud





by asking members of the community their opinions and aspirations.

Positive voices from around the world

Recognising our world's need for a story that brings people together with good news, the 2021 awards called upon organisations to tell their stories of using facilitation to have a positive impact.

“Facilitation is being used in companies, communities and government around the world. The awards recognise the specific impacts that organisations and facilitators have achieved from facilitation.” – **Vinay Kumar**, Chair of the IAF

It is not always easy to achieve positive change in the world we live. Under pressure, group dynamics and processes can fall apart. These are make-or-break moments when an independent facilitator can make all the difference.

About the award ceremony

This year's celebration of the impact of facilitation was on 25 October, and let over a thousand participants meet the people behind the projects. Honouring silver, gold and platinum projects that achieved positive and measurable impact through excellence in facilitation, the awards were an example of participation. Hosted by a global team of 20 facilitators, it offered panel discussions, interactive polls and networking

opportunities. It was a great chance to peek behind the curtain to see how these awards are prepared and selected – while getting to the heart of the secrets of participation, shared by a diverse talent who work in a wide variety of contexts. Formerly a face-to-face private event, the virtual format allowed all awardees and opened it up to a global audience for free.

About the awardees

“The facilitators who have gained recognition for their expertise have combined innovative planning with expert delivery in widely-varied fields to help their clients meet complex challenges and achieve organisational objectives,” Mr. Kumar said. Seven of the awardees are not-for-profit organisations, four are large corporates, 3 are small to medium-sized businesses and two are government organisations. The projects undertaken clearly show that good group process facilitation translates into cost-effective and creative outcomes. This year, awards went to organisations spanning Belgium, Canada, China, India, Iran, Ireland, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States – each have been recognised for using facilitation to make change and progress happen for their organisations.

You can interact with the awardees on the Howspace platform iaf-world.org/FIA.

#FacilitationHasImpact

ABOUT AUTHOR

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

More info at jefferlondon.com or @jefferlondon.

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.



The International Association of Facilitators
promoting the power of facilitation worldwide



Revenue vs Engagement at Virtual Events

Analyses of a recent **Kenes Group** experience with their healthcare professionals' association clients have shown that free registration and lower fees to virtual events result in lower attendance and engagement. Nevertheless, returnee numbers to subsequent paid events increased after online education was offered without costs.

The world on the screen continues to evolve with more knowledge and information, so should all that be packaged and delivered to association members for free, or is there a better way to price it? And what about virtual conferences – what would be the future of their revenue streams?

When Kenes Group surveyed healthcare professionals in 2021, 65% of respondents continued to demand lower registration fees for virtual events – 50% or lower – compared to in-person meetings. We had the opportunity to put the theory to the test with a client of ours and measure if lower or no fees really impacted participation and engagement at their annual congress.

The first virtual congress of this client took place in 2020. The association decided to offer the event for free as their goal was to support their community, and for science to reach as many practitioners as possible. For their second virtual event in 2021 there was a low registration fee.

We observed interesting outcomes. With the free registration in 2020, the event received a high volume of registrations (about 6500 people), compared to 2021 – there were 2400 registrants. Registration fees had an impact on the signing up rate, as many organisations observed since the pandemic started, and events were moved to virtual.

But while in 2020 about 47% of the registrants logged into the virtual platform, in 2021 this number was nearly double with 80% of participants logging into the system. The congress had a record high returnee number – 40% of the 2020 participants came back and paid the fees of the event. And to top that, there was a high reach

of non-members in 2021 too, that actively participated at the event.

The community of this association is content-driven – both clinical and basic research is of very high importance to these healthcare professionals. In terms of engagement, we noticed that the unique session views between the 2020 and 2021 events were the same – about 1500.

All of this shows that pricing virtual events guarantees active and engaged participation and assists associations to offset the costs of producing them and providing quality content. Those participants that thirst the knowledge are the attendees that each association wants, and while fees play a role, that core audience for which the event was designed will find a way or another to get access to the content that they need.

ABOUT KENES GROUP

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



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PSA meetings, network building sessions and more.

The impact of climate change is becoming clearer by the day. During the summer, we were confronted with extreme heat waves, floods, and drought, causing the loss of lives and destroying houses, infrastructures and crops. The **IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)** report published mid-August was equally clear on the consequences of global warming and provided some hope: it is still not too late, if we decide to act now. The COP26, taking place early November at the **Scottish Event Campus** in Glasgow is the moment where the world can say: it stops here. And the event industry needs to be part of this commitment.

A Pledge for Sustainability

AUTHORS:

SENTHIL GOPINATH – ICCA CEO

SVEN BOSSU – AIPC CEO

KAI HATTENDORF – UFI CEO

During the **AIPC Annual Conference** mid-July, sustainability was high on the agenda. The three of us were on several panel discussions with representatives of both the industry and the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the conversation continued during coffee- and lunch breaks. The message was clear: sustainability is not just an option anymore. Convention centres, organisers, suppliers and exhibitors which do not have a net zero plan will struggle to attract customers and investors in the nearby future. At the same time, we need to acknowledge the efforts already done by the event industry worldwide and ensure that all parties involved in defining sustainability policies are fully aware of these efforts. Achieving net zero in our industry is however an objective which can only be met if all the stakeholders in the value chain commit to achieving it, hence the need for an industry wide initiative.

The UNFCCC already initiated such initiatives in other sectors, like sports and fashion – resulting into detailed roadmaps towards net zero with key milestones and measurable objectives to report upon. In their view, the event industry could be the next chapter and the conversation was started with **UFI, ICCA** and **AIPC** – three global trade associations, representing a substantial part of the events value chain. These three associations created a steering group, composed of nine CEOs from organisations representing organisers, venues, exhibitors, and suppliers.

This steering group was complemented with an operations group, which took on the endeavor of defining a roadmap towards an industry commitment which is both inclusive – an element which is of very high importance to the UNFCCC and a key success factor – and ambitious when it comes to meeting the net zero objective. By

mid-August, the pledge was drafted and ready to be shared with the full event industry for further input.

A lot was learnt in the process. The draft pledge evolved from an eight-bullet action list to a four pillar, process driven commitment. The pledge also takes into account different realities across the globe, when it comes to, for example, switching to reusable energy. And the pledge has the ambition to lead by ambition and statistics, demonstrating progress made in a clear and tangible way. In a nutshell, the proposed pledge comes down to the following:

1. Develop a plan to achieve net zero by 2050;
2. Collaborate with the other stakeholders in the value chain to drive change;
3. Measure and track scope 1, 2 and 3 GHG emissions;
4. Report on progress made.

These are very ambitious and much needed commitments, reflecting the very nature of the event industry: driving excellence by collaboration.

We also realised that we needed an industry wide platform to get an industry wide commitment. Therefore, **JMIC**, the **Joint Industry Meeting Council**, will host the initiative and serve as the platform to collect your input and make the

pledge a truly SMART one: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound. Being the global umbrella organisation for the events industry, **JMIC** is the right host for an endeavour of this size.

As always, the success depends on the parties joining. But this time, there is no doubt about the cause, so there is no excuse not to join.

Sustainability is the single biggest issue we face, and we can – if we act now – make a real difference. So, go to the **JMIC** website, sign up and make it happen. We can.



How to create a strong, strategic brand identity that allows associations to increase their impact.

Smart Association Branding

AUTHOR: *GIULIA INEKE SARRI, CREATIVE STRATEGIST AT AIM COMMUNICATION.*

How can a brand have a strong and strategic identity? What is the secret behind it? Well, it's better said than done!

Today, more than ever before, all organisations – be it a company, an agency, a private institute or an association – should be seizing the moment to take a break and reflect on their values and purpose, and then develop brands and materials that really reflect those.

Brands can fail many times before finding their way to really stand out. Yet there are some easy steps associations can take, by focusing on producing some interesting assets, to make their audience fall in love with their brand.

Let me share a few:

1. Refresh owned media

The term “owned media” refers to any online property owned and controlled by a brand, such as a blog, website or a social media channel. The more owned media channels an organisation has, the larger their digital footprint is, which means more potential to reach stakeholders and followers.

I invite you to first take a step back and analyse how each channel is perceived by its stakeholders. Is the association acting as a professional reference point? Does it provide valuable education opportunities or is it just considered a duty that needs to be paid for? A comparison between the responses and the Board's beliefs would be a useful starting point to redesign the offering and to refresh the owned media, such as the website, the landing pages, newsletters, social media and why not... also the logo!

It may seem obvious, but it is not! An association's owned media can act as the business card of the organisation, especially for those who are still not

100% familiar with the association's offering. For instance: new generations, younger members, prospects from new geographical areas to name a few.

A modern, straight-forward user experience and clear messaging on all association collaterals can also have a positive impact on new members.

2. “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”

In the process of considering some (or all) of an association's owned media, I advise conducting a simple activity: to listen. Listening to both your audience and competitors can bring precious insights and ideas for a refinement of the brand. Listening to the target audience means sending surveys, analysing insights and exchanging frank opinions on what it is expecting from the association. In fact, needs and expectations keep changing at a very fast pace and organisations tend to strongly believe in their long-standing offering, while losing the chance to keep the momentum high and adapt services to evolving needs.

On the other hand, competitors may have done so, becoming an example (or not!) – analysing their website, visual identity, colours, tone of voice, events' calendar, may be eye-opening. There could not be a better time to assess an association's situation and find out its positioning towards its stakeholders – if its services are appreciated or not and where limited resources and efforts should be placed.



3. From the core to the essence

The step after the “listening” phase is to deep dive into what the association's stakeholders believe and tell them about the brand. Sure enough, all entities respond to some abstract concepts: the famous Italian red car brand will definitely recall “speed”, “sporty”, “wealth”, “luxury”. Well, such an exercise could be done with any brand. A survey to members, non-members, partners, suppliers and key opinions leaders would solve this issue by asking them about positive and negative feelings occurring to them when thinking about the association.

The survey results can be eye opening for the Board, it will be crucial to face the facts and perceptions that are exposed. On one hand, positive feedback will need to be mixed and matched with the values the association believes in and wishes to express in the (new) brand identity. Suggestions will come from each side, bringing confusion at some point, but the long list can be shortened and then finally lead to the selection of 2/3 items that will stand out. Those few elements will pinpoint the very brand essence!

4. Augment the value proposition

The association can leverage this momentum to ensure that it is adding value across all aspects of the association's services. For instance, usually, the annual congress of an association is one of the core activities which is also responsible for a large part of the annual budget. So, this activity needs to be analysed and measured. What is the overall ROI of the congress from a quantitative and qualitative point of view and what is the value for each stakeholder?

The benefit of “augmenting” an event is definitely not about using virtual reality and AR technology, but it's rather about extending the reach of the congress

content in space and in time. Some tips to create more added value for the conference are to:

- consider the annual congress as one strategic asset within a much broader education programme;
- leverage owned media to create a natural link with all key moments of the year;
- mix digital moments with live ones and create a strong narrative to connect the phases;
- create climax moments to trigger the curiosity of the target audience and build expectations (always find a way not to disappoint them!);
- identify one item (object, gadget, sentence, process, etc) that deeply represents the association's essence and share it with stakeholders to “augment” their experience with the brand.

Finally, there is an ultimate test in branding that really helps organisations understand if they are on the right path towards the construction of a strong and strategic brand identity.

The power of a brand concept should satisfy 3 criteria at the same time. A brand should be:

- different from competitors and thus easily recognisable;
- relevant for the target audience;
- sustainable in the long run.


When those 3 criteria are met, then the Association did a great job!

AIM Communication is an open innovation network dedicated to communication, brand activation and marketing digital technology. They base a strategy on a four-pillar approach that covers the entire innovation cycle: Think, Build, Measure, Amplify.

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