



# Headquarters



THE ASSOCIATION  
MAGAZINE

#87 *BUILDING BRIDGES  
IN THE MEETINGS  
INDUSTRY*  
FEB  
2019

Overcoming barriers to  
innovation at associations

Membership Engagement:  
*Challenging people  
to be creative*

The secret recipe for agile  
association business models

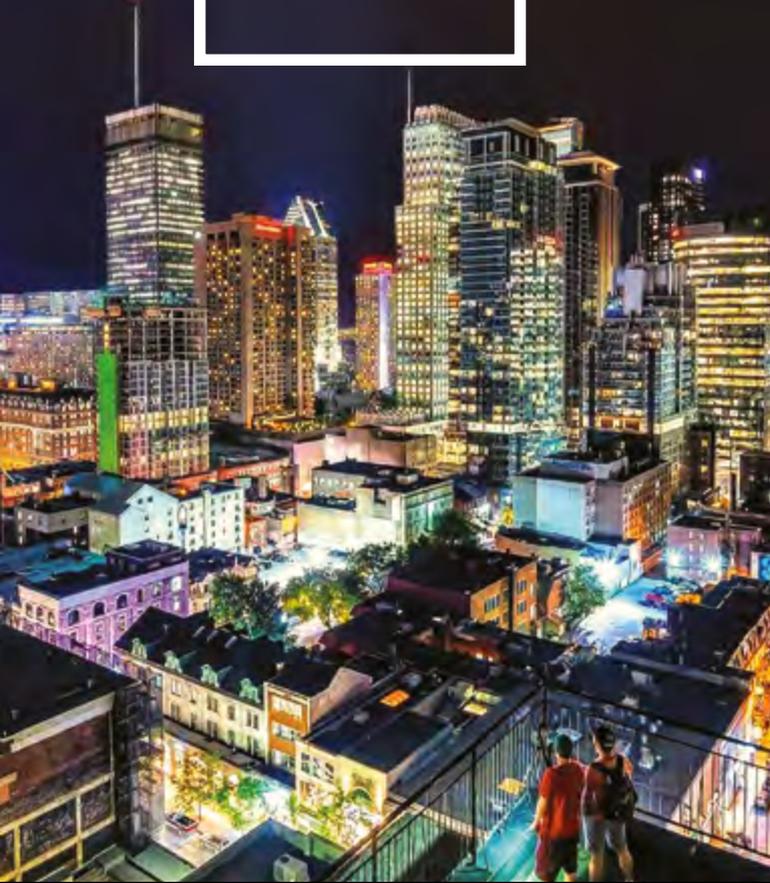
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Is the MICE industry  
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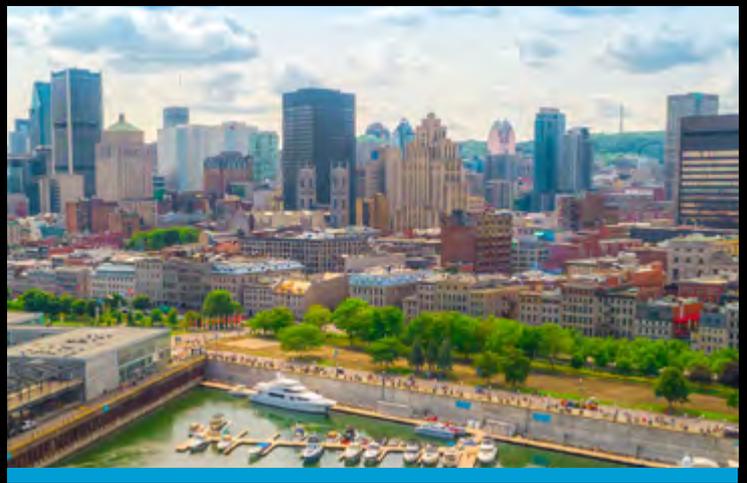
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THE ASSOCIATION  
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IN THE MEETINGS  
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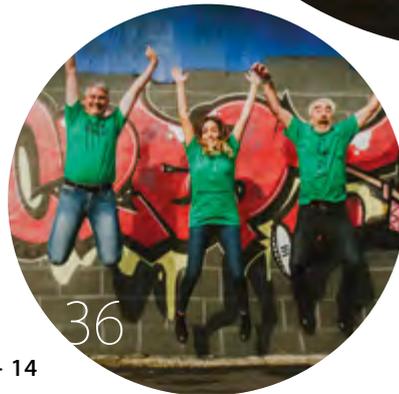


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# Injecting the 'New' into 'New Year'

HQ Magazine is starting the new year with exciting new partnerships. We are proud to announce three new collaborations as part of our ongoing effort to gather and publish more engaging and relevant content for our readers.

**Interel**, our esteemed long-term content contributor, has now become our official partner to share valuable insights from their work with global and European associations across sectors. As the world's largest independent, global public affairs and association management consultancy, Interel is at the nexus of business, policy, and advocacy for more than 35 years. Their AMCI-accredited association management team has been supporting membership associations around the globe in creating value for their members for over twenty years and their award-winning consultants in 70 markets deliver targeted innovative solutions for clients worldwide.

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**Meetings & Millennials** is a cross-cultural and cross-organisational network for young professionals active across the full spectrum of the Business Events Industry. The network aims to connect young professionals and provide them with advice, support and community in a peer-to-peer environment; foster active learning among young professionals; and be the voice of the younger generation in the Business Events industry. With this new partnership, we aim to provide a platform for (*and engage with*) the voices of the millennials in the MICE industry.

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Fifty years of knowledge, experience and market expertise have led **Kenes Group** to the forefront of global conference management and to becoming one of the world's leading Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) that specialises in medical and scientific conferences. Founded in Tel Aviv in 1965 and headquartered in Geneva, Kenes Group has hosted over 3600 conferences in more than 100 cities around the globe, providing services to over 160,000 participants per year. This new partnership will shed light on the ins and outs of global medical and scientific events.

A warm welcome to Interel, Kenes Group and Meetings + Millennials to the HQ family as our recurring content contributor!

## The HQ Team

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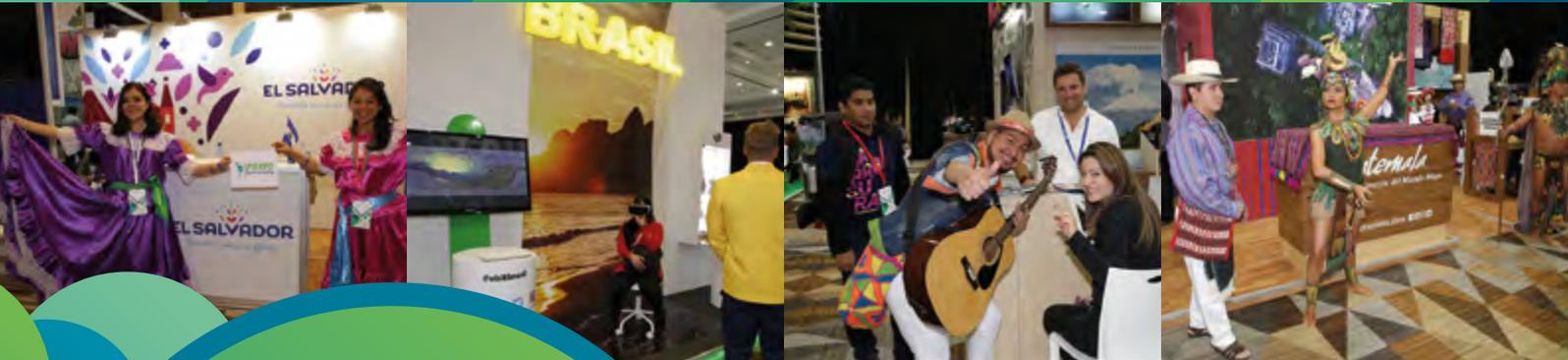
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# Let's **Expand Our Creativity** While We Expand Our Horizons

The simplest definition of creativity is: the ability to create something new. Naturally, not everything is said, there is a lot more to it.

While it's often regarded to as talent, people who create something new do proclaim that it is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. Creativity is a big challenge for most. Conditions have to be created to bring creativity to life. For some people that is seclusion, for others it is boredom and for others it is 'the A-ha! moment' – *The moment of inspiration* – which can come from anywhere and surprise you anytime!

The neighbourhood where I live has been inhabited by quite a few writers. Maurice Baron Gilliams (1900-1982) is a less well-known Flemish writer and poet, whose commemorative stone writes: *'the unrest gives wings to the imagination'*. Boredom has already brought many people to creative thoughts (and solutions). It is also said that children who receive everything from their parents no longer develop imagination.

So, what about our industry? The most used word in our field is 'Meetings' (*a hollowed-out concept*) and the second word that occurs infinitely in the meetings industry is 'creativity'. I've attended innumerable sessions on 'creativity' in the congress world over all these years, and I'd like to comment that there is little creativity in the meetings industry in general. A keynote speaker occasionally manages to wake us up during presentations. Some conference organisers experiment with cosy corners to give networking more character, but in general everything remains old and familiar.

Still, there are initiatives that have attracted my attention. The people behind Meetology deserve a mention for their creative approach in conveying messages differently – walking the path of liveliness and humour, fed by scientific research on behaviour during meetings. SoolNua consultancy group gets my appreciation too. Launched in January 2014 with the tagline "another viewpoint for meetings and events". Their name literally means new perspective, new viewpoint, new vision and outlook - Sool is an anglicised version of súil, the word in Gaeilge (*the Irish language*) for eye. Nua is Gaeilge for 'new', and together it means 'new eye' with all the intended metaphorical connotations.

In 2019, I greedily look forward to other examples of 'New'.

**HQ** MARCEL A.M. VISSERS  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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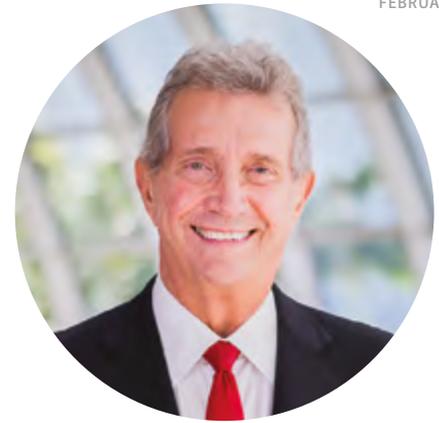


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# Marina Bay Sands' Winning Formula

Singapore's prominent landmark is more than its iconic architecture and world-renowned infinity pool. **Mike Lee** (spokesperson and VP of Sales), shares their upcoming events, innovative sustainability initiatives, and their strategy to enhance their impeccable service standards.



## HQ: How does one of the most well-known hotel venues in the world maintain (or further boost) its service standards?

ML: Marina Bay Sands is a large integrated resort with operations spanning across our hotel, our food and beverage establishments, MICE, entertainment, retail as well as the world's first ArtScience Museum. Last year, we welcomed approximately 45 million visitors to the entire property – so you can imagine the scale at which we operate on a daily basis.

Our priority is to consistently provide our guest with the highest levels of service, which can sometimes be challenging in a property as large, dynamic and multifaceted as Marina Bay Sands. In order to help our staff work more efficiently and effectively, we seek to empower them with tools and training that allow them to do their jobs better.

One way we do this is to leverage on innovative technology, such as Artificial Intelligence, robotics and analytical tools, to help our teams perform better. These technologies can assist in forecasting manpower demands, replacing low-value work and optimising performance – which ultimately allows us to boost service standards.

## How do you minimise energy consumption for such a huge venue? Can you share with us your innovative sustainability initiatives that can support event planners to accomplish their green goals?

Marina Bay Sands' property-wide sustainability efforts fall under the umbrella of

Sands ECO360, our global sustainability programme that guides the company in responsible operations to reduce our carbon footprint and overall environmental impact. The strategy focuses on people and technology to maximise energy, carbon and water savings.

At our integrated resort, every meeting already starts off on a green note. As an ISO-certified venue, we value-add to our clients' specific green goals through a spectrum of green meeting options and customisable solutions, offered to clients at no additional cost. These include dedicated green meeting advisory services, an event zero-waste component programme, sustainable menus, as well as the creation of a Post-Event Impact Statement for clients to monitor and track their event sustainability achievements.

We recently enhanced this offering to include a 'Meet Green Live Well' top-up option for clients who wish to add a wellness component to their 'It's Easy Meeting Green' package. With the top-up, meeting planners can enjoy additional elements such as a healthy snack bar, special rates on Sunrise Yoga and more.

We continue to push the green envelope by introducing new, innovative sustainability solutions to help our clients achieve their green goals. For example, we recently raised the bar for sustainable food experiences with two green events hosted at Marina Bay Sands – the Schneider Electric Global Innovation Summit (20-21 September), as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> Responsible Business Forum on Sustainable Development (RBF) (11-12 October). Both events featured specially created 'Earth-friendly' menus,

which go beyond our usual sustainable Harvest Menu to offer a higher volume of certified environmentally-friendly products. The result was a fully sustainable menu featuring dishes made with Organic, Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance Certified, responsibly produced or locally sourced ingredients.

## Any exciting upcoming MICE events?

Marina Bay Sands hosts an average of 3,500 events a year, attracting over a million attendees yearly. Since 2010, the integrated resort has welcomed more than 610 new-to-Singapore MICE activities including tradeshow as well as small, medium and large associations. We have also built a strong pipeline of returning shows, with an annual average of 34% repeat events over the past four years.

This year, we will see the return of numerous repeat shows such as Money 20/20 Asia in March, as well as Tax Free World Association (TFWA) and the International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) Asia Pacific in May. The International Furniture Fair Singapore (IFFS) will also make its debut at Marina Bay Sands from 9 to 12 March 2019.



# The **Collective Power** of Russia

One year after the establishment of the Russia Convention Bureau and its impressive debut at IBTM World, Russia’s national stand “Russia Open to the World” continues to be a major highlight on the showground. **Alexey Kalachev**, CEO of Russia Convention Bureau, sat down with HQ to share his strategy and vision of shaping the positive image of Russia for international events.



**HQ: Could you please provide us with an overview of the new developments in 2018?**

AK: Russian Convention Bureau is an association, united by members from different regions. Within the first year, we have attracted more than 77 members from 14 regions.

In order to boost the partnership with convention bureaus within Europe, we proudly became a part of the Strategic Alliance of the National Convention Bureaux of Europe. We look forward to strengthening and maintaining the partnerships with other European national convention bureaus.

Following the successful footprint of FIFA World Cup 2018, we have organised our first International Press Tour in the past October. Representatives of leading publications in the event industry

from UK, Belgium, Germany and Russia have visited four Russian regions, experienced the warmth of local hospitality, witnessed the beauty of the regions, as well as discovered the potential possibilities for organising international events.

**Share with us your recent winning bids?**

There are four major winning bids that I would like to share:

1. Global Manufacturing & Industrialisation Summit (GMIS) will be held in 2019 in Ekaterinburg. We are expecting more than 4,500 delegates for this event.
2. 34th Planetary Congress, organised by Association of Space Explorers. It will take place in St. Petersburg in 2021 and will mark the 60th anniversary of the first human space flight, completed by Soviet citizen Yuri Gagarin on the Vostok spacecraft.
3. International Planning History Society (IPHS) will take place in Moscow in 2020. This is a prestigious scientific and business event that is held biennially in different parts of the world. Up to 1000 international delegates will join the conference which will be hosted by Russia for the first time.
4. World Energy Congress (WEC) will be held in St. Petersburg in 2022. We are expecting more than 3,000 delegates from all sectors of the energy system in the world.



We are expecting a total economic effect of about €67 million from these four international events. Additionally, we have submitted 30 other bids that are currently under processing.

**After Russia’s successful debut at IBTM 2017, what is your objective for the 2018 edition?**

We presented a distinctive feature of the Russian stand by offering event opportunities as a whole package from different regions, aimed to introduce Russia as a reliable and confident participant in the global meeting industry. For our second year (2018), not only the size of the stand was doubled, but also the number of co-exhibitors has increased. 16 co-exhibitors performed in unison as a single brand of “Russia Open to the World”, and the structure of the stand was designed under the regional-focused concept. During the three-day trade



on our profile, in order to gather more professionals on board to optimise what we can offer to meetings planners from home and aboard.

Second of all, we would like to encourage different regions to build their own regional convention bureaus or destination marketing organisations. This will not only allow them to offer one-stop contact and service but also helping the national convention bureau to understand their needs.

Thirdly, we are currently working on creating new standards, laws to formalise the local meetings industry. Meanwhile, we are offering professional training programs and creating platform for our members to exchange knowledge and ideas in a regular base.

In 2018, we have signed agreements on strategic cooperation with 14 regions and now we're in the process of creating so called Regional Passports. The Regional Passport will include information about main cultural, historical, geographical data, touristic and events facilities as well as the information on the key industries of the region, in order to allow different regions to present their unique advantages to attract correct forums and congresses as well as entertainment possibilities for the guests. We look forward to welcome more regions to create Regional Passports in 2019.

Last but not least, we look forward to work closely with local associations and academics (such as Russian Academy of Science), in order to attract more science-oriented congresses.



show, 33 presentations about regional event opportunities were conducted and more than 500 business meetings took place at the stand. We have received in total about 2500 international visitors.

#### What is your growth plan for 2019?

One of the main tasks is membership engagement. We would like to keep increasing the numbers of members





# Leadership & Gender Equality for African Women

**Dr Elisha Attai**, founder of African Women in Leadership Organisation (AWLO, a nonprofit organisation in Lagos, Nigeria), talks about his motivations and initiatives to drive change in gender equality in Africa.



## HQ: Can you share with our readers the mission and vision of your association?

EA: The African Women in Leadership Organisation envisions a world in which women take their rightful place as home and nation builders with opportunities and equal access in all areas. We aim to bring together female executives, entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders to further enhance their leadership capabilities and fulfill the objectives of the organisation.

## What is your motivation for starting this association? In your opinion, what should and needs to be changed for women in Africa?

Having worked as a media consultant for years, I have had opportunities to work with women. I was inspired 'to bring women together' – to raise each other up; as this was the edge that we the male counterparts had over women.

I witnessed firsthand the incidence of how a woman's lack of support for another closed a potential door of

opportunity, and I was moved to bring women together to form a support system and build each other up. It also began a movement of getting women prepared for Leadership Opportunities.

In order to encourage more women to participate in leadership and government, it is necessary that the community and world as a whole give them the support needed. Instead of downplaying the efforts of African women, people could encourage them either by listening to their views in an objective manner, participating in women-initiated activities, and helping eradicate the social stigma and discrimination against women in leadership and African women in general.

## Can you share some of the projects that has impacted beneficiaries?

**iLead** – A project targeted at pupils/students between ages 5 and 17 in schools who are young leaders, and prospective leaders. We strive for inclusion in iLead through iLead clubs, leadership debates, summits, and activities to stimulate young minds and build capacity for

leadership. iLead is equipping Africa's next generation of female leaders with knowledge and skills in leadership, making them more competent and confident to drive transformative change on the continent.

**Leadership Academy and Finishing School** – Our academy affiliates with leadership institutions, organisations with shared goals, and tertiary institutions to create curriculums dedicated to grooming and building women for leadership. This curriculum caters to women at every level of leadership. As Potential Leaders, Young Women Leaders, Professionals, CEOs, Public Servants, and Entrepreneurs. This is one of AWLO's measurable strategy for impact in leadership.

**HEforShe** – Over the years AWLO's strong advocacy has yield thousands of people to support the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment, starting at a high level with a simple positive pledge, and moving to a deeper level of concrete action and social change. Our stories and activities are being captured and shared globally through

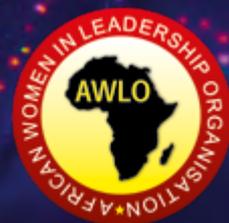
the UN platforms and our in-house media networks.

**Tell us about your biggest annual event.**

Every year the African Women in Leadership Organisation (AWLO) brings together women of African descent from various walks of life to channel their leadership potential at the African Women in Leadership Conference (AWLC). During AWLC, heads of government and stakeholders are brought in, to weather in on the concerns of the African Woman.

It is usually attended by women leaders of African descent such as, CEOs, Executives, Politicians, Public Servants, Entrepreneurs, Intrapreneurs, and other professionals. It rekindles the zeal for leadership, and gears up women for leadership roles.

Top priority at AWLC yearly, is a communique adopted after resolutions made by stakeholders during the conference. The conference culminates in an awards/gala that recognises industrious female leaders who have rolled in achievements for the continent.



**MORE INFORMATION**  
[AWLO.ORG](http://AWLO.ORG)



# It's Now Time to Make a Change

*Overcoming barriers to  
innovation at associations*

I am big fan of creative innovation, and have seen more than once how a little tweak at the right place can change an entire organisation for the better. After moving from science to association management, I naturally made it my mission to continue innovating in this new setting – *and still remember the exact moment that I realised it just wouldn't be all that straightforward...*



**AUTHOR**

**Benita Lipps**, Head of  
Association Management  
of Interel.

It was during one of these rare face-to-face board meetings that most international associations can only afford to hold once or twice per year. Everyone was in the same room, on the same page and eager to find new solutions to long-standing challenges: how to become more relevant to members, how to ensure a solid financial basis, and how to run the association more efficiently without compromising on quality.

My team and I had invested much effort in preparation: analysing data, researching solutions, and discussing our suggestions with the relevant board members. This was a tried and tested approach – *so what could possibly go wrong?*

No doubt some of you, deeply familiar with this kind of settings, are already chuckling at my naiveté and hubris: **everything** can go wrong! And it did: discussions focused on the minutia of implementation, it was pointed out that something similar had already been tried unsuccessfully in the past, doubts were raised if members would accept such drastic changes, or if these decisions should be taken at this point in time. Nothing was outright rejected and it was decided to revisit some of these ideas at a later, undetermined date.

So, what went wrong? That's when I realised: nothing went wrong. It's just

that associations are risk-averse by their very nature and design. Consequently, innovation and associations are hard to match. They are like fire and ice, like father and son the Cat Stevens's song:

*It's not time to make a change,  
Just relax, take it easy  
You're still young, that's your fault,  
There's so much you have to know...*

Does that mean that there is no chance to innovate in an association? That the time for change will never come? From my experience, the answer is *absolutely not*. It's just that associations require a different approach to innovation and that the models that may work for tech start-ups, blue chip companies, or even NGOs won't cut it in the association world.

## *The Quest for Association Innovation*

This January, my team and I set out to test the following hypothesis: innovation is possible at associations, but it needs to follow a different path than in other sectors to be successful. In addition to talking to our client associations, we invited the international association

community to share their experiences: To date, twenty-two were kind enough to respond, letting us know what innovation means for them, and what they consider the biggest challenges and opportunities.

### **WHAT IS ASSOCIATION INNOVATION?**

In order to figure out how to innovate in associations, it really helps to understand what innovation actually is. There's just one little problem: innovation is one of the most overused words in business, education and marketing this decade. To quote Michael O'Bryan: *"Like Miss America contestants wanting world peace, the term 'innovation' has become the canned response of executives, politicians, and educators to the question, 'What do we need to be successful?'"*

There are of course many insightful definitions – and anyone interested will be able to google those in a heartbeat. What I believe we are lacking though is not a notion what the word 'innovation' stands for, but what innovation means concretely for the everyday realities of associations.

When talking to diverse associations, three areas were mentioned regularly as the areas where associations need to – *and can* – innovate: increasing member value, efficiency in operations and improving financial stability.

## "What does Innovation mean for your Association?"

- A** New approach/ tools that increase efficiency/effectiveness -15
- B** New products/ services that add member value & address their needs -15
- C** Attracting new sources of income -14
- D** Reaching new members, customers or markets -12
- E** Creating new impact on the sector/ profession/ cause that the association represents -10
- F** Others -3
- G** Anticipating business trends and providing thought leadership -1

## WHAT'S STOPPING US FROM INNOVATING?

Interestingly, achieving improvements in the three areas mentioned above may just be on the to-do list of every association professional out there. So, if the issues are that universally important, and if innovation is offering a way to tackle them, what is stopping us?

One obvious barrier to innovation is the one mentioned earlier: associations are risk-averse by nature. Associations function as custodians, regulators or gatekeepers of a sector or profession. Safeguarding standards requires continuity, care and consistency. Innovation, on the other hand, is deeply associated with risk, experimentation, and embracing disruptive change.

However, that's not the only – or even the most obvious – challenge. In our discussion with association leaders, two other factors were mentioned repeatedly: First, there is **lack of time**. 'Just' keeping the association running, implementing a growing number of services and responding to the needs of members, partners, sponsors and leadership alike is stretching secretariats to the very limit of their capacity. "With a fast-growing association, we always play catch-up and need to invent as we go along. There is just not enough time for strategic thinking and effective brainstorming," confirmed a contact at a global association who prefers to remain unnamed. Under these conditions, spending time to something as intangible as brainstorming, creative thinking and innovation is not only difficult, it can simply seem reckless.

Second, many associations state that they **lack the resources** to seriously 'innovate'. This includes money, staff and – to a lesser extent – innovation know-how. Evidently, all of these are interconnected: "Funding, and therefore staff size is limited" notes one interview partner. "It is difficult to invest money in tools for experimentation only. The Board expects results, not experimentation," writes another.



## "What are the barriers to innovation at your Association?"

- A** Lack of time -17
- B** Lack of money/ resources -14
- C** Fear of change/risk -7
- D** No space for experiments/ failure -6
- E** Slow pace of change -6
- F** Lack of follow-through on ideas -5
- G** Lack of strategy/ approach -4
- H** Lack of know-how -2
- I** Lack of staff interest/ contributions -2
- J** Others -5



## INNOVATION IS DEAD; LONG LIVE INNOVATION

Does that mean that association professionals should give up on innovation? That we should focus steering our ocean liners of continuity through the turbulences of progress and change, relying on the tradition and the ‘tried-and-tested’? I don’t think we should, and all association leaders who participated in our study agreed.

Now, that we can frame the challenge – *the fact that standard innovation models will simply not work for most associations* – we can work towards new models. We can identify the innovation methods and tools that help associations deliver results for our members, our teams and our sustainability.

What could such an approach look like? Luckily, there’s no need to guess, just look around us. There are many association professionals out there innovating and are often happy to share their insights.

## LESS TALK OF INNOVATION, MORE PROACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

When most people think of innovation, they think of trendy tech people engaged in endless brainstorming, finding creative ideas and experimenting with beautifully designed prototypes. While there is nothing wrong with these approaches, innovation is essentially about finding useful solutions: “*An innovation is a feasible and relevant offering such as a product, service, process or experience with a viable business model that is perceived as new and is adopted by customers,*” confirms Gijs van Wulfen, author of the FORTH Innovation Methodology. Let’s explain to our board, our teams and our partners that innovation is not blue-sky thinking, it is simply **a smart tool for problem solving**.

While this may not sound as glamorous as ‘disruptive innovation’, experience shows that it’s often the little things that can make a big difference in the long run. Not sure that that means? Here are some concrete examples that were shared with us during our innovation research:

- Tweaks to the statistical reporting helped to speed up delivery and to create bigger value for leadership.
- Renegotiating existing sponsor partnerships helped to create significantly more value for both the association and the sponsors
- Running key governance and member meetings virtually helped save significant money on travel and allowing for more agile working and collaboration.

## INVESTING IN ASSOCIATION INNOVATION

When lack of time and resources are ‘the’ key barriers to innovation, and when a need for more innovation has been identified as essential by the very same association, the solution seems easy: it is time to invest in innovation: by hiring more staff or by investing in new solutions.

From our discussions, we learned that some associations have come to the same conclusion and started acting on it:

- One society has just strengthened and grown their internal conference organising team, allowing them to offer more value and better service to their participants
- Another European alliance is hiring an additional staff member as communication and projects officer.
- Four associations invested in technology. Two developed their ex-

tranet, offering members better services without increasing staff time. Two others invested in member management and invoicing tools, allowing them to automate some administrative work.

However, to the majority of associations, the option of this kind of ‘hard’ investment is simply not available. Tight budgets or a frugal leadership make it unlikely that any new resources can be dedicated to innovation anytime soon. What can be done? It’s time to get innovative with innovation. But how? Let me share some examples:

### Creating innovation partnerships

can be a great way to create innovative impact without spending any hard cash: One association reported that they partnered with one of their members which is working on a large-scale initiative with the potential to become global. Without interfering in the implementation work, they agreed a ‘win-win’ deal whereby the member involves the international association, in exchange for support in promoting and communicating the initiative. Two other associations have created industry partnerships to offer exclusive access to knowledge and resources to their members.

Last but not least, here’s my favourite no-cost innovation tip – one that has probably generated the most positive impact in my work with innovation in the last ten+ years: **Empower your staff to become a team of problem solvers.**

Touted as ‘fostering an innovation mindset’ in the relevant literature, it’s really nothing more than encouraging all team members to keep their eyes open for problems and to discuss these openly. It’s essential to make it clear that this is not done in order to assign blame or to highlight failures – *on the contrary*. Identifying a problem is the first step to finding a solution, and this is best done together, *as a team*.

## "What would help you drive innovation in your Association?"

- A Good practice examples/ inspiration -15
- B Arguments for leadership buy-in (ROI) -8
- C Dedicated grant/ project funding -7
- D Innovative coaching for management -7
- E Benchmark studies/ industry data -7
- F Innovation training/ course for team -4
- G Other -1

In addition to promoting innovation, it also has a very welcoming side effect: it empowers people in their jobs. None of the talented, dedicated and multi-faceted experts working for associations want to be treated as mindless executors, they want to make a difference with their work.

In short, invite your team to be curious, honest, supportive and to take full responsibility for their work. Lead by example. And – *voilà* – your innovation task force is born.

## What's Next?

Almost 70% of the association leaders interviewed believe that innovation will become more, or much more important over the next two years. The same percentage is in need of good practice examples that can inspire them on their path to innovation.

This seems the right time to share experiences, understand common challenges and define good practice and hopefully this article and its underlying research are a step in the right direction. Others seem to agree and I am deeply grateful to the 22 associations – including AIB, ASAE, BioMed Alliance, CSC, EFFA, ESAE, FAIB, FEA, FICAC, ICAS and the Royal College of Physicians – that contributed to this conversation and shared their stories. It's equally inspiring that HQ Magazine, ESAE and the Visit Brussels Association Bureau have considered this topic of enough impor-

tance to support the **Association Innovation 2019** Initiative through their own channels.

Join the **Association Innovation LinkedIn Group** <http://bit.ly/AssociationInnovation> to get access to more results of this research and to add your voice to the growing body of stories and evidence. With everyone's help, we aim to publish the final results as an open white paper 'Association Innovation 2019' and – *if there is any interest* – to discuss the findings in one of our Association Intelligence Sessions. Should you wish to be kept updated on either, join the Association Innovation LinkedIn Group or get in touch with me directly.

Let's move towards meaningful association innovation in 2019 together. Now is the time to make a change.



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# ICCA's Senthil Gopinath Recognised for Innovative Business Event Strategy

The pioneering association meetings industry education and advocacy work of ICCA's Middle East Office was honoured in the latest round of nominations for PCMA's annual Visionary Awards, with ICCA Regional Director Middle East Senthil Gopinath named as one of three finalists in the running for Business Event Strategist of the Year. Gopinath, who has spent his glittering two-decade career in business events advocating for the strategic development of the global meetings industry, has set a precedent as the only non-US nominee included among the 2019 honourees and finalists.



## Industry education, networking and advocacy in the Middle East

In his latest role as the International Congress and Convention Association's Middle East representative, Gopinath's employment of a unique strategic approach to the growth of meetings business, which combines creative meetings methodology and the engagement of policy makers, has seen ICCA activities in the region grow significantly since 2016. Working in collaboration with local convention bureaux and tourism boards, ICCA's Middle East Office has increased engagement with the local meetings industry by organising a large number of educational events and networking opportunities.

Named "Meetings Industry Development Forums" and introduced by Gopinath around the theme of "Education... Engage... Enhance Business", each event uses ICCA's wealth of knowledge and experience to enable both local associations and meetings industry professionals to gain an understanding of the general requirements and strategies of international associations.

## Knowledge growth and more engagement, with tangible results

The introduction of this format has proved incredibly successful in developing professional association meetings knowledge, as the format focuses on

increasing regional engagement, integration and community development among the ICCA members and local industry stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing, a key foundation of ICCA's methodology. Twelve Forums have taken place in 7 countries since 2018, with the most recent edition being held in Muscat, Oman in December 2018; similar events are planned for 2019. The record-breaking 57<sup>th</sup> ICCA Congress held in 2018 in Dubai attracted over 1,150 senior meetings industry professionals from over 75 countries, a clear sign that ICCA engagement and knowledge development in the Middle East have gone from strength to strength.

It also serves as a major testament to Gopinath's business events acumen honed over two decades holding strategic leadership positions in major meetings industry organisations, another reason for his Visionary Awards nomination.

*"It's a great honour to be selected for the prestigious Visionary Awards. I would like to take this opportunity to thank PCMA for recognising my contribution of over two decades to the global meetings industry; it's a pleasure to be included alongside this elite group of international meetings industry professionals. It's also a significant achievement for ICCA. My sincere thanks to ICCA for creating such a great platform for knowledge sharing and community engagement,"* said Gopinath of his nomination.

## Significant increase in Middle Eastern ICCA membership

Under Gopinath's leadership, ICCA membership in the Middle East reached the 50-member milestone, increasing by 70% in the first 18 months of his tenure. Six ICCA members from Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai, Jordan, Oman and Qatar have also signed on as ICCA Association Relations Partners, an additional sign of the region's growth and dedication to their investment in attracting international association meetings.

According to ICCA's recently-published 55-year industry report, the Middle East continues to be the fastest growing region for international association meetings, with the number of meetings held more than doubling in the last decade.

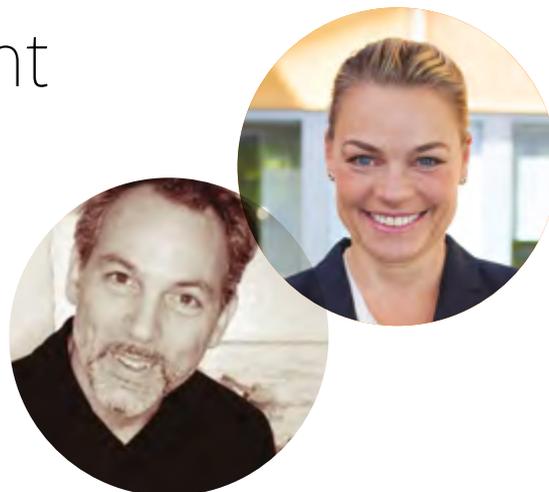
The winners of the 2019 PCMA Visionary Awards are set to be announced during the awards ceremony on Tuesday 7 May at the Marriott Marquis in Washington D.C., U.S.A.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ICCA & ICCA ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION, VISIT [ICCAWORLD.ORG](http://ICCAWORLD.ORG)**



# Membership Engagement Challenge People to be Creative



**Jeffer London** speaks with **Jeneva Patterson** about how she engages people with creative challenges.

Jeneva is Senior Faculty and Executive Coach for

Organisational Transformation at the Center for Creative Leadership (ccl.org) where Jeffer also works. CCL® is a top-ranked global provider of executive education that develops better leaders through its exclusive focus on leadership education and research.

Creativity is a key to engagement, but the creative muse is not always obedient. If you want your members to be creative, think in terms of challenges that follow people's natural rhythm – combining intense group sessions and free time. As Roshan Bharwaney, the Associate Director of Executive Development at WPP, puts it: *“Creative challenges can be more engaging than other workplace assignments because they require going beyond data, analysis, and existing ways of thinking to deeper levels of expression that can include profound shifts in the way we understand things.”* To access people's creative potential, we need to rethink the way we seek engagement. Jeneva Patterson is an expert at setting up these creative challenges and bringing people together to share the results.

## **Jeffer London: Why are creative challenges key to engaging people?**

Jeneva Patterson: People are thirsty for self-discovery. This desire is never quenched because we change all the time. Up to our early twenties people ask us lots of questions: *Why did you choose to study this? What's your aspiration? What are you developing in yourself?* Later in life, we stop getting asked these questions, but we still have the opportunity to evolve. Stimulating people with questions and creative challenges, no matter their phase in life, wakes people up and paves the way for engagement.

## **JL: Senior leaders seem to be at a crossroads on how to engage their people. What do you find on the top management's minds?**

JP: Many leaders find themselves living double lives. On the one hand they are visible, putting on a brave face in front

of their companies and on social media; on the other hand, they're often privately perplexed about the best strategy to follow. Their concerns range from *“should my organisation exist?”* to *“am I an imposter?”* to, *“is this the best strategy?”* Conversations that focus on identity, reinvention and leadership brand offer a respite from the double life trap.

## **JL: Given top leaders' strategic questions and needs for engagement, how do you help them shape people-intense initiatives?**

JP: The first challenge is to get people to show up. Everyone is busy, and we have limited control, if any, over what members do with their time. Association leaders can actively co-create and integrate members' contributions. Leaders need to shape succinct and catchy invitations that appeal to members' emotional connection to the Association's values. We often use video and visuals to show how

getting involved will be fun, meaningful and impactful.

## **JL: When participants say yes to your invitation, what are they signing up for?**

JP: To be surprised, stimulated and supported. Of course, we need to deliver on the promise that it's entertaining and makes an impact, but to do that we can't just do the same old thing. Confrontation and support are part of the formula. We invite members to promote their unique skills and passions to the rest of the group. We lead activities that simulate real-life scenarios. Members yearn for time to be and think together through structures that elicit feedback, authenticity and mutual support.

## **JL: How do you establish that atmosphere of trust and safety?**

JP: Most people want to have that safe space, but sometimes don't dare to be

the first person to speak out. Naturally, fears and social norms can inhibit people; still, they're hungry for the shared intensity of experiential learning. Simple questions can galvanise the interaction; for example, *please share a story with a neighbour about a time when you made a difference in a group*; or get a few testimonials on: *who could share their insights or surprises on how of an inclusive approach at work changed their culture?* Setting expectations for ourselves, as organisers, is critical. Sharing feelings, versus thoughts, may take multiple tries. Eventually, by facilitating with gentle persistence, patience, and open-ended questions, courage builds up in the group.

**JL: Tell me more about how sharing life experiences leads to innovation.**

JP: Being listened to, without judgment, is one of the most powerful interpersonal experiences humans enjoy. Associations are unique; they can create a forum for individuals to freely share crazy, fresh ideas without censorship. Validating ideas encourages conversation and sparks more ideas, thus laying the path for innovation. Regrettably, many of my clients assume they need to be solitary, innovation pillars. This is a seductive notion that would paralyse anyone. Innovation comes from sharing, testing, challenging, regenerating, and supporting ideas. Any Association can build an opportunity for that.

**JL: Most people are not most creative while at work. How do you bring fresh thinking into workplaces?**

JP: We often 'get hit' by great ideas when least expected. Einstein said that his ideas emerged while taking the bus, laying in his bed or relaxing in the bathtub. A great way to set the tone when meeting is to ask people to reflect on their most creative moments or ideas, after which they list the conditions that led to their creativity. To sustain courageous pursuit of ideas when not together, we give homework. Accountability partners support each other between meetings, deadlines for sharing, reminders, and

a sense of competition, further ignite courage. Naturally, given the research on innovation, as highlighted by Einstein, homework must also include scheduled downtime so that creative ideas can germinate. Downtime to 'turn off' thought, can include sports, siestas, cooking, walking the dog... The mind sends the most creative ideas when it's, ostensibly, inactive. Creativity and ideas blossom between sessions.

**JL: If creativity happens in between your sessions, what happens in them?**

JP: Dialogue. Walking in pairs to share. Validating people's experiences. Admitting one's fears. Peer coaching. What works for one person may not be ideal for another. *Variation* is key. Effective sessions are like music. Sometimes a session builds slowly like the sorrowful notes, of Henryk Górecki's third symphony. Other times I evoke creativity and disruption by playing Echad Mi Yodea by Ohad Naharin. Sometimes a vigorous dance performance video can inspire new ideas. Art forms are by definition creative! We often enjoy those art forms in our 'personal lives' but they're clinically separated from work. Join them together and new ideas flourish.

**JL: Any other advice for association leaders who seek creative engagement?**

JP: Learn from the best in the marketplace. Plenty of organisations harness creative engagement. Ask members to list every possible way they could smash their organisation to bits so that it dies a quick death. Then you'll know where to start by harnessing the phoenix from the flames.

*Thank you Jeneva Patterson, for taking the time to talk about how your work at the Center for Creative Leadership brings about engagement and innovation. You very well may find HQ readers in your upcoming programs. For more insights into engagement, see Jeffer's blog about stimulating conversation at [jeffer-london.com](http://jeffer-london.com).*

*"Stimulating people with questions and creative challenges, no matter their place in life, wakes people up and paves the way for engagement."*



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# Change (Mindset) is the New Constant



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Koj is a Managing Partner of Akronos Consulting – a boutique consultancy in Brussels, VP Partnerships at Professional Women International Brussels (PWI Brussels), and recruitment and leadership Consultant at EARS – European Affairs Recruitment Specialists.

She helps individual clients to thrive by aligning their personal and professional vision and organisations to identify the best talent. She specialises in strategic communications, institutional relations and organisational leadership.



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Change is a very important concept. As complex to comprehend fully, as it is common in our lives since forever. Over the years, a lot has been written and said about change management processes and techniques, developed to help leaders drive and manage change in their organisations.

The concept of change today, however, as per its own nature, has evolved. With the development of artificial intelligence and growing innovation in the area of automation, we are witnessing changes occurring at an ever-increasing speed, and becoming more and more exponential. As Yuval Noah Harari notes, we struggle with imagining the scope of change in the future because we keep using the same thinking patterns we have been using for years.

Traditionally, when thinking about change we anticipate a disruptive force challenging the status quo, a period of adaptation, and finally stabilisation in the new status quo. However, what is more probable is that constant change will become in the coming years the new normal. This means that both as individuals and as organisations we need to look for ways to become more agile, reactive and adaptable. We need to develop tools and mechanisms to thrive even if we don't have all the data to predict what future will bring us. What we need to work on is, first and foremost, our own *Change Mindset*.

The Change Mindset allows you to fully embrace the concept of constant change, without fearing the unknown. It empowers you to unleash your creativity

to proactively drive and shape change, to write your own story. Ultimately, it plays to the strengths of your whole self, as it mobilises to capitalise on your full skillset rather than staying closed in the box of any specific professional role. This broader way of perceiving yourself is crucial in ensuring success, as supported by the results of the study by the World Economic Forum on the top 10 [Skills needed to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#). While complex problem solving, unsurprisingly leads the list, skills such as creativity, critical thinking or emotional intelligence have all gained in importance.

Throughout the year, in a series of targeted and crisp reflections, I will explore with you ways to develop, practice and empower your Change Mindset.



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More than **220** batches of award-winning enterprises

Total income: **304,134** billion

More than **20** batches of more than **700** professional conference buyers

### Hangzhou M.I.C.E. Association already has

206

Members

90

Hotels

29

Travel  
Agencies

56

Conference  
Companies

31

Meeting Service  
Providers of  
Others

### Awards & Honours

- Chinese Top Ten Best Business Cities (Forbes) from 2004
- Top-ten happiest cities in China (State Statistical Bureau) 2007-2018
- Top-five urban security in China (Blue Book of public service)
- China Top-ten smart city (MOHURD) 2012
- China's Best Tourist City (UNWTO from 2006)
- The best sample city for global tourism of 2017 United Nations World Tourism Organisation
- World Tourism Alliance headquarter located in Hangzhou (2017)
- Top-ten tourism cities in China 2018
- Top-ten tourism cities in Asia 2018

## Hangzhou MICE Event Roadmap

2018

- The Third International Conference on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources
- 2018 TechCrunch International Innovation Summit (Hangzhou)
- 2018 Global Entrepreneur Forum

2015

Yunqi Cloud Town  
Computing Conference

2013

China (Hangzhou) International  
Automation and Robot Exhibition

2000

Western China International Fair

2022

The 19th Asian Games

2016

Hangzhou G20 Summit

2014

The Hangzhou Cultural  
and Creative Industries EXPO

2012

International Digital Marketing Exhibition





# The Secret Recipe of Agile Association Business Models



## AUTHORS

**Annemarie Weise**, Senior Business Development Manager, MCI Brussels and **Karine Desbant**, Global Marketing & Communications Manager, MCI Group.

Most organisations have a business model. Beyond its strategic framework, the business model must answer fundamental questions such as how is the organisation creating value, to whom, and if the value created is aligned with the organisation's mission and vision. Is this traditional model still viable?

## FROM TRADITIONAL TO FLEXIBLE AND AGILE

Because of the pace of change and communication, organisations must have the ability to adjust quickly. Moreover, to grow and prosper in today's tough environment, associations need to have a more robust business model that demonstrates unique value proposition, profit and seamless execution. They must demonstrate the ability to identify new opportunities and embrace change with a flexible mindset and to act on opportunities with agility.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, a research study\* was conducted to understand the biggest disruptors associations are facing and the actions they are taking to anticipate the shift in membership needs, preferences and behaviours. Some 63% of the organisations surveyed said they have already taken concrete actions and defined steps to shape their future. Most rated answers include: Change mindset;

Think like a futurist (51%); Improve product development and management practices (44%), Breaking the operating silos (42%), Develop a strategy for innovation (34%), Include innovation in every Board agenda (17%), and Appoint a Chief Innovation Officer (11%).

All of these actions cannot be achieved without a flexible and agile mindset supported by a robust business model.

Here is the story of an international organisation that has taken a bold step by penetrating and developing their products into a new and complex market with impressive results.

## DISRUPTING THE TRADITIONAL MODEL

SAE International is a global association of more than 128,000 engineers and related technical experts in the aerospace, automotive and commercial-vehicle industries. With close to 600 sessions delivered every

year in more than 30 countries, SAE professional developments courses, including online/on-demand courses, instructor-led courses (classroom/web-delivered), in-company training (corporate learning) and certificates, score in an impressive 8000 people trained per year globally, representing 10 million US\$ revenue for the organisation.

However, SAE International wanted to increase its reach and become a truly international organisation with on-the-ground global operations. With Europe chosen as a starting point, SAE International wanted to offer new and adapted products/services for European members and customers, and establish itself as one of the major players in the automotive and aerospace engineering field in Europe. SAE International also wanted to extend its community of European members, volunteers and customers and spread its content reach with the support of engaged European technical leaders.

In just over a year of operations, SAE International successfully recorded 72 sessions delivered in 18 different European countries representing over 1,000 people and 1 million US\$ revenue for the organisation. As an average, SAE International courses are rated 4.35 out of 5 with a 50% run rate on open enrolment classes.

To achieve these impressive results, MCI Benelux supported the organisation by deploying a three-fold strategy consisting of:

1. A strategy based on a sequenced market intelligence cycle to drive SAE penetration in Europe.
2. A four-fold tactics plan consisting of:
  - a) **Local business capacity** including local customer services, the recruitment of local instructors to offer customized knowledge to the European market, and local business practices such as collecting local money and paying local VAT.
  - b) **Europe-specific MarCom and Sales** through local marketing initiatives to increase brand awareness, shift perceptions and reinforce community engagement and recognition, and applying local languages and local business approaches to maximise sales per country.
  - c) **Adapted format** including pricing, timing and duration, location and accessibility of the courses to make the products / services appealing to the local community.
  - d) **Adapted content** through continuous knowledge exchange internally as well as externally to stay up to speed with the market and competition and to identify new content sources and opportunities.

*“Localisation is about setting clear objectives, designing and adapting to local needs and delivering processes successfully. Self-awareness and market knowledge are key in that effort”* said Kevin Perry, Former Director Professional Development at SAE International.

## KEY NUMBERS



## FIVE TIPS TO ROBUST BUSINESS MODELS

Developing a new and innovative business model requires resources, time and taking risks. It is a significant task that demands the business model stewardship to shift its conventional mindset to a new, positive, yet unknown environment. In some instances, Boards and senior management in charge of this exercise can become their own worst enemies. For this reason, having the right conversation with the right innovative mindset, and understanding where the obstacles are, will help identify compelling opportunities and deliver new value.

Here are five tips to driving efficiently a future-proof business model:

1. Identify opportunities
2. Create new value
3. Innovate, take risks
4. Investigate new customer segments
5. Plan carefully, seek profitability

*\* To receive a copy of the infographic “Are Associations As Agile As They Need to Be?”, contact [karine.desbant@mci-group.com](mailto:karine.desbant@mci-group.com)*

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, authors **Annemarie Weise**, Senior Business Development Manager, MCI Brussels and **Karine Desbant**, Global Marketing & Communications Manager, MCI Group.

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# How to be a “Model” Association in a Changing World

The question of what association “model” will work best in the current membership and geo-political environments is not a new question. It has been discussed for over half a century, as older associations have been forced to look at their traditional model and new associations are being formed with no “traditional” model after which to pattern themselves. The reason this topic has become more and more prevalent in the association world in recent years is no secret.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mark Levin**, CAE, CSP has more than 20 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.



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The old models aren’t working anymore. Membership is dropping. Participation is dropping. Chapters and affiliates are struggling to stay afloat. Competition for things like education programs, benefit/affinity programs, social interaction, unique communities, etc. is now coming from the online world, not from other associations.

So what model will be best to deal with all this?

Your model. The one you create. The one that fits best with your industry or profession or community, with your organisation’s mission and purpose, the one that gives you the flexibility to deal with **your** specific challenges and the challenges your members face.

Here is what I mean. When people think of association models, they almost always think about structure-related issues, so they discuss things like:

Should we-

- have a Parent-Chapter model or an affiliate model?
- be modeled more like a for-profit organisation?
- change our dues structure?
- be a traditional headquarters model or a virtual staff model?
- be less dependent on Committees and more on staff and outside contractors?

All of these are legitimate questions and options but they are not going to solve any problems if they are instituted in an organisation that starts with their “model” discussion. The key is to **be clear about what outcomes you are trying to achieve** – outcomes that will provide the greatest value to your members and other stockholders.

Most associations hold planning conferences and Board retreats and “think tanks” to come up with a list of things they want to accomplish over the next

2-3 years (*almost no associations are planning any further out than that anymore*). They wind up with 4-5 main areas of importance and a list of specific activities that will help them move forward and then they.....

.....try to fit all of that into their existing structure. They go down the list of goals and assign them to one or more of their current committees (*sometimes they get really creative and create a new committee or Task Force*). The problem is this is backward and often creates more confusion and work than it was before.

The “model” that works best is the one where the association staff and leaders are aligned on what the goals and priorities are, and where they have defined what success is going to look like (*i.e. using appropriate metrics*). Then they *structure their organisation around these things*.

Here are some things associations can do to keep focused on organisational mission and member value, rather than an organisational structure and model.

### **1 Don't let your organisation chart dictate your success.**

It's o.k. to change as your priorities and resources change. One large U.S. association, with hundreds of thousands of

members and a staff of hundreds, created a completely new leadership structure after their planning session. They had determined that they needed to be successful in four key areas over the next three years, so they created four Vice Presidents' positions on both the volunteer and staff organisation charts. Each team was assigned to accomplish the goals in an area, and was given the option of organising any way the felt would work best for them.

### **2 Yes, emulate the best practices of the private sector but not necessarily its model.**

Associations have been saying they want use the “for-profit” model for a long time. That has always been a good idea as long as the differences between the association sector and the for-profit sector are considered. If members become customers and membership becomes a transaction instead of an experience, you've lost what makes associations unique – the volunteer aspect. Is that really what you want to do?

### **3 When in doubt, talk to your members and stakeholders.**

It's important when discussing any organisational model to be aware of what your members and stakeholders perceive as value. There is an old saying in the association management field that claims “it is the volunteers' (leaders) role to be sure the association is doing the right things. It's the staff's job to be sure the association is doing things right.”

If your organisation is focused on doing the right things (*as identified by your stakeholders*), then staffers should be creating a model to do those things in the highest, most efficient manner.

Call your organisational model anything you want. The only name that really matters is SUCCESS.



# RĪGA – The Largest City in the Baltics

MEET RIGA was established in 2011 as the official Riga City Convention bureau, and it is a department of Riga Tourism Development Bureau. HQ Magazine learns more through a casual chat with MEET RIGA's Project Director **Aigars Smiltans**.



## HQ: What is Riga's biggest unique selling point?

AS: Riga is affordable, reliable and safe. Compared to other European capitals, Riga is a rather new destination, our MICE infrastructure only started to evolve and develop from beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Riga's multi-layered and diverse history is a huge value-add, especially for enriching conference programme or pre and post conference tours.

The affordable price level in Riga comes with exceptional service which makes the destination great value for money. For example, some hotels offer DDR (*Daily Delegate Rate*) of €50 for eight hours of conference room use, two basic coffee breaks and full buffet lunch meal. The new hotels that will be opening in

Riga will help to keep hotel room rates and conference hall rental fees at very competitive level.

## What are the latest MICE developments and offerings in Riga?

The Grand Poet Hotel by Semarah and Grand Hotel Kempinski Riga are two five-star hotels that opened in 2018, Hilton Garden Inn and AC by Marriott will open in 2019. With a wide range of three, four, and five stars hotels opening in the already saturated hotel market in Riga, the destination will be enriched by at least 2,500 new hotel rooms and meeting halls.

Besides the Central Market pavilions and BT 1 Exhibition Hall, we will have two new large venues by the end of the year – the Hanzas Perons is a place for culture,

venue for concerts and conferences (for up to 2000 pax), and the A3 will accommodate up to 4000 delegates.

Riga International Airport is also developing in a high phase with plans to extend the main departure hall and build an additional Southern terminal. The current two terminals managed to accommodate 7.06 million passengers in 2018. Serving about 50% of the entire Baltic State airport passengers and flights, it is one of the fastest growing small airports in Europe (with up to 10 million in passenger numbers).

## What are your target markets and industries?

Our main target markets are European countries with good air connectivity and moderate flight time. Riga (& Latvia) is so diverse that there is something for all



MEET  
RĪGA



FIND OUT MORE:  
[MEETRIGA.COM](http://MEETRIGA.COM)

industries and clients! We are a rather new destination on the MICE scene and we feel that many of our potential clients don't realise all possibilities we present, the vast resources that they can use here. Judging from the car launches, product presentations and education sessions taking place here, we are becoming popular among the automobile industry. We want to establish Riga as a great *new* meeting point between West & East / North and South, an up and coming hot-spot for associations

who are looking for affordable prices and great value for money even without subventions and support programs.

### What is your opinion of the millennial generation in the meetings and business events industry?

I must admit that the MICE industry is aging! We don't see many *younger* people around. However, this can be changed. What we can do is to involve millennials into it, mentor them, and also to listen

to them! Millennials provide a different perspective on many aspects and issues. Involving millennials in our MICE industry can help us break some rules and traditions in order to create a new way of doing things. I believe millennials can be a great asset and catalyst to evolve association life, membership structure and meetings as such. I personally (*and strongly*) support the renewal process of our industry. Bear with the slight initial disturbance, for they can certainly introduce some great new things to fabric of our MICE industry!



▲ Photos credit: latvia.travel

As Aigars would like to dedicate the last question for a millennial in his team, we framed many things we'd like to know into a question for Partner Program Manager at RTDB, **Edgars Mikelsons**.

### HQ: What are your challenges, motivations, and outlook on your career and future as a millennial in the MICE industry?

Is there really any difference between millennials and the previous generations? Personally I do not see any huge gap (*besides the younger generation being more adapted to technology, to use it to solve challenges in the MICE industry*).

The dynamic working environment of the MICE industry suits me, I love the flexible working hours and the

people-to-people business that is open-minded and oriented on interpersonal relationships. The biggest challenge for me was to jump into this ride with my well experienced colleague, Aigars. However, I started to see that not only can I learn from him, but he can also get some great ideas from me as well, coming in with a fresh mind from a different educational background can be useful to the industry.

Living in such a beautiful city as Riga, seeking motivation isn't hard work. I love my job promoting Riga as a wonderful

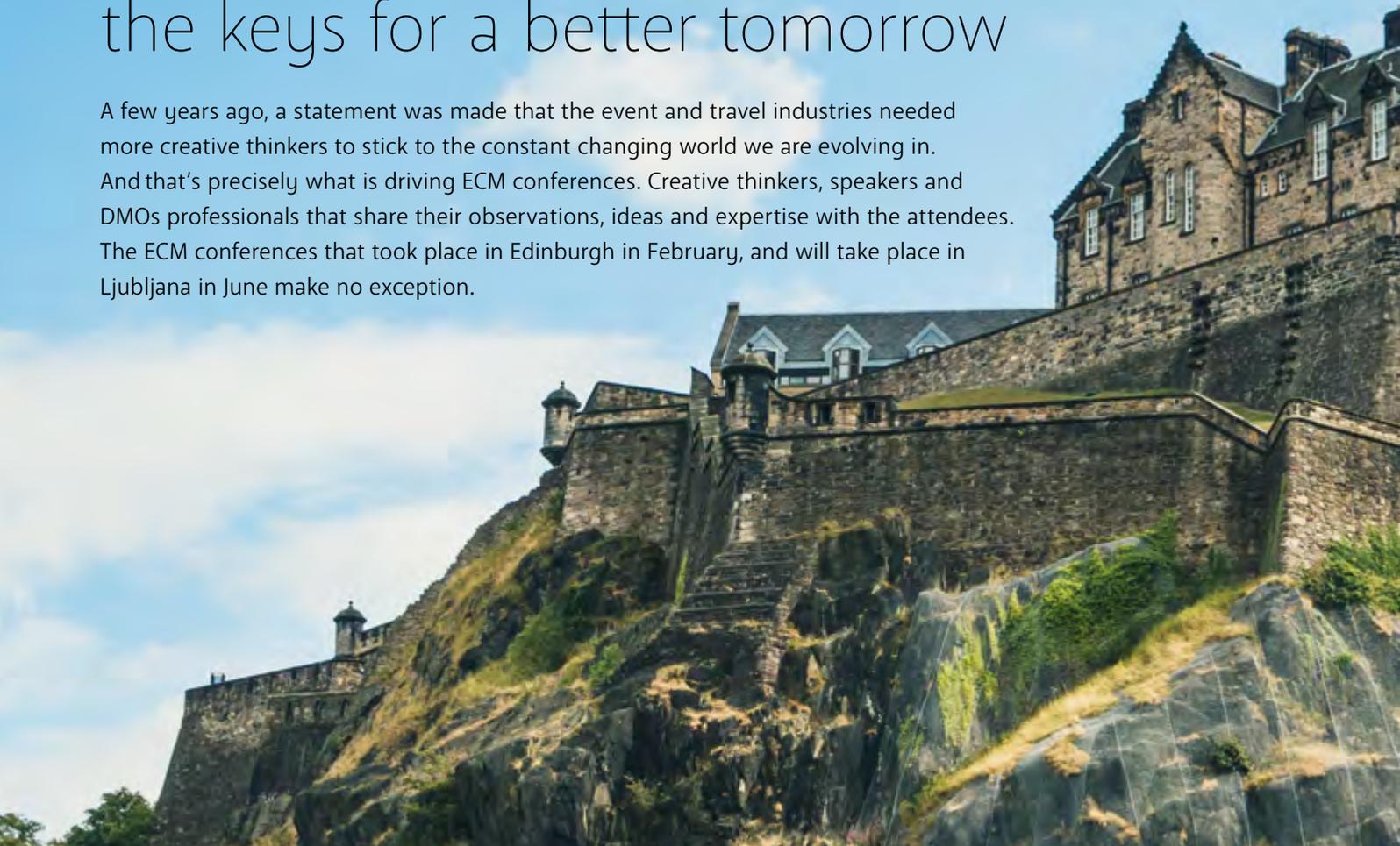
destination for meetings and events, and knowing that a lot of work is still ahead of me gets me excited. It is one thing to work for an already well-known destination, but *another* to make a destination well known from scratch. I am looking forward to build my career in the meetings industry, and I will see Riga become one of the top choices as a MICE destination. Well... at least in Northern Europe.

Once again, are millennials something very different? I think this question would be more suitable for those who need to work with us.



# Innovation and creativity for DMOs: the keys for a better tomorrow

A few years ago, a statement was made that the event and travel industries needed more creative thinkers to stick to the constant changing world we are evolving in. And that's precisely what is driving ECM conferences. Creative thinkers, speakers and DMOs professionals that share their observations, ideas and expertise with the attendees. The ECM conferences that took place in Edinburgh in February, and will take place in Ljubljana in June make no exception.



Being creative is having the ability to surpass traditional ideas and rules and to create meaningful new ones. It is the same with urban events and sometimes it brings the best to a city but every now and then it is the complete opposite.

Urban events are awesome communication platforms and can generate great public excitement and boost the soft power of the city. Big events bring with them increased economic turnover, and – if conceived and executed strategically – they might boost your city's international brand and stimulate urban development both physically and socially.

Events can be a great way of manifesting a city for a global audience. In the cultural economy, small is often beautiful and what is local might go global. Pamplona, Davos, Kassel and Park City are the proof that, with creative and exclusive content, even the smallest of towns can be world cities for a few days every year. Events have the power to make nowhere places go everywhere!

Yet, as it turns out, even if creative enough, for host cities, major events in culture, commerce, science or sports have become a complex and high-risk business with many pitfalls and diverse stakeholder interests.

In Edinburgh, February 13-16, 2019, ECM offered a fully loaded two-day conference on *Eventful cities* with leading international experts, event owners and select international showcases that provided attendees with all the insights and inspiration they need to cultivate the event scene in their cities. ECM presented event leaders and creatives from some of the world's leading happenings and dissected the strategies that made them successful. The dark side of the moon was also uncovered with a "festival of failures" where brave survivors of epic disasters in event management share their experiences and valuable learnings.






**MORE INFORMATION**  
[EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM](http://EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM)

Another ECM event will be of interest regarding innovation: set the agenda for ECM International Conference on urban tourism and travel trends that will be held in Ljubljana, June 5-8, 2019.

ECM will be presenting outstanding speakers, presenters, challengers, motivators, thinkers, leaders, experts, gurus, talents and DMO professionals with inspirational insights, passions, and learnings to share. On the overall theme of ***Trends and technology in urban travel and tourism*** likely to change and challenge the business of DMOs. Be ready to discover:

- **The next big thing in the marketplace:** trends and phenomena that you

haven't seen before, but are destined to change the way you go about our DMO business.

- **Inspiration:** the coolest and wildest concepts and technology applications meant to concur the world of travel and the practice of DMOs.
- **Playful experiments:** golden project that is really fun and ground-breaking or cool start-ups disrupting the experiential landscape in a city.
- **Walking the talk:** cases of how AI, predictive analysis, VR, AR and data in general can be applied in urban travel and tourism.

“The helicopter analysis” of the structural forces and dynamics that will drive change in the market: demographics, global transaction platforms, climate crisis, political and cultural matters, new consumer orientations...

The full programme and registration platform will be available during Spring 2019.

ECM conferences' programmes are set by meetings facilitator Peter Rømer Hansen together with the help of ECM members that share their suggestion of speakers that could be of interests for the conferences' attendees.





# How do millennials consume content at a conference?



When you're trying to decide if you should attend a specific conference or event (or asking your boss if you can attend), often you look at things like the venue, the speaker line up or the session titles. But the thing I think is most important, is the session format. A conference programme particularly appeals to me if I see the words "workshop", "interactive" "collaborative session" or if I see an innovative/creative session design with lots of time allocated for Q&A.

**Aoife McCrum**, Council Member of Meetings & Millennials

**W**hy? Well because I want to be a part of the session's content. Sometimes there shouldn't be any PowerPoint presentations - if every speaker is confined to his or her PPT then that decides the outcome of the conference before it even begins! And no, the answer isn't to have lots of panel sessions in-between speakers either. Panels give another opportunity to the speakers to give their opinion further but what about my opinion and the opinion of the 400 delegates in the room?

During a Q&A a maximum of 3-4 questions from a full room will be addressed at the end of a presentation (if you are lucky). Then you're asked to fill out a survey to provide feedback on the content after it has been delivered at the end of the conference. Often this survey, taken when the conference is actually OVER, is your only opportunity to contribute, be involved or be creative.

But what if we changed that? What if we started involving the WHOLE audience during a session and getting their feedback in a LIVE environment?

Although the word "Crowdsourced" was not officially coined until 2006, crowdsourcing an answer or idea is not a new concept. In 1884, 800 volunteers worked together to create the first Oxford English Dictionary. So why not bring the minds of 400 delegates attending a conference together to design a presentation and set of takeaways we can all benefit from?

Speakers are invited to a conference to share their knowledge and expertise. But my generation wants to hear from another type of expert too. We tend to trust knowledge, expertise and content that has been created or recommended by our peers. When deciding what restaurant to eat at or destination to visit, we turn to TripAdvisor, Instagram posts by our friends, blog posts and other user-generated content (UGC). Therefore having collaborative sessions where we can learn from one another is massively appealing to our generation.

An example of a collaborative and innovative session format is a session that took place during the SITE Global Conference in Bangkok. 375 incentive travel professionals attending the conference gathered together to create a series of statements to define the nature, purpose and direction of incentive travel.

In 2 x 2 hour highly immersive and interactive sessions moderated by former CEO of ICCA, Martin Sirk, a representative cross section of delegates brainstormed to bring viewpoints from all segments of the industry (geographically and demographically) together. This was a pen and paper, flip chart and multi-coloured dots session - not all millennials need technology to be engaged! From these sessions 15 statements were crafted.

On the last day of the conference, January 13th, we created The Bangkok Manifesto through the use of the audience engagement platform, Sli.do, 375 delegates voted

LIVE in a series of 3 polls to collectively agree upon the final 10 statements to be included in the Manifesto during a 20minute fast-paced and interactive session.

We all walked out of the room holding a piece of paper with the final 10 statements feeling like we had been a part of something important - we had created a part of the conference's content.

My generation, the so-called Millennials are often referred to as being selfish, entitled and lazy. But that's simply NOT true. We just want to be listened to. We want to participate, collaborate and move at a fast pace.

**MEETINGS** | **MILLENNIALS**

Meetings+Millennials is a networking initiative for millennials in the Meetings and Events Industry.

Aoife McCrum is the Social Media and Digital Marketing Manager at SoolNua - a specialist marketing agency working in the meetings, incentives, conferences and events industry. Aoife is also the Director of Social Media and Digital Marketing at the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE).



**MORE INFORMATION**  
[MEETINGSANDMILLENNIALS.COM](http://MEETINGSANDMILLENNIALS.COM)



# GDPR – A Positive Perspective

GDPR was a major concern for associations over the previous years, which has generated a trail of generally negative opinions and hysteria before it finally came into force on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2018. While attending the Marketing United Roadshow on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, HQ discovered a (*refreshingly*) positive perspective – **Shane Phair**, SVP Marketing of Campaign Monitor, shares more.



## HQ: How has GDPR saved email marketing?

SP: Before GDPR was developed, email marketing was starting to get a negative reputation in Europe due to people's inboxes being cluttered with unwanted email — to the point people even began ignoring commercial email all together. But, when GDPR was implemented last May, marketers had to have their subscribers opt-in to their lists again, which cleared out the small portion of email lists that were filled with people who did not want to be there in the first place.

In a post-GDPR world our mailboxes as consumers are far less cluttered allowing us to more effectively engage with the content we signed up for. For example, Campaign Monitor saw a 29 percent increase in average open rates within EMEA.

It's important to mention that GDPR not only allowed organisations to narrow down their email lists to find their engaged subscribers, but it also allowed them to focus on improving customer relationships. Showing the willingness to be compliant demonstrated their interest in keeping their customers' information secure.

## What is a good strategy for email marketing campaign?

The most important thing to think about when sending an email marketing campaign is, *'do I have something important to say or offer to my subscribers?'*. If not, then don't send an email. One of the most common mistakes marketers make is sticking to an email cadence that is not in-line with the information their subscribers want to read. Your strategy should always be to send relevant content.

## What would you say to organisations who prioritise the size of their lists instead of the quality?

I encourage them to look at their email marketing analytics and imagine what it would look like if they removed the people from their lists who did not want to be there. At Campaign Monitor and our family of brands, we continue to share the importance of quality over quantity with our customers. You can have the largest email list in the world, but if those subscribers are not engaging with your content, then you're not gaining anything from the money you're spending.

## How can we overcome the fear of seeing the unsubscribe list grow?

It can be terrifying, but we tell marketers that if they see their engagement increasing, then they're doing the right thing. Like I previously mentioned, you need engaged subscribers or you're not going to have the ROI you are aiming for.

## How does GDPR affect non-European organisations and companies exchanging data with EU countries?

GDPR still affects non-European organisations and companies because they are held to the same standard when it comes to exchanging data within European countries. These organisations also had to make the decision whether or not to abide by GDPR regulations in just non-European countries, or within all regions. Either way, GDPR required the same amount of up-front work to remain compliant.

 **Campaign Monitor**

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[CAMPAIGNMONITOR.COM](https://campaignmonitor.com)





Images: University of Glasgow

# GLASGOW, a city of medical innovation

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**PEOPLE  
MAKE  
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# The Future of Meetings: Original Events

The events industry is constantly challenged to deliver solutions that meet expectations and answers the ever-evolving needs of the market. Industries with a high accumulation of information require more ways to meet, exchange knowledge, collaborate and build networks. In this environment, new fields and topics pick-up speed fast, but often traditional associations cannot address them at annual meetings due to limited resources. These trending issues require fresh ideas from planners to create dedicated platforms now. Kenes Group calls these: **Original Events**.

What is the model of Original Events? They are often initiated and driven by different stakeholders: a corporation, government, venue, convention and visitor bureau (CVB), an association, or the professional conference organiser (PCO) itself. Often, the PCO is the facilitator leading all involved parties.

Original Events offer independence to PCOs, and the opportunity to fill a market gap while expanding their business portfolio and penetrating new segments. The main process to kick-off a project is straightforward: identify ideas with growth potential, invest in

emerging topics, create a solid business case, and assess and mitigate all risks. Embarking on this path requires an investment of time and resources, as well as adaptability to different business models each platform may call for.

To organise such an event, the main requirement is co-creation and combining resources with destinations, CVBs, venues, to get access to local knowledge hubs, innovation centres, and institutions. Involving Key Opinion Leaders in the field is vital as they lead the content creation for each event. The PCO and partners navigate together toward establishing a new brand, supported by

thorough research, pre-financing and a clear marketing strategy. Original Events are built on the strength of each stakeholder involved: research, regional competences, knowledge hubs, the right environment and infrastructure, or the ability to reach local academia.

Meetings are a powerful tool to build a community and a network that connects like-minded professionals and companies. It is expected from all of us in the industry to accept the challenge, take the risk and provide support in creating effective new event brands. Welcome to a future filled with Original Events.



## ABOUT KENES GROUP

At Kenes, we're passionate about delivering superior, world-class conferences. Over fifty years of knowledge and market expertise have led Kenes Group to the forefront of global conference management and rank us among the world's leading Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs). We bring you the accrued confidence that comes from hosting more than 3,500 conferences around the globe, for over 140,000 participants a year. Founded in Tel Aviv in 1965, and headquartered in Geneva, Kenes Group is the only global PCO dedicated to medical and scientific events. The company boasts a team of over 350 professionals, in 26 offices on four continents, and more than 120 long term clients.

## For more information, contact:

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# Penang: Pearl of Asia

Penang has two pearls in its crown. The locals fondly call it 'Pearl of Asia'. The second pearl is a striking building, the Setia Spice Convention Centre, which is also called "Pearl of the Orient". But do you know where Penang is? This island province is situated on the northwest coast of Malaysia, and is Malaysia's fast-rising second-tier congress destination.

*Marcel A M. Vissers reports*

## A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

When visiting a new destination, I always try to get a better idea of the city's layout by looking at it from above. I find it's the best introduction to a new city, especially when you lack good orientation skills (like me). There are two places where you can do this in Penang.

Your first option is the top of Penang Hill (otherwise known as Bukit Bendera), which is 821 metres above sea level and Penang's highest point. An unrivalled view of the island awaits you at the top, as far as the eye can see, with Penang Bridge in the distance and ships in the harbour. On a clear, sunny day, you can even see the other end of Penang Bridge, where it meets Peninsular Malaysia. If

you don't feel like hiking all the way to the top, the dedicated funicular train service will take you there in less than 5 minutes.

The other option is KOMTAR, a 65-storey high rise tower in central George Town and one of the most prominent landmarks in Penang. The lower floors are occupied by a lot of local shops. You can take the elevator to its sky bar at the top level which offers views of the island and across the straits to Penang's mainland.

## A WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE

For many years I actually thought Penang was also a city but this is a misconception. Colonial George Town is the island's actual capital and a UNESCO World

Cultural Heritage Site. I would love to visit this city again because there is so much to see and do. It is also the food capital of South East Asia and a real paradise for foodies. Here is a list of highlights I thought to share with you, a few places delegates can visit when they have some time during or after their congress.

Penang is mainly popular because of its cultural highlights, the many attractions, the delicious food and the modern shopping malls. In addition to several good food courts, it also has plenty of good (and luxurious) restaurants, where you can delicious and cheap food (*'That Little Wine Bar' in George Town, for example, is very popular*). The CEO of Penang Convention Bureau is not really joking when he laughs that there is only one



diet on the island, namely eating.

Some of the more popular attractions on the island are the Tropical Spice Garden, Entopia by Butterfly Farm, Peranakan Museum, the Burmese temple, Kek Lok Si temple, Penang national park, The Habitat on Penang Hill, the Escape Theme Park, Wat Chayamangkalaram and Clan Jetties. Personally I really enjoyed the colonial walk in the city, as well as my visit to the lovely house of Yeap Chor Ee. One of the highlights of my trip was definitely The Habitat.

According to research, George Town is the best place to live in Malaysia. It is one of the most popular cities with expats and foreigners who stay in Malaysia under the MM2H (Malaysia My 2nd Home) programme. The city has excellent facilities for foreigners who live and work there or who are visiting. The medical facilities especially are very good, which explains why the island is the hub for medical tourism in Malaysia. And naturally Penang is the premier destination for medical congresses. It's also a great place for walks, a place where you might suddenly find yourself in the kind of house where you could easily spend two hours.

So who brought all this splendour to Penang? Yeap Chor Ee was a Chinese

immigrant, who came to Penang in 1885 as a penniless 17-year old. When he died, he was one of the richest people in Penang. The House of Yeap Chor Ee was the house of the Grand Old Man of Penang (*a nickname given to this dynamic businessman*). It has since been transformed into a museum which showcases his collection of antiques, which is managed by his descendants. The colours of his beautiful collection of glassware are forever etched in my memory!

### THE HABITAT PENANG HILL

Albert Einstein was probably right when he wrote: *"Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better"*. One of the most memorable visits for BE @ Penang 2018 delegates was probably the canopy walk in the world's oldest forest, which is 130 million years old. The Habitat attracts conventions about nature conservation and raising awareness to protect biodiversity and ecosystems to Penang. Environmental preservation undoubtedly is one of the most important themes in the history of mankind. The Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau has established a special cooperation with the administrators of this stunning nature reserve. Find out why a visit to educational rain-forest experience is a real must for congress delegates.

### THE HABITAT TREETOP WALK

At 13 metres, the Tree Top Walk is the highest public viewing platform on Penang Hill and the island, located on the plateau just above the Mid-Point Rest Area and Museum. Designed to handle up to 120 people at a time, it offers mesmerising 360-degree views of Penang, including George Town. On a clear day the islands of Langkawi can be seen in the distance, and if you look just in front of you, you can spot Bel Retiro (the Governor of Penang's mansion) in all its splendour.

### ABOUT PENANG CONVENTION & EXHIBITION BUREAU (PCEB)

Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) is a state bureau established to develop the Business Events and meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) industry in Penang. PCEB aims to position Penang as the preferred location for Business Events activities in the region. With its rich UNESCO heritage, thriving multicultural society, state-of-the-art facilities and vibrant natural attractions, Penang offers a truly eclectic tropical experience.



 **MORE INFORMATION**  
[PCEB.MY](http://PCEB.MY)

# The Process of Change Has Found a Valuable Forerunner – *The People*

After two positively-rated annual BestCities Global Forum (*Dubai in 2016, and Tokyo in 2017*), the third edition re-united senior international association executives and the twelve partner cities to Bogotá, Colombia. Hosted by the Greater Bogotá Convention Bureau (GBCB) along with the BestCities Global Alliance, the event fully encompassed its theme with a constant flow of inspiring stories about the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Bogotá – essentially making it an excellent experience to learn about the only Latin-American destination member in the BestCities Global Alliance.



*Ken TJX reports*

## BOGOTÁ SEIZED THE SPOTLIGHT AND SHINED

Nestled in the heart of the Andes, 2,640 metres above sea level is a vibrant melting pot of all the cultural and gastronomic diversity of Colombia. An eclectic and energetic fusion of tastes, music, and colourful streets (*that double as an open gallery of imaginative street art that captures the history, stories and hopes of the warm local inhabitants*).

The capital of Colombia is an active economic epicenter and business hub of the

country. Bogotá is well-connected to the world with over 700 air routes from 44 destinations; there are 1,500 multinational corporations operating in Bogotá (including 73 of the most important companies listed on the Fortune 500, and 62% of the 500 largest businesses in Latin America). This megacity is Colombia's most competitive city with the largest per capita income in the region.

Bogotá is certainly equipped with the necessary infrastructure to carry out large events (*having successfully hosted the One Young World Summit and World Summit of*

*Nobel Peace Laureates in 2017*). The newly opened Grand Hyatt Bogotá was an impeccable choice as the headquarter hotel for the BestCities Global Forum 2018. Bogotá's newest convention centre Ágora Bogotá, the Grand Hyatt Bogotá, and Torre AR Calle 100 – Convention Center all hosted a day of the Global Forum.

By nature, MICE events are opportunities to show (first-hand) how the security concerns are managed. Generally perceived as a dangerous city, I experienced a different reality during my stay. If you consider the fact that Coca-Cola moved their business unit from San Jose to Bogotá, and Amazon chose this location for their first service centre in South America, the fear and safety concerns seem superfluous.

## THE POWER OF PEOPLE

While the current sense of stability, facts and figures are sufficient to give Bogotá a chance for your next global business event, it is the optimistic, enterprising and passionate people of Bogotá who will truly win you over. After all it is the *people* driving the strong business structure that has managed to coordinate the public and private sectors to collectively strengthen the destination's economic and social development.





As Jorge Mario Díaz, President of the Board of GBCB says: *“We strongly believe that each person has the power to make a fundamental difference, that can shape the future and make a positive change. People are the essence of this industry, and this industry is a vessel to achieve wider and bigger impacts. As an alliance we want to highlight the true power of the people within it and believe the forum will help us achieve this.”*

People play a unique role in making significant changes and progressions in the meetings and events industry, and there isn't a better time to enshrine 'people' at the core of the message. By focusing on the people, we can look beyond ROI and truly leave lasting legacies. The event was a testament that business events can help facilitate local stakeholders to do more; and the innumerable ways local community can value-add to the business events industry, and capitalise on it as a growth platform for their community and cause.

### REAL, INSPIRING CONTENT

The four-day session (9-12 December 2018) featured inspiring local speakers, thought-provoking workshops, and transparent knowledge-sharing between partner cities. The event was infused with GBCB's 'Synergies for Change' initiative which puts people at the core of the project. Staying true to the theme, the programme showcased innovative ways locals drive change from within their battled communities regardless of surroundings or situation.

Inspiring highlights include Neyder Culchac, a youth leader from Putumayo who shared about his life story, the power of determination, and his initiative that transformed the lives of 480 families within his community (*despite growing up surrounded by conflict*). Carlos Lopez from Magicians Without Borders recounted his heartening experience of bringing his trained band of children magicians from Ciudad, Bolivar (a zone with the highest number of displaced individuals) to New York for a sold-out performance at a Broadway theatre. During the 'Sound of Bogotá Breakfast' session, we learned about the power of people

behind music – As UNESCO's Creative City of Music 2012, Colombia's diverse music genres created opportunities for the people; live events promote local talent and strengthen the infrastructure.

The most inspirational experience of all was the 'Weaving Peace tour', which featured powerful stories of big transformation led by peace weavers and their communities, such as Juan Antonio and his son from Distrito Chocolate, and Hernando and Christina Chindoy from Wausikamas Coffee. The impactful tour exposed us to the heart and soul of Bogotá, as we met (*chat, and sample the products of*) Colombian farmers who were victims of the drugs trade, rebuilding their lives from illegal (*cocaine*) to legal (*cacao and coffee*) activities, planting the seeds of peace towards a sustainable future.

Bogotá is worth a visit to witness their exciting state of transformation – *from a country of problem to a country of solution*. If every city can awaken the power of her people, perhaps that's how we can begin to change the world for the better? People is a key driver for change; creativity and entrepreneurship can stimulate change. I believe BestCities Global Forum 2018 has successfully achieved its goal of inspiring associations to create bigger, better, and more impactful meetings. The next edition of the Global Forum will be taking place in Copenhagen from 8-11 December 2019.





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# Establishing Cultural Agility & Intercultural Competence



Do you belong in a linear-active, multi-active or reactive culture?

**Marit Imeland Gjesme**, Founder of CultureCatch Consultancy, guides us to successfully optimise cross-cultural teams and business meetings.



**HQ: Can you share some tips on building cultural agility, and how we can build cross-cultural support and intercultural competence? How can we manage cooperation or changes involving several and diverse cultures?**

MIG: So, what is culture? In a work context we mean the invisible things, “*How we do things around here*”, how we “*by default*” behave, communicate or solve problems. There are so many things we never think of, we just “do them” and take for granted that they will be equally normal everywhere.

Think of culture as a pair of glasses you wear all the time (*but without knowing it*)! They are a filter you see and interpret the world and other people’s behaviour through, and we should know that what we see is not “the truth”, but one of many truths! To work successfully with others who think and work differently, we need to adjust our learned, “mental software”. We must create an attitude of being ready and prepared with “mental adapters” to hit the wavelength of our target cultures! I like to put it this way; *You may well be*

*successful in working globally and across cultures – OR you can insist on doing business YOUR way!*

And that’s exactly what cultural agility is about – being flexible, adapting and behaving in ways seen as respectful and efficient in the eyes of your target culture(s)! Being *culturally agile*, means you are culturally competent and ready to efficiently succeed across cultural barriers.

But how can we develop cultural competence? Imagine a ladder of development stages, starting with self-awareness; your own world views and how you may be perceived. From awareness, move to developing positive *attitudes* towards differences; be *curious* and wish to *understand*. With a positive attitude, build up the *knowledge* stage, learn the values, patterns and ways of others. And when *knowing*, start to implement your knowledge into adjusted behaviour and skills – in communication, leadership, negotiations or team participation.

## What skills do you need to optimise success in multicultural projects?

We know for a fact that cultural diversity in projects often causes misunderstandings, conflicts and errors that break the success and efficiency instead of making it. But we also know that multicultural projects have the potential to reach far greater results than homogeneous groups, making the challenges well worth conquering! Research has proven that the key difference between high and low performing diverse teams is whether the project leaders take culture seriously or not. The best ones MAP, BRIDGE and INTEGRATE their team people from start, instead of neglecting culture. Mapping determines geographical *cultural category*, and according to the Lewis Model we consider three main ones in the world, basically coded in colours red (Multi-active), blue (Linear-active) and yellow (Reactive). Then we map culture specific values and individually unique





working styles and preferences. This is done by using a brilliant self assessment tool, CultureActive, developed to map the linear, multi or reactive preferences. It provides individual and team profiles, overviews and advice to work from, as well as giving access to – *literally* – a world of country specific information. This always inspires and adds a lot of value. Building on this, bridging and integrating is about clarifying and explaining personal differences, finding common ground and agreements, - before making shared guidelines that everyone commits to, for how to work together. Integration also requires relationships-building, making sure roles and responsibilities are understood the same way and that synergies are optimised.

Patterns have been identified for how national cultures behave in general, which helps mapping and bridging. Important country-specific areas are the **communication styles**, since they cause so much misunderstanding and lack of trust. When supporting multicultural teams, make sure everyone learns the vital things about each other's

preferences for communication, listening, leadership, truth-definitions etc and get them off on a positive track from start. The profiling with CultureActive provides individual positions in the overall global cultural model (*The Lewis Model, see model and map*), and gives an overview of the cultural capital to work with. This is something people always find highly enlightening and motivating. Helpful in many ways, and for all stages of building cultural competence (awareness, understanding, creating attitudes and curiosity, building competence and skills) – *don't forget to add patience, flexibility, generosity and a dash of humour!*

**How can we successfully optimise cross-cultural meetings to make them meaningful for all?**

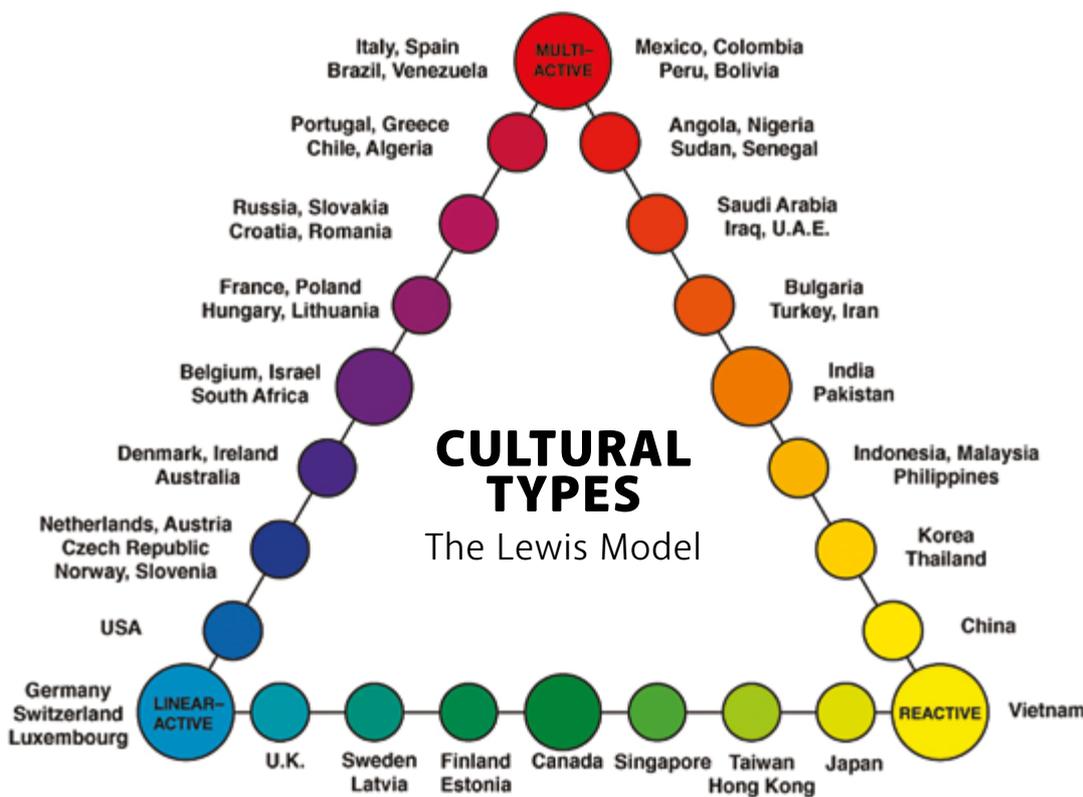
Basic clue: Make sure everyone feels respected! Let's stick to the three overall cultural categories (multi-active, linear-active and reactive), what will they expect to get from a meeting?

Linear-actives (blue) will in general want a clear agenda, information sharing,

punctuality and economic use of time, facts and figures, open expressions of direct opinions, discussions and issues presented and solved one by one. Confrontations and mutual challenging of each other are valued, while socialising is not a requirement as the task list is more important than building relationships.

Multi-active cultures (red) would be much more people and relationship oriented, than facts and product oriented. They would like a flexible, random agenda, be far less punctual, prefer extended socialising, form alliances, inspire one another and close meetings with many loose ends, lots of good ideas but very few action plans. They would love humorous and creative activities, especially with a team building aim. Hierarchy, honour and dignity would be a major priority and group identification would play a much bigger role than for the individualistic and egalitarian blues.

For the reactive cultures (yellow), the aims would be harmony, showing (and expecting) respect and “protection of face”, no disagreements nor conflicts, no challenges on giving individual opinions,



# NATIONAL CULTURAL PROFILES



decisions or commitments to anything before after a long process. They would assess the others and the possibilities for building long term relationships, trust and potential business – based on how well the linear-actives and multi-actives were able to behave as seen from a reactive’s point of view. They would listen much more than speak, and never express anything that could put a harmonious atmosphere at risk. This might be time consuming, too indirect and frustrating for the others.

A multicultural meeting needs careful planning, balancing of styles and facilitation not to end up as an endless waste of time and cause of frustration!

### How can we tailor-make effective marketing campaigns for diverse cultural markets?

No marketing campaign will be equally impactful everywhere! We MUST tailor

according to target groups. Make sure that deeply rooted cultural preferences are emphasised. The three main factors of Aristotle’s advice for persuasion and influencing (Logos, Pathos and Ethos) are eternally helpful and inspirational. All three must be present, but with different weightage. Each of them corresponds perfectly to our colour-coded cultural category, and tells you that your marketing should focus strongly on:

LOGOS has the best effect for the linear-active cultures – clear information, accountability, logic, facts and structure. For the multi-active cultures, the PATHOS works best – activation of emotions, passion, fun, charisma and personal bonding. The ETHOS will have a strong grounding in the reactive cultures, where the “who” is important – the senders known credibility and seniority, loyalty to long term relationships, respect and harmony always trump “newcomers” and whatever excellent offers they may have. Which means that you must patiently invest over time and

build your reputation and network before your marketing can be really impactful in reactive cultures.

Remember, building cultural competence and agility is about knowing what “cultural category shoes” you are wearing – and understand how it feels to wear the shoes of the other categories, when you are walking together towards the same goals!

For the full extended interview, visit:

[MEETINGMEDIAGROUP.COM](http://MEETINGMEDIAGROUP.COM)

For more inspiration and ideas or to learn more in depth how you can work with your teams to develop their intercultural competence, please visit:

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# Five Reasons Why Africa Will Dominate the MICE Industry in 2019

Demand for meetings and events is forecasted to rise between 5-10% in 2019, with the average size of meetings also expected to increase, and Africa is ready to capitalise and work for its slice of the growing global MICE pie, by positioning itself as an attractive destination for corporates and international event planners. Here are five reasons why **Henk Graaff**, Managing Director of SW Africa, believes Africa could be hugely successful in the MICE-sector this year.



## 1 INCREASED FLIGHT ACCESS OPENS NEW POSSIBILITIES

Flight access and connectivity on the African continent has improved drastically in 2018. Ethiopia Airways added new services to Chicago and Los Angeles, while Kenya Airways recently launched a direct flight to New York. Rwandair also has ambitious plans to launch another new service to the Big Apple soon.

These new connections have opened up new destination choices for MICE organisers. Victoria Falls, the Masai Mara and Africa's Mountain Gorillas, have all become more accessible to international MICE travellers as a result of improved flight connections.

Intra-African airline connectivity has also increased, approximately five percent year-on-year, in 2018 with the establishment of 70 new routes and 30 more intra-continental routes in the pipeline.

## 2 NEW AFRICAN DESTINATIONS EXPAND MICE OFFERINGS

Rwanda has been hard at work to position itself as a MICE destination of choice. According to Clare Akamanzi, Rwanda Development Board's Chief Executive Officer, Rwanda aimed to increase its MICE receipts to US\$74 million (€64.25 million) in 2018 alone, up from US\$42 million (€36.47 million) in 2017, which highlighted the benefit of private sector support.

*"Rwanda has prioritised MICE as one of the drivers of economic growth, and the Government has invested in infrastructures like the Kigali Convention Centre and the national airline. We have also invested in hotels and attracted the private sector to support the value chain of conference tourism,"* Akamanzi highlighted.

Uganda has also expressed its interest to explore the MICE market further. Both Rwanda and Uganda offer unique products and services for MICE travellers and buyers, with the chance to experience

a trip to see the mountain gorillas, a favourite programme highlight.

Rwanda's great infrastructure, good road conditions and relatively shorter travel distances make gorilla trekking more accessible for MICE travellers who want to visit the gorillas after their meetings.

Meanwhile, Uganda offers gorilla permits that are much more affordable. The country also provides a more extensive range of accommodation ranging from mid-budget to luxury. Uganda also has a fantastic chimp-trekking programme in Kibale, as well as a few authentic visitor experiences with the indigenous Batwa people.

## 3 SOUTH AFRICA STILL TOPS THE MICE WISH-LIST

South Africa has been rated the number one meetings destination in Africa by ICCA. The country also ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the world as a MICE destination.

Speaking at IBTM World 2018 in Barcelona, **Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo**, Chief Convention Bureau Officer for the South African National Bureau, said meetings, conferences and conventions had attracted one million international delegates to South Africa annually. She added that there are around 211,000 national, regional and international meetings, conventions, and conferences hosted in South Africa each year.

South Africa will continue to be a destination of choice for MICE organisers. With the favourable exchange rate as a major incentive, organisers with larger budgets can add a lot more bells and whistles to their events in South Africa.

## 4 HYPER-PERSONALISATION AND UNUSUAL VENUES ARE THE NORM IN AFRICA

There has been an increasing trend for hyper-personalisation, with MICE organisers looking to tailor and adapt any event, conference or meeting to the client needs and company values. They seek unique outdoor spaces and

out-of-the-box venue ideas to make the experience more memorable.

Africa offers a vast array of exceptional locations, from a meeting on the Blue Train to a convention at the new Zeitz Museum in Cape Town. SW Africa has previously hosted meetings out in the middle of the wilderness, as part of a mobile safari camp.

*"We have definitely experienced a need for more personalised and non-traditional MICE experiences, and I guess you can say that we can count ourselves lucky that Southern and Eastern Africa as our operating environment never fails to present us with opportunities to exceed expectations."* – Henk Graaff

## 5 EXCITING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS

Sustainability and corporate social responsibility will continue to be another primary focus in 2019. The war on single-use plastic has been a hot topic and is set to remain a significant trend.

Africa offers a host of opportunities for delegates who want to give back. In a private concession in the Kruger National Park, for example, delegates can embark upon a conservation safari with the Elephant Collaring Project. They can lend a hand by fitting specific elephants with GPS-enabled satellite collars that help identify habitual crop raiders and assist in combating human-wildlife conflict.

MICE delegates will love the sleep-outs under the stars, surprise morning bush breakfasts, sophisticated safari dining and tailor-made menus with catering services.



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# Joburg – City of Gold

Established in 1886 following the discovery of gold, Johannesburg (*also known as Jo'burg*) today is the provincial capital and largest city of Gauteng – the wealthiest province in South Africa. **Rendani Khorommbi**, Deputy Director of Johannesburg Tourism fill us in on their infrastructure, key markets and priorities.



## HQ: Does Johannesburg have the infrastructure for MICE?

RK: The city is recognised as the financial capital of South Africa and is home to at least 74% of Corporate Headquarters. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) rates as one of the top 20 exchanges in the world in terms of market capitalisation.

Key industries and areas of innovation in Johannesburg include a multiplicity of commercial and creative activities – from banking and finance, gold mining, manufacturing and health sciences to transport, business services and outsourcing, information and communication technologies, automotive, television, film and creative industries, to mention but a few.

Joburg has a wide variety of accommodation establishments ranging from one-star to five-stars. Out of Gauteng's 1532 accommodation establishments, 33% are in Johannesburg. 37.9% of Gauteng's 536

conference venues are in Johannesburg as well. Many of Johannesburg's three to five-star accommodation establishments have meeting facilities.

Joburg has world class infrastructure from its international airports, high-speed trains (the first in Africa), excellent road infrastructure, good public transport network, a huge range of quality accommodation options and meeting venues. Multitudes of International airlines fly into Joburg, making the destination the most accessible on the African continent and the hub from which to access other destinations on the continent.

The biggest percentage of total foreign business visitors who arrive in Gauteng province come for Joburg; Of these, 82.4% are business professionals while 73.8% attend conferences and conventions.

## What are your key markets and priorities?

Our market priorities are aligned with South African Tourism and its business unit, South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB).

For conventions and conferences, we focus on associations relating to South African specialisation, and associations with South African key contacts. Besides Africa, we also set our sight on US and Europe.

For corporate meetings, we focus primarily on promoting South Africa as Africa's best staging place for product launches and user groups organised by companies in the SADC (Southern African Development Community), Europe, the US and Asia. Not forgetting African regional meetings of multi-national corporations and local corporate meetings.

SANCB put its incentive market focus mostly on incentive houses and corporate travel agencies. Europe and the US are strong established markets, while Brazil and India are promising as shorter-haul large emerging markets.

As for exhibitions, we aim to internationalise national shows, and establish African versions of existing titles from Europe. Internationalising shows that have South African and SADC producers should be the main focus for the SANCB.



Crime perception about the destination and the fact that Johannesburg is a long haul destination for most of our target markets. The perception is gradually changing through stakeholder engagements and media publications at various international congresses, trade shows and exhibitions. We continue to host trade and media on familiarisation trips to showcase our beautiful city to the world. Subsequently, the hosted trade sell Johannesburg package to their clients while media provide positive reviews about the destination. The number of international events such as the recently hosted Afro Punk is of vital importance to spread positive word of mouth about the destination through attending delegates.

#### **A final quick pitch to meeting planners?**

Joburg has world class infrastructure from its international airports, high-speed trains (the first in Africa), excellent road infrastructure, good public transport network, a huge range of quality accommodation options and meeting venues. Furthermore, there are various authentic leisure tourism activities which include cultural & historical tours where guests can interact with local for memorable experience.

#### **Can you please share with us your plan and vision of Joburg Tourism for the upcoming three years?**

The past year (while increasingly busy and hectic) has once again borne positive results for the Joburg Convention Bureau. Year on year, we've managed to keep abreast of developments on the international scene by participating in relevant roadshows and exhibitions, while increasing our bid output to bring more convention business to our city.

In the case of secured meetings, we've hosted numerous site inspections and we're also working with local committees in an effort to offer onsite services. While I'm happy to report that we have a number of bids in progress for meetings to be held between now and 2021,

I'd like to remind our stakeholders that our doors are always open to partnerships that can help increase the number of events we bring to Joburg.

Our immediate plan is to strengthen relationships and partnerships with MICE stakeholders such as South African Association for the Conference Industry, Gauteng Convention Bureau & Events, Professional Conference organisers, Events Managements Companies, just to mention the few, in order to increase market share for Johannesburg in the next coming three years and beyond.

#### **What is hindering international associations from choosing Joburg for their events? How do you set out to change that?**

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