

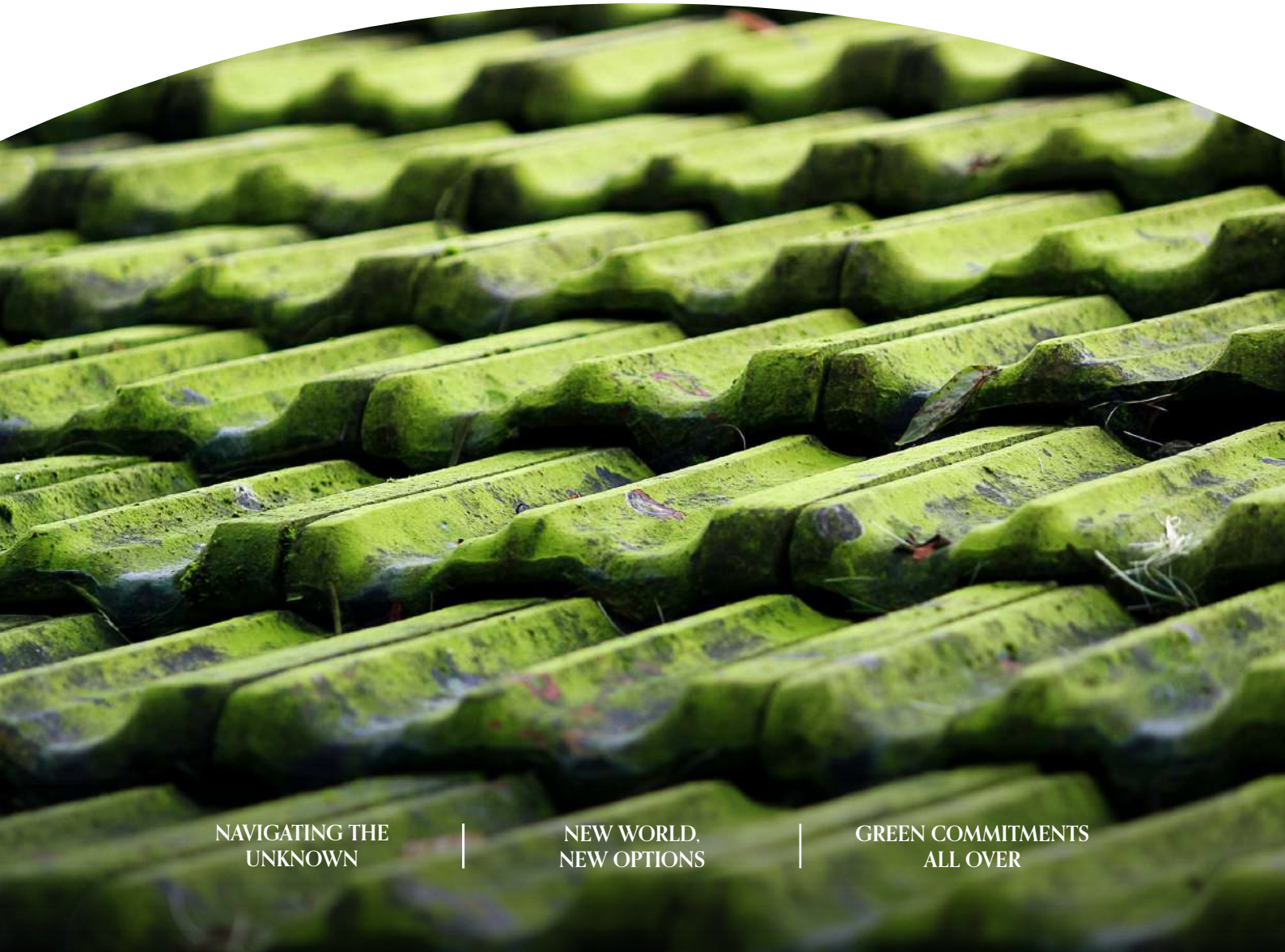


BOARDROOM

THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

HOW TO STAY RELEVANT

VOLUME 1 | **2020 VOLUME 2** | VOLUME 3 | VOLUME 4



NAVIGATING THE
UNKNOWN

NEW WORLD,
NEW OPTIONS

GREEN COMMITMENTS
ALL OVER

Your location

Meetings, ideas, celebrations – our wide range of locations give events the potential to be unforgettable. And our longstanding expertise and finely honed services will do the rest. You can enjoy these benefits on a large or small scale because we care about your event.



messe frankfurt

TIME OF THE TRIPLE C's

COVID-19+CREATIVITY+COMMUNITY

While writing this letter on Good Friday, nearly a month into confinement, the first question we had was how to approach the topic of COVID-19. Sure, we could focus on some of the more positive responses coming out of the industry, such as conventions centres transforming into temporary hospitals and food waste from cancelled events helping those affected by social distancing.

But there's a lot of uncertainty swirling around, and we wanted to see how we could help make the situation clearer. We polled our Advisory Board and found that while trade associations can still function, associations with individual members are taking an all hands on deck approach. By the time this issue comes out, the situation may be similar for the trade, too.

As a way for partners and clients to communicate and share how their organization or destination is coping with the crisis, we created a dedicated COVID-19 section on the Boardroom digital platform. During the early days of the outbreak, we published a piece by Martin Sirk, who advises that *"associations can collectively become the most important creator of solutions, but only if we become 'solution engines' rather than 'membership machines'."*

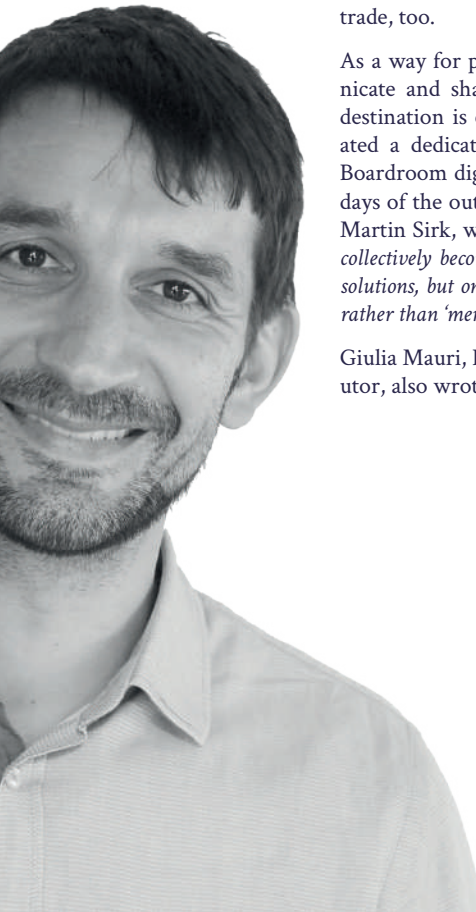
Giulia Mauri, Boardroom's new legal contributor, also wrote a helpful article on managing

an association digitally – and the legal impacts of it – since many countries have taken specific COVID-19-related measures that allow associations to continue functioning and making decisions through tele- and video conference.

Things that were possible a few months ago are no longer accessible, so organizations have to be creative to successfully cope with the situation. Take business models, for instance. Is the majority of your business model based on event revenues? If you can't physically meet for a conference, should you turn to digital meetings? Maybe it's time to adopt a new finance model. We want to help you navigate the new landscape we're currently in.

Community is more important now than ever, too. We believe the term *"social distancing"* should be replaced with *"physical distancing."* Social belonging and a sense of community offers the structure and support we need during a crisis. It's important we don't lose touch with each other, even when we can't physically be in the same room.

By showing empathy, turning to creative solutions, and being transparent in communication with your members, you'll set an example of strong leadership and create a tight-knit community that will continue to thrive – even in the most trying of times.



Rémi Dève

Founder & Chief Editor



Cécile Volz

Founder & Managing Partner

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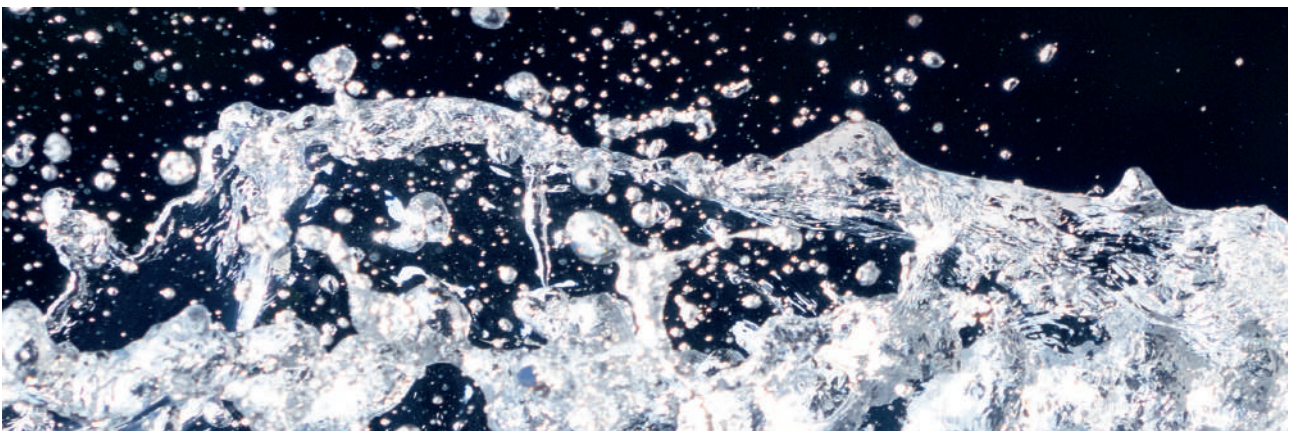
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Geneva International Associations Forum

Designing Future-Proof Associations

When I first learned that the inaugural Geneva International Associations Forum (GIAF) would still be taking place in June, it gave me a sign of hope that the worst was behind us. If ASSOCIATIONWORLD, Geneva Convention Bureau and Congrex Switzerland – the event’s founding fathers – decided to push forward with the Forum, that would give associations something to look forward to – and plenty to talk about — at the meeting this summer in Geneva.

Words Rémi Dévé



The Geneva International Association Forum was launched by the ASSOCIATIONWORLD Foundation, in collaboration with the Geneva Convention Bureau and Congrex Switzerland, earlier this year. Slated to take place June 22-23, 2020, the event will bring together representatives of international and European associations, non-profits, federations, professional

societies, NGOs and universities based in Geneva. The goal for GIAF: establish an international leading platform for knowledge sharing in one of the world’s flagship host destinations for associations.

“Let’s be honest— by the time this edition of Boardroom is published, the Forum could be postponed. So, why are we thinking at this

very minute that GIAF could still take place as a face-to-face meeting?” asks Kai Troll, president of the ASSOCIATIONWORLD Foundation.

The ASSOCIATIONWORLD Foundation and partners have been carefully monitoring developments around the world, government decisions across Europe,

and, specifically, the regulations imposed by the Swiss government on a regular basis. They are also discussing new developments at weekly calls with stakeholders to “ensure that we are all aligned in regard to proper decision-making,” Troll explains. “All of us involved in GIAF want to see even the tiniest light at the end of the tunnel. We remain committed more than ever to putting GIAF on the map in times of crisis, and, with a bit of luck, the Swiss government will have lifted bans by early June, and GIAF could be one of the first—if not the first—face-to-face association gathering. Since Covid-19, GIAF becomes even more relevant.”

CREATING AN ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY

According to Troll, the goal is, in the long run, to establish an association community where a lot of European and international associations are based – something that has been missing until now, one finds. The organizers foresee attendance will mostly come from Geneva and Switzerland anyway – hence the decision to keep GIAF in the running, since most participants won't have to fly in.

Known globally as the UN's European headquarters and the head office of the WHO, Geneva attracts thousands of people each year for conferences, conventions and meetings. The international city is also considered a prime location for global companies: over 140 multinational companies are established in and around the city. Geneva is also home to 36 international organizations (IOs), over 300 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 200 diplomatic missions.

“Geneva is an institutional and scientific hub like no other in the world, and a central location for international diplomacy, scientific research and innovation, and professional expertise gathering,” says Didier Allaz, director of Geneva Convention Bureau. “The city's unique ecosystem of public, private, non-profit and academic players provides a fertile ground for fostering an impactful dialogue and expertise sharing. Building more

of a community amongst our Geneva-based international and European associations and non-profit organizations and supporting them to achieve their mission is the essence of the Geneva Convention Bureau's mission. And with GIAF, we want to open this community to associations that are based in Switzerland, Europe and beyond.”

PEER-TO-PEER PLATFORM

The Forum is currently being designed as a platform for peer-to-peer exchange, for associations, by associations. GIAF wants to offer high-quality information and educational opportunities for all kinds of organizations, no matter where they are based, and no matter the size. Whether it's offline or online, face-to-face or rather visual, association professionals will be able to share their professional knowledge and learn from various case studies.

“The world is changing fast, and most destinations and communities are facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Anna Bueno, association meetings manager at Barcelona Convention Bureau, GIAF's European destination partner. “As a destination fully committed to the wellness of international and European associations, who have tremendous positive impact on the world we live in, we aim for close cooperation with GIAF's stakeholders. Now, more than ever, we are ready to offer a high-quality, face-to-face program to help associations to learn, engage and share expertise.”

Designing joint initiatives to tackle common challenges and achieve better results is the essence of GIAF. “We want to bring people together again, whether now or later,” says Troll. “Establishing cross-industry collaboration and partnerships between a wide range of stakeholders will be key for associations to be more impactful, become more sustainable and resilient. This is especially true during these unprecedented circumstances.”

For more information and updates, visit
www.giaforum.com \ hello@associationworld.eu

On the (work-in-progress) program

GIAF's program will be designed around four pillars:

CEO IN ACTION (for CEOs, secretaries general, senior directors, etc.)

Discussion will revolve around topics like governance & board development, leadership & management, membership models, finances, and HR. Attendees will also learn and discuss business planning, strategic communications, membership development, income generation, digitalization & technology, travel and meeting protocols that are high on association leaders' agenda.

ADVOCACY, CAMPAIGNING, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

This pillar assists professionals in the field of external communication who have the power to influence governments, legislators, institutions and high-level external stakeholders in times of and after Covid-19.

INCOME GENERATION / RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

This is designed for those actively involved in fundraising, sponsorship, exhibitions, donor development, high net worth individual donor development, foundation funding and business development. Diversification of income streams is today more important than ever.

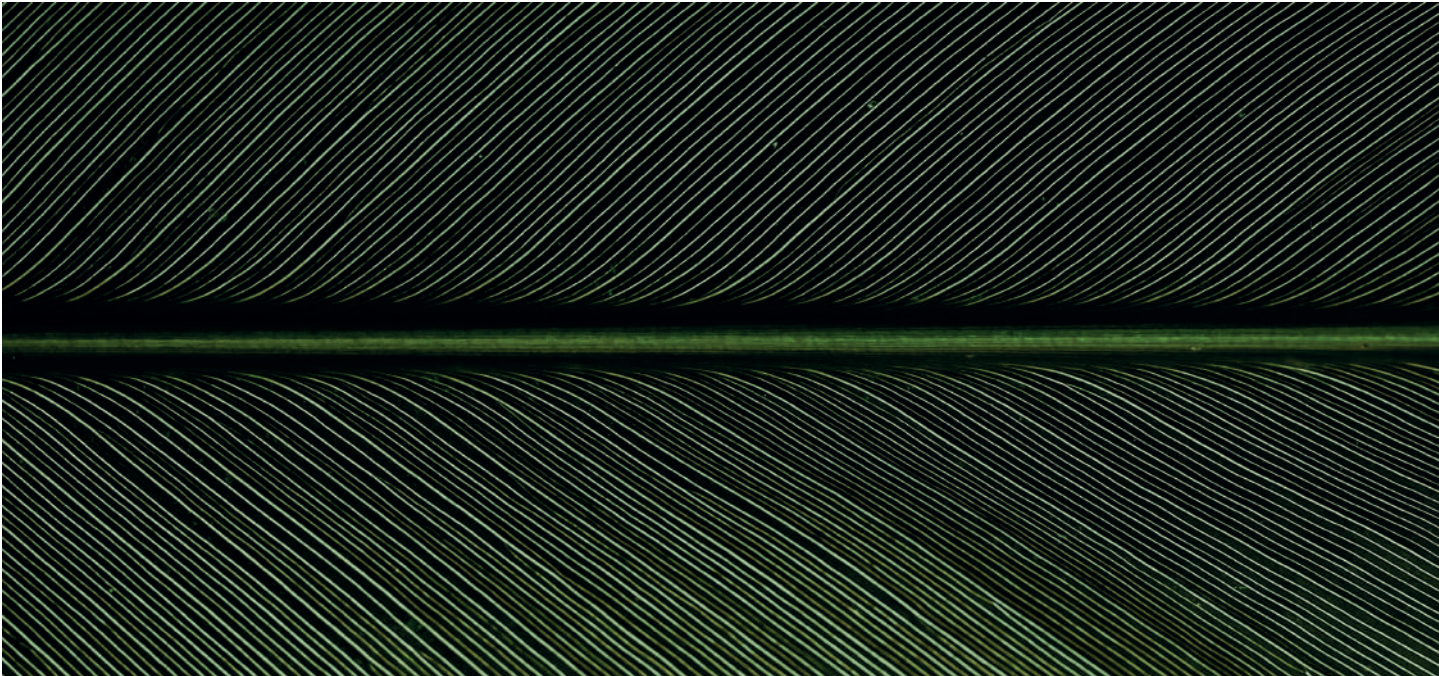
INNOVATION / SUSTAINABILITY / DIGITALIZATION

The last pillar revolves around innovation and sustainability in the fields of event planning & design (F2F & online), technology, and operations. It will also touch on how the UN SDGs can be integrated in the overall mission and vision of an organization.

Game Changing Globalization

ASIS International, the leading professional society for security professionals, was founded in 1955 and is headquartered in Virginia. The organization boasts over 34,000 members from around the globe, but as with any professional society, there's always room for growth in terms of membership and certification. In addition to strengthening the delivery of products and services through its local chapter structure, ASIS set foot in Europe thanks to Brussels-based AMC Exempla, who supports its mission to advance security worldwide. Boardroom caught up with CEO Peter J. O'Neil, FASAE, CAE, who shares why it made sense for the organization to take this route - and why it may be beneficial for others to do the same.

Words Rémi Dévé



Globalization has had a powerful impact on professional societies of all varieties, requiring many associations to seek field information in foreign nations. For associations that are considering global expansion, it's highly likely that market potential and market share will vary widely from country to country, or region to region.

As a way to tackle expansion, the ASIS Board of Directors adopted a new, highly ambitious strategic plan. The association is working through an intensive change process to reinvigorate itself for the digital age. One of the highlights? An updated value proposition for current and new members around the globe.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

ASIS International has faced numerous and different challenges in recent years. Chief among them are financial challenges, challenges related to global brand protection, challenges with knitting together and communicating a strong strategic plan that resonates across and through regional specific cultures, and challenges with

effectively managing and leading chapters and councils comprised of nearly 2,000 volunteers. *"We've tackled all this by making sure we don't sell a 'one-size-fits-all' model around the world because that never works, given the disparity in needs and resources of our members across regions,"* explains Peter J. O'Neil, CEO of ASIS.

At the same time, it is impossible to develop a successful, sustainable long-term strategy without understanding the future in which your members will live and work. Whether you're using strategic planning or value proposition design, research confirms that in order to be successful, associations must develop strategy based on the anticipated future of their industry or profession. *"Security professionals today are faced with an increasingly IoT-driven and rapidly changing business environment where the traditional divide between physical and cyber security disappears,"* O'Neil explains. *"It's only by looking at the future, and where it lies, that an organization like ours will be successful."*

Being a U.S.-headquartered association with a global presence presents a variety of complications. *"The U.S. presents unique challenges, given the strong feelings about our national leadership and the global positions taken abroad on behalf of the U.S.,"* O'Neil points out. *"With this comes assumptions about ASIS. Given the profession we represent - security - there are further assumptions that we are an extension of the U.S. CIA or another security-oriented organization—which is simply not the case. In addition, geo-politics genuinely impacts ASIS on many levels, especially membership."*

LOOKING TO EUROPE

In Europe, there is the additional challenge of a U.S.-headquartered organization creating a regional value proposition in an events market that a lot of people see as congested and competitive. By appointing Brussels-based AMC Exempla as its European representative, ASIS made it *"much more convenient and cost-effective than hosting an independent regional office,"* O'Neil

says. *"As ASIS expands in other parts of the world, we will likely follow a similar model."*

Bénédicte Losseau, a partner at Exempla, explains that investing in a physical or staff presence in Brussels shows commitment to members in the region, since it's a city where it's natural to have a European or international outlook, and where a large majority of nationalities and languages are represented.

The association ecosystem in Brussels is another added value. Associations like the European Society of Association Executives, FAIB (the federation of associations based in Brussels), and the Association Bureau at visit.brussels come together to form a strong support network. There is also a diverse workforce with association experience and transferable skills, as well as a large number of associations in Brussels that can serve as advisors for legal and tax issues. *"It adds credibility, especially if you run any EU affairs or liaison activities,"* Losseau explains. *"European staff can help interpret the European business culture and communication styles - and we know this can vary a lot across our little region."*

Many associations see Brussels as the clear choice for a European headquarters, in addition to the city serving as a getaway for the Middle East and Africa. Primary drivers include everything from banking and IP laws and rules to access to top regional association talent. *"Just like it's the case in Washington D.C., we really feel like we're a member of an association community that shares the same challenges and opportunities,"* O'Neil says. *"By having easy access to European institutions, and by meeting up with our peers, we can design solutions that will make our organization thrive."*

This piece is part of the exclusive partnership between Boardroom and the Global Association Hubs Partnership (GAHP), which comes as an innovative response to the increasing decentralization of international associations as they look to develop their activities globally.

www.associationhubs.org

Progressing Business Continuity in a Changing World

A sustainable business is one that has minimal negative impact, or potentially a positive effect, on the global or local environment, community, society, or economy. One that has the capability to manoeuvre around a dramatically evolving business landscape and adapt to sudden shifts without breaking the chains that hold an organization together. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had the world jolted into a new reality of the unknown, which the meetings industry has to adapt to.

Words Angeline van den Broecke

According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the tourism sector is one of the hardest hit with impacts on both travel supply and demand and of this Asia Pacific is expected to be the most affected region. Events and meetings have had to be either postponed or cancelled in an effort to curb the spread of this pandemic leading to revenue losses and company restructures. In such trying times, organizations with the foresight to be equipped with the capability and the agility to bend and curve where needed combined with positive collaboration and the right partnerships, pave the way for greater impact and recovery.

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (the Centre) shed its "supplier" skin and adorned the leather of partnership long ago resulting in great results, and most recently contributed to the success of Ottawa Conference on the Assessment of Competence in Medicine and the Healthcare Professions (Ottawa Conference 2020). Jointly organised by The Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE) and International Medical University Malaysia (IMU), the Ottawa Conference 2020 returned to Malaysia after eight years from 29 February to 4 March 2020, but under very different circumstances!

The Ottawa Conference Operations Director, Pat Lilley, said, *"We came for our last site meeting in January 2020 and everything was wonderful and going according to plan, with large numbers of participants registered. However, due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, this particular conference ended up being held differently to past editions."*

THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE

The Ottawa Conference was facing the challenge of trying to maintain a full program, while recognizing that many participants from around the world could no longer travel or attend physically.

To help overcome the situation, the organizer teamed up with the Centre to find innovative solutions to ensure the event ran smoothly despite the global disruption. This involved last-minute changes to the event format and the ability for participants and speakers to engage with the conference programme remotely and vice-versa. This was possible thanks to the venue's IT and AV infrastructure, which supported remote access.

Of key importance at the time was the ability to keep potential attendees engaged and comfortable about participation under growing uncertainty about travel restrictions. Consistent, factual, transparent communication was the crucial factor that kept delegates committed to attending the conference. The other crucial factor was adapting all precautionary measures outlined by the Malaysian Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisations (WHO) on increasing hygiene and sanitary measures.

COMMUNICATION AS A FACTOR FOR SUCCESS

The Centre's General Manager, Alan Pryor, explained: *"A flexible and personalized partnership approach was critical to ensure we could provide reassurance and for the organizer to not feel alone in a challenging and constantly changing and volatile landscape. During this*

period, we maintained close and ongoing contact and consultation to ensure they were kept up-to-date and confident that the information they were providing participants was accurate and timely."

Lilley continued: "The Centre was very responsive and senior management has been extremely helpful, recognizing that we really didn't want to cancel and postpone the conference, but were not in a position to accommodate the original number of participants we expected. The Centre was also very attentive and the staff extremely helpful throughout the entire process."

"It is this sort of close collaboration and partnership which has ensured that a large number of clients would rather defer than cancel their events and that they will choose us over and over again. It was truly a first and unique experience for all of us involved," said Pryor.

FEEDBACK & LESSONS LEARNT

Sharing Pryor's sentiments, Lilley said: "In the end, our event went amazingly well, albeit slightly differently due to the global situation, as it forced us to think very carefully about the format of the conference program. It was quite an experience, but I have to say it's been very enjoyable, and the participant feedback was extremely positive, with many liking the new format as it felt more cohesive. Whilst initially it felt like all bad news, it certainly has not been that way at all."

Dr Jo Bishop, Associate Dean, Student Affairs & Service Quality, Faculty of Health Sciences & Medicine, Bond University, Australia, explained: "As a facilitator I was concerned about organizing a workshop when some of my co-presenters were not physically present. However, thankfully the Ottawa Conference organizing team had already created plans on how to combat this. We were given plenty of support to help us adapt to the situation and as a facilitator this was greatly appreciated. Coincidentally we were conducting a leadership course and really showcased 'adaptive leadership in action'. With the IT working so well, I think blended conferences may be the way forward for us."

Conference participant Dr. Harumi Gomi, Professor of Medicine, Centre of Infectious Diseases, School of Medicine, International University of Health and Welfare, Japan, shared: "The organizing committee did an excellent job and their communication throughout was amazing. They made the timely decision to give participants the option of physically or remotely attending the conference early on, which was fantastic. I was also pleasantly surprised how many participants and speakers were able to join remotely and how well it worked."

Angeline van den Broecke is Director of Global Business Development & Marketing at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.
More information on www.klccconventioncentre.com



Preparing for Recovery

Scotland expressed a clear message to the business events community in the wake of the country's Coronavirus lockdown: we'll wait for you. In the meantime, it is busy putting together a recovery plan that will enable it to swing swiftly back into action, when the time is right.

Words Chantelle Dietz



Like countless other tourism organisations and convention bureaux across the globe, VisitScotland has had to put a lot of its resources into supporting and guiding its business event clients through extremely difficult times over the past few months.

#SCOTLANDWILLWAIT

"Scotland understands that these are unprecedented times and we have been supporting our clients and lend a hand in whatever way we can," says Rory Archibald, VisitScotland business development manager – associations & sectors. "We are working as closely as possible with them to make sure if they are postponing events, we can fit them into future years, or, if they are cancelling, that they still choose to come back to Scotland in the future."

The message that Scotland 'will wait' for clients to return or reconsider it as a destination for business has been amplified on social media via the #Scotlandwillwait hashtag. *"We realize the industry is going to take a long time to recover from this. Even when the hotels and conference centres are back up and running and people are allowed to meet, we'll have a long road to get down before we get to full recovery,"* says Archibald.

But, thanks to the work VisitScotland has already been doing to connect delegates and associations with Scottish expertise, there is optimism for the future. *"We're putting all the mechanisms in place now, so that when the time is right, we've already got relationships lined-up and ready to go so it's a very easy conversation to have. As soon as associations are ready to come back or consider Scotland, we can make their event the very best it can be and organisers can kick start their conference planning with a bang,"* he says.

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

A lot of these relationships were already established as part of VisitScotland's business event team's successful Legends campaign, which culminated in October last year. The two-year long initiative highlighted Scotland's key sectors, which include technology, data science, creative industries, food & drink, marine, publishing, sensors & imaging and life sciences.

One of the lasting outcomes of the campaign is the Legends Legacy Network - a group of 15 research and innovation experts from across Scotland. Together, they represent internationally renowned institutions like The Data Lab, The Scottish Association for Marine Science, The Roslin Institute and Creative Scotland. Through regular meetings, these experts help to create new networks, encourage investment, look at new perspectives, pool international talent and showcase Scotland as a destination for business events.

"We can pick up the phone at any time to the CEOs of these innovation centres and professors at our research institutes - we even have a direct line into government," says Archibald. *"This means that, if an association wants to engage with one of our local knowledge centres, then we're in a position to support the introductions and the ideas along with our different convention bureaux."*

CREATING LEGACIES

Plans to release a follow-up campaign have been put on hold for now, but Archibald gives a flavour of what's to come: *"It's less about the cultural aspects and more about the ambitions of Scotland. It's not just about marketing our castles and landscapes, it's about informing and educating the associations market on what opportunities are available and how we can create the legacy aspect in collaboration with our innovation centres, research institutes and universities."*

VisitScotland will work with the Scottish government on the campaign, to ensure it targets association events that align with Scotland's National Performance Framework, which provides context to the kind of country Scotland wants to be. Being sustainable is a big part of this mission, and is something Archibald is personally passionate about: *"Within our industry there's a lot of talk about sustainability, but we don't actually walk the walk when it comes to implementing it."*

"Here in Scotland we work with our partners to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing, to find out what the barriers to sustainability are with our industry and what ideas can we collectively come up with to ensure we are being as sustainable as possible."

One silver lining to come out of the Coronavirus crisis, says Rory, is that the industry has an opportunity to really start from scratch and think about how it operates sustainably. Just because we've always done something a certain way doesn't mean it's right. *"This is our opportunity to think differently for future events. I'm not just talking about token gestures, I'm talking about ideas that will last and have an impact for some time to come,"* he says.

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FEATURE

How to Stay Relevant

In the past years, associations, no matter where they are based, no matter how big or small, have had to face challenges: loss of market share, exponential changes in technology, higher member expectations, increased competition, diverse member markets... not to mention the covid-19 pandemic which has turned – and still is turning – our world upside down. In these troubled times, our contributors are exploring ways for associations to stay relevant... and it's not just about the digitalization of their management and operations.

The Irrelevance of Associations

Obviously, the title of this article was just meant to get your attention. But associations that fail to deliver value to their members and support their professional growth certainly don't have a high life expectancy. Associations need to provide initiatives which answer the needs of their existing members, but which, at the same time, are attractive to new members. Failing this might lead to the deadly spiral of irrelevance. Fortunately, there are ways to tackle this.

Words Caroline Teugels

NON FOR PROFIT & ALL FOR PURPOSE

Associations must ensure that their purpose is made clear in all the member's value propositions. But even with a clear value proposition and great relevance with the ability to change the world, some associations don't get their message out clearly. They are focussing on the 'what' and not the 'why' of their actions. Their initiatives are 'all over the place' without a clear focus on the reasoning behind it. Members don't feel engaged and have the feeling the association has lost its sense of purpose. New members aren't attracted to the association as they don't clearly understand what the association stands for.

Of course, associations don't lose their relevance overnight and one could even argue that, most of the time, they are instrumental in making the world a better place. It's just that, occasionally, the lack of focus weakens the engagement and involvement in answering the needs of the members.

START WITH WHY

In his book *Start with Why* Simon Sinek demonstrates why organizations who are guided by this very concept will succeed

more often than those which don't. Too often, businesses or organizations start with the 'what' and with questions like: "*which actions are we going to write down in our action plan for next year?*" And with every new board member, new ideas and products/services come along.

It is paramount for every association to take a step back and question the relevance of a new service, a new project or a new idea. Beyond the 'fun/interesting/great' element there is to them, associations should ask what is the purpose behind them is and what are the objectives they want to reach. Members need to understand how specific actions can contribute to the purpose of their association.

Moving forward associations need to refocus, be more proactive instead of reactive, and act upon the basic needs of the members. If you wonder "*If my organization ceased to be, what would be the greater loss for my members and audience?*" then you are definitely on the right track. Without them working towards the ever-growing demographics and demands of their members, associations will just lose their relevance.



THE INNOVATION CARD

A next step in the pursue of relevance is to look at how associations can use innovative tools to ensure their sustainability. In today's ever competitive world, a pathway should be followed for the growth of both the association and its members. But don't just focus on the digital tools there are out there, like AI and augmented or virtual reality for instance. Instead, look at how you can approach your association's governance or daily structure and operations in an innovative way, taking the knowledge that exists in business and association management onboard.

In their book the *Race for Relevance*, Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers provide a no-nonsense look at today's realities and how associations operate and what they need to do to remain relevant in the future. They give some very interesting guidelines on associations' governance models, the size of boards and the need for board members to be recruited for their talents rather than based on where they are located: this is what they call a "competency-based board".

Similarly, the concept of Visionary Leadership in the quest for relevance can be a good idea, one that can transform the board of directors into visionaries for the next decade. In an association, the (voluntary) board members are often intelligent and well-meaning persons, but the lack of a clear role definition from the board and staff members might impede the very functioning of the association and the motivation of both. To get to a highly functioning organization where the board is fully engaged and able to implement Visionary Leadership to look at the bigger picture (and so to avoid becoming irrelevant as an association) it is crucial to redefine the boards activities and initiatives and that the board and staff alike work together implementing each other's role.

INTROSPECTION PROCESS

In the end, signs of irrelevance are very straightforward: declining number of members, reduced participation rate at events or absence of key opinion leaders of your sector... If you experience those, you will have to realize that your association has embarked on a negative spiral, and this has to be the start of an introspection process from the board and staff. From that introspection, you might learn that the association daily business is not in line with the fundamental demands and the value proposition expected by members. There is only one thing to do at that point to stay relevant: press shift and get back to the basics.

But, as much as this might look scary - or even boring - it will be none of this. Quite the contrary: it will be a great opportunity to involve members again and even to include them in the strategic planning process. New board members might even present themselves on the way as they might be willing to engage and make change happen. In this context, you will have great opportunities to communicate a new strong message to your community.

Caroline Teugels is the Executive Director International Federation of Podiatrists, and a Board Member and Treasurer of the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE). For more information about ESAE, with which Boardroom has an exclusive partnership, visit www.esae.eu





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Staying Relevant in these Unprecedented Times

Frances Hulme asks how, in these unprecedented circumstances, associations can continue to add value for their members and maintain sustainable sponsorship and revenue streams.

We find ourselves in a rapidly changing world and there has never been a more pressing time for organizations to adapt their engagement strategies. A lot of traditional face-to-face engagement modes are having to be reconsidered in the current environment. In this turmoil, knowing that your association is there to provide guidance and a sense of community can be a breath of fresh air for members dealing with the current uncertainties.

In the long run, associations that successfully navigated these times and valued their stakeholders will be the ones benefitting from a loyal member-base. In these unprecedented circumstances, how can associations stay relevant, continue to add value for their members and maintain sustainable sponsorship and revenue streams?

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Adopting digital engagement strategies will foster a stronger sense of community,

through online continued education and networking for 24/7 engagement. We live at a time when, if organizations – be it non-profit or for profit – don't apply a digital data-driven mindset when serving their key audiences, they are missing out on constructive insights. The risk? Becoming irrelevant to those people they should matter the most for. Digital transformation allows associations to stay future-proofed, increase member value and drive revenue growth.

With all the varied networking opportunities, learning platforms and advocacy programs available, core associations' benefits can now be accessed without belonging to an association. This makes it more important than ever for professional associations to fully harness their databases to address members' challenges, meet their needs and drive value. New digital approaches in sponsorship will also increase value and align with sponsors' ROI (return on investment) and ROO (return on objective).

Size doesn't matter. Any organization can be digital and implement simple strategies for blended scalable platforms to curate valuable content, trigger knowledge sharing and e-learning while bringing automation into their processes.

THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Digital transformation is not just about technology; choosing a suitable technology platform does not result in an online community. A clear digital strategy needs to be tailored to your association's objectives with community management solutions that fulfil engagement, growth and value.

MCI UK's Director of Digital and Online Media, Damian Clarke made the following analogy: *"At the moment people are scrambling around for tools when they need solutions, having a tool is just the start if you don't have a fully developed plan of how to use it. If I buy an oven and some ingredients, I won't be able to make a soufflé. The true*



challenge of running a digital community is not just the technology, but a reinvention of your engagement strategy to work effectively in a virtual space. The focus on the members' online experience, through effective online community design and management, ensures a rewarding and engaging digital platform for everyone."

Having a dedicated digital community platform provides multiple benefits for associations including:

- Reaching a wider global audience and growth of your membership
- Added value for members with co-created and curated content, on-demand learning and industry resources
- Networking capabilities, dedicated topic forums, knowledge sharing, interactive discussions
- Increase in sponsorship revenue from growing membership and online engagement which grants sponsors 24/7 access to your members
- A deeper understanding of your audience through data-driven insights gained through analytics - this also can inform the content your organization creates plus topics in event programs, based on engagement trends across the platform
- Host live-streamed sessions via your community platform for your members to participate in the live online interactive experience
- Community managers can ensure sustained engagement across discussion forums, by managing curated personalized content and automation triggers

ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Online member communities provide associations with innovative digital engagement solutions to foster interaction between members, sponsors and other key stakeholders.

One thing is for sure, as we go along, no area is untouched by technology. Membership organizations need to make the jump in order not to be left behind. Technology and associations need to go hand in hand in order to remain relevant and successful. Even if it might get bumpy along the way, we are in it together.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Frances Hulme, Marketing & Communications Manager, MCI UK. IAPCO represents today 140 companies comprised of over 9,900 professional congress organizers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. www.iapco.org



New World, New Options

With the trajectory of the current COVID-19 pandemic taking us into truly uncharted territory, it's difficult to think much – at the time of writing this – about anything else. But like the pandemic itself, not devoting at least a bit of attention to what may follow runs the risk of being ill-prepared for that as well.

Words Rod Cameron

Today, there is only one top priority for everyone – and that is the containment of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and management of the global pandemic it has brought on. But the scale of the impacts we have already experienced are such that subsequent recovery will likely require nothing less than a rebuilding of the entire industry, almost certainly in a somewhat different form.

Industry associations will inevitably be a part of the restructuring equation – and as potential members ponder their options for the future, the key factor they will be weighing as always will be relevance. But that's something that has changed considerably in recent years, quite apart from the current pandemic, and is likely to take on added meaning going forward.

ULTIMATE TEST

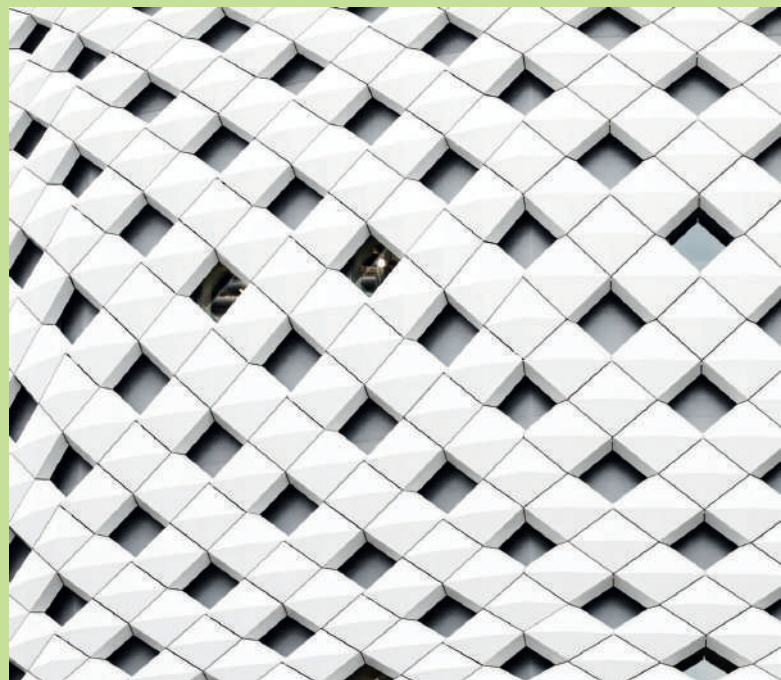
Relevance is the ultimate test of whether or not an association is actually addressing the priority needs and expectations of its members. The catch is that this is constantly evolving, and what may have been the rationale for creating an association in the first place is likely very different from what keeps it alive today.

Once it was exclusivity that defined much of an association's offering – you had to be a member to get your hands on certain things or be part of a particular “club”. But in a time when online content and self-generating interest groups have created many alternative sources of pretty much everything there are fewer and fewer things that are truly exclusive to any one organization.

SO WHAT DOES THAT LEAVE?

Associations by definition exist to advance collective interests – to deliver things that can't be done – or done as efficiently

– by individual members. In most cases, this is related to enhancing exchanges amongst members and utilizing their individual knowledge, experiences and expertise to greater collective advantage. Often it is also related to creating educational, research and other content and programming that can be more efficiently or cost-effectively delivered than through individual initiatives. Sometimes it



relates to the establishment of standards and credentials that can help individual members demonstrate achievement, or awards programs that are essentially just a mechanism for recognizing excellence.

But it's not just a matter of content. Another side to the value proposition is what kind of membership and affiliations an association offers, and how that responds to today's context. That too has been changing rapidly, and getting the right balance is important: - if membership is too narrowly defined, many players that are newly relevant may be excluded from the collective; too wide and the focus of the organization and its interactions may become too diffused to be meaningful to the core membership.

FACTORS AT PLAY

But there are other factors. In an industry like ours, with so many organizations and so much overlap in membership, the inevitable competition amongst associations all trying to distinguish themselves in some way can create additional problems. For one, there is the matter of duplication - not just a potential source of waste and inefficiency, but in areas such as statistics, standards and credentials, of inconsistencies that can put our overall credibility as a coherent industry at risk.

For individual members, the shear demands of engaging with so many different organizations in any meaningful way can become overwhelming - and overwhelmingly time-consuming. This was

already becoming an issue long before the current crisis - and in our post-COVID world, there may simply not be enough time available to devote to so many different forums for engagement.

So as we move forward into what are certain to be very different conditions, we'll likely see many new models arise in response to these kinds of issues. But one such effort is already underway - via the G3, a recently-announced alliance between AIPC (the International Association of Convention Centres), ICCA (the International Congress and Convention Association) and UFI (the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry).

Recognizing an overlap in both membership and activities, the members of the alliance came together to pursue an overall goal of *"facilitating collaboration and generating more comprehensive and better aligned benefits for our respective members"*. To that end, they agreed to explore the potential for greater exchange and reciprocity in four primary areas - event participation, educational content, research / standards and advocacy - in a way that enables them to do so without compromising the focus and platform of each member organization. It was to some extent a matter of knowing that each brought a somewhat unique perspective - but by aligning these, a much more comprehensive picture and offering could emerge.

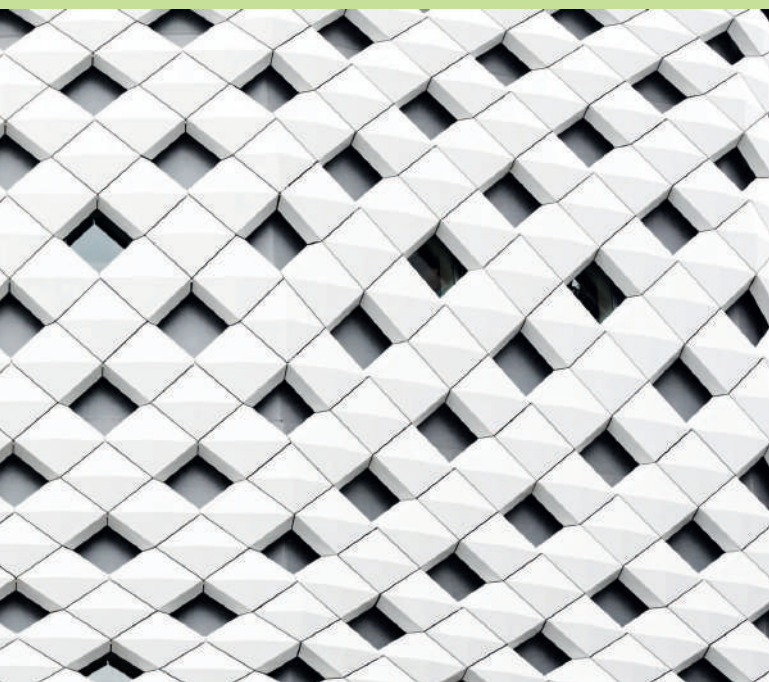
IMPORTANT IN THE FUTURE

At the time of announcement, the respective Presidents noted that the driving force behind the Alliance was the risk they felt of competition replacing collaboration as the driving force for industry. *"With our Global Alliance, the three of us choose value for our members, choose collaboration over competition"*, they said - and with events unfolding as they are today, this may prove to be even more important in the future.

In the end, it will be industry members themselves that will define relevance and render a decision about how best they can engage and deploy their available time. But in an era when that time will be at an all-time premium and members are hard pressed to respond to the many new demands they will be facing, that will mean new expectations for greater efficiency and effectiveness on the part of industry associations. Our job - and our responsibility - will be to deliver just that.

This article was contributed by Rod Cameron, Executive Director, AIPC, through a special partnership with AIPC. AIPC represents a global network of over 190 leading centres in 64 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide. It is committed to encouraging and recognizing excellence in convention centre management. www.aipc.org

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The Demand for Value

The relevance of any organization, for-profit or not, is a result of its ability to create value. We can develop innovative products, services and membership models, but if they don't result in value creation to consumers or members they are not going to help any organization stay relevant.

Words Renata Lerch



Industry research shows that the main reasons for members not renewing are lack of engagement, high membership price, and member retirement. This is inevitably the consequence of the low value members feel they have received for their investment. This is also a sign that offerings haven't been attractive and properly communicated to the younger generation of professionals. Consequently, most associations are seeing either no growth or a decline in membership.

Meanwhile, new companies can transform the market overnight with novel technologies and innovative products. In times of saturation when competitors enter the market as a result of blending industries and low entrant barriers, associations need to become a lot more focused on building their unique value proposition.

THE NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Innovative organizations often revisit their product line with a critical perspective of what represents true value to customers. This is done by designing products and services centered on providing the best possible user experience. With the explosion of technology resources, consumers are becoming not only accustomed to a variety of ground-breaking products, but also to seamless experiences. Similarly, associations that can demonstrate the ability to add a layer of differentiation in their offerings showcase a much-needed competitive advantage.

Membership and trade associations are in a great position to leverage their unique community model to differentiate themselves from new entrants. Their robust body of knowledge, typically recognized as non-biased and from high-caliber subject matter experts, is a fantastic asset that not many associations leverage extensively. First-class research, industry benchmarks and statistics represent another set of differentiators that very few for-profit competitors have the latitude to match. Add to that a solid, and often global, group of peer members for mentoring and networking, and you can hit the grounds for relevance.

Many trade associations are creating a value proposition around advocacy. It is a distinctive opportunity to engage professionals, academics and subject matter experts to accelerate influence locally or globally, and support the work of members through lobbying, policy making or technical resource.

Leveraging the strengths of an association along with the creation of unique benefits accessible to members-only can bring high value, resulting in improved member acquisition and retention. If done well, they can also attract the media and influencers to consequently accelerate brand exposure and asset.

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

As a recognized centre of body of knowledge, associations are in a great position to attract corporate partners. It is in fact an unmatched opportunity for them to connect theory to practice, generating distinctive business models and frameworks. It creates the perfect environment to accelerate industry innovation and experimentation as a result of networking, best practice sharing with subject matter experts, funding, and technical resources.

Large corporations in tech and healthcare are taking the lead in creating partnerships with universities and associations, tapping on their scientific and engineering minds in a variety of domains, fostering game changing R&D and phenomenal advances in biomedical, engineering, education, sciences, just to name a few. It also supports the general mission of associations to improve lives.

These collaborations offer associations access to new target audiences, markets and even potential economies of scale.

WRAPPING IT UP WITH GREAT TECHNOLOGY

Technology is the backbone of practically any relevant business. It is more than just an operational tool, it sustains the full member value stream, especially with the current explosion of data.

Members very often experience a variety of digital touchpoints with associations, including their websites, mobile apps, meeting platforms, learning management systems, content libraries and online collaboration with peers. Therefore, it is imperative that a well thought out plan to integrate disparate systems data and authentication should be developed. Otherwise, the short window to engage members electronically is lost.

A further challenge for associations is the hybrid approach to custom-built software with off-the-shelf systems. A good architectural plan for full systems integration enables a single digital point of entry and consistent look and feel across all platforms, resulting in seamless user experience through the entire digital journey. A strong IT infrastructure also enables internal cross-functional solutions, such as data integration with martech, sales and billing.

Regardless of size and budget, technology should be an integral part of the strategic planning of associations, leveraging advances such as cloud computing, machine learning, analytics, and software-as-a-service to maximize business operations and innovation. Leadership can enable that by giving IT a seat at the decision table, rather than the typical report to the CFO or COO. Many organizations are now creating a new role, the Chief Digital Officer. While the traditional CIO role focuses mostly on operations and infrastructure, the Chief Digital Officer is responsible for transforming traditional systems into digital value streams.

IT expertise is in large demand these days, making the role more relevant is not only necessary to implement the right solutions, but also to attract the right talent.

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SOMEWHERE IN EASTERN FRANCE

France's Green Commitment

In 2015, France became an early adopter of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help the world reduce poverty, fight inequality, and protect the planet. These SDGs led to the establishment of additional goals – to which France is equally attached – with respect to sustainability in general. The French meetings industry is definitely playing a key role in this very matter.

FEATURE REMI DEVE

With more and more French cities listed in the GDS Index, France has recently made huge strides in the sustainability area. The Index is a collaborative platform that promotes the sustainable growth of meeting destination through knowledge sharing, capacity building and benchmarking. The fact that France has, over the last few years, greatly improved not only in terms of city environmental strategy and infrastructure, but also in terms of social sustainability performance, industry supplier support, and convention bureau strategy says a lot about the country's vision and strategy. And cities like Lyon, Bordeaux or Toulouse which, not so long ago, successfully joined the Index won't prove otherwise.

The French government, together with the private world, has embarked on a journey to be green and sustainable. In 2016 for instance, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Sea launched the "Green Tech," a new incubator in order to assist 50 start-ups to develop 14 new services and applications for citizens in the sustainability field. Meanwhile, the National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) for 2011-2020 has aimed to make France "a model biodiversity restoration country," rolling out many activities nationally to tackle biodiversity loss. There are also initiatives like "Finance for Tomorrow" which are committed to making France the world capital of green and sustainable finance.

In this context, the French meetings industry is riding the sustainability wave as well. In order to improve the environmental performance of business events, Atout France works, for instance, in synergy with the ADEME Environment and Energy Management Agency to amplify the dissemination of the ISO20121 certification – a voluntary international standard for sustainable event management – among destinations and industry professionals. Likewise, the new French pavilion that will showcase France's

ability to host conferences and congresses of any type and format at trade shows this year will be testament to the country's green vision.

Suppliers like Viparis are also leading the way. In 2014, they were the first player in the events sector to be ISO20121 certified at all of their ten sites, and hosting the COP 21 later in 2015 confirmed their capacity to take on large-scale sustainable events. In 2018, they took one step further with Better Events Viparis 2030, a green program encompassing the whole value chain. Its goal? To reduce Viparis' environmental footprint, by offering smooth mobility solutions, creating new sustainable and innovative partnerships, and fully integrating the meeting sites into their surrounding areas. Case in point: the 14,000sqm urban farm on the roof of Paris Expo Porte de Versailles' Pavilion 6, which will offer a range of activities later this year.

As Caroline Leboucher, CEO of Atout France concludes: "More than ever, the requirement for sustainable development is becoming a short-term objective. Everyone must act within their field of responsibilities because the challenges are numerous, among which water management, the preservation of biodiversity or global warming, just to mention a few. We have to be able to offer sustainable experiences to our visitors, planners and delegates alike, and support our many destinations in their ambitious strategies to host major, sustainable events. We also have to encourage innovation in terms of sustainable tourism development. That's definitely where our future lies."

More information

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The Green Commitment of La Cité Nantes Congress Centre



The eclecticism of its landscapes and architecture, its dynamic industries and the diversity of its cultural events have regularly placed Nantes at the top of the best cities to live in. But it's also clearly because of its efforts in the area of sustainability, which made it the European Green Capital back in 2013, that Nantes is standing out. As for the matter, La Cité Nantes Congress Centre has made it easy for associations to organize eco-friendly events.

La Cité Nantes Congress Centre's profound commitment to sustainability is embedded in its very culture. It is the only French convention centre among the 30 AIPC certified centres worldwide, to have been awarded the AIPC Gold Quality Standards Certification (International Associations of Convention Centres), and it's also certified ISO 20121, a voluntary international standard for sustainable event management.

Over the years, La Cité Nantes has demonstrated a responsive management and increased its efforts to minimize the environmental impact of its operations. Among

many initiatives, let's mention its efficient fluid management thanks to a centralized technical system, 100% green energy, heating produced by waste incineration, monitoring water consumption, photovoltaic panels, sustainable development provisions in contracts, green purchasing... the list could actually go on and on.

Above all, La Cité Nantes Congress Centre encourages the organization of green events: the aim is to reduce their carbon footprint with the support of the venue's customers in the process. To do so, La Cité boasts a solid local food network, helps reduce waste, sorting out uneaten food or donating it to charities, or promotes exhibitors to be responsible by, for instance, turning the light on their booth at night or the use of public transport. Together with UNIMEV, the French Meeting Industry Council, it has even developed Cleo, an event performance calculator that provides an estimation of the event's carbon footprint.

Hosted by La Cité Nantes Congress Centre in January, the Biennales Internationales

du Spectacle (BIS, the International Live Entertainment Biennale) were very proud to be awarded the ISO20121 certification, after an extensive audit process which studied all aspects of management of the event. *"We are committed to mastering our social, economic and environmental impact, to seek exemplarity and to guarantee a high level of organizational quality to our participants, exhibitors and partners",* said Nicolas Marc, creator and director of BIS. *"Of course, there is always room for improvement, and I personally hope that this certification, which must be revalidated each year, will be long-term."*

It helps, of course, that Nantes, as a human-scale city, is perfectly compact and walkable. La Cité Nantes Congress Centre is located opposite the high-speed train station, the international airport is only 20 minutes away, and most venues and hotels are at a stone's throw of one another.

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Occitania's Pristine Eco-Friendly Approach

With more heritage sites than anywhere else in France, Occitania is the fourth most active tourist region in the country. It's also a business events destination that combines an exceptional historical and cultural heritage with a pristine natural environment and a certain Mediterranean way of life. As far as sustainability is concerned, the region has demonstrated an eco-friendly approach in many dimensions of conference organization, which Club Business Occitanie can help with, thanks its solid know-how and network of professionals.

From the wild landscapes of the Petite Camargue to the creeks of the Côte Vermeille, Occitania boasts a unique 220km-long Mediterranean coastline, home to a host of unspoiled treasures, such as the village of Collioure, the scuba diving areas around Cap d'Agde, or the Lido promenade near the port of Sète, among many others. If Toulouse and Montpellier are Occitania's most famous cities, the region also houses a diverse array of towns that make the area particularly attractive to visitors and delegates alike.

No wonder that the vast majority of the professionals of Occitania's business events industry are committed to respecting the environment any way they can. For Occitanie Events, which manages the Sud de France Arena and the Exhibition Park in Montpellier, it all began with listening to its stakeholders, event organizers, service providers and professional organizations. A survey of the general public was carried out, too, in order to find out the areas which should be prioritized in terms of sustainability. Employees of the company were also able to express themselves on the issues that should be committed for, and from

this, conclusions were drawn, and key areas emerged: waste management, responsible and local food production, clean energy and positive societal impact.

In this context, the ISO 20121 certification, a voluntary international standard for sustainable event management created by the International Organization for Standardization, is set to be completed by the end of the year. This initiative is, of course, strongly supported by Club Business Occitanie, which brings together key business tourism providers throughout the Occitania region – your go-to for hosting your professional events and ensuring their success.

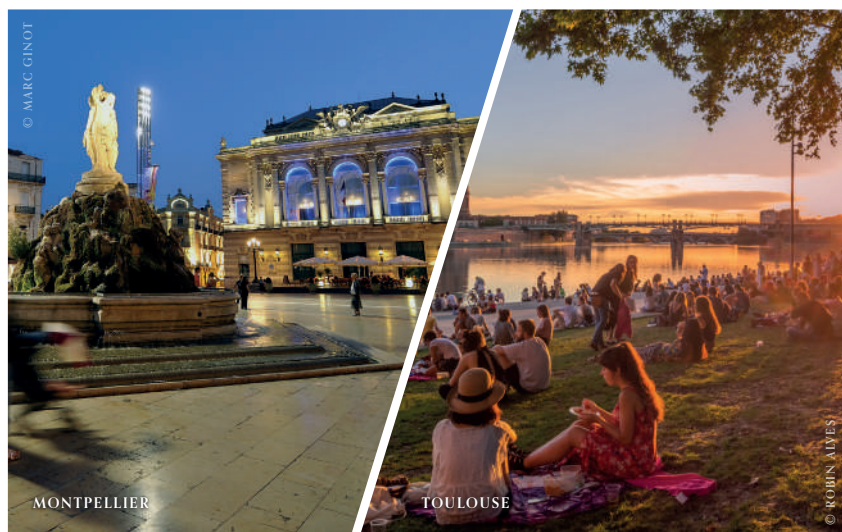
The Ann'events agency is another telling example of Occitania's green conscience. Well aware organizers should minimize the impact of their events on the environment, they have developed a "carbon calculator" which can study the CO₂ emissions of any meeting they are in charge of. These

calculations are carried out based on the principles established by the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME).

After analysis, several areas of CO₂ are identified, on which it is possible to act in order to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the event, with transport often constituting the major factor of carbon emissions. The aim of Ann'events is to then find ways to avoid this type of emissions – shifting towards a zero waste policy is just one solution for instance – or at least reduce it through several actions – activities with low carbon footprint are, in this context, an option. What cannot be avoided or reduced can be compensated by actions taken locally on biodiversity.

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Green living in Lyon



Lyon is a pioneer in terms of sustainable practices — especially when it comes to meetings. Last year, the UNESCO World Heritage city — and second-busiest convention city in France — was awarded the coveted title of “European Capital of Smart Tourism,” a worthy achievement since Lyon regularly ranks among the most sustainable cities on the globe.

One of the best examples of Lyon’s strength as a green city: last year, it joined the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS), a performance improvement program that measures and benchmarks the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings cities. Lyon became the highest-rated French city with a score of 55%.

The ranking isn’t a surprise if you look at the sustainable initiatives and projects Lyon has taken on in recent years. The airport has been carbon-neutral since 2017, and many hotels in town hold a sustainability certificate from a recognized label. The Radisson Blu Hotel Lyon, for instance, is both Green Key and EarthCheck certified, the two labels clearly recognizing the hotel’s excellence in the field of

environmental responsibility and sustainable operations.

As for conference venues, the Lyon Convention Centre has obtained the ISO 20121 certification, an international standard for sustainable event management that promotes responsible consumption and offers guidelines to curb the social, environmental and economic impact of events. The Renzo Piano-designed La Cité Internationale’s green credentials are just as impressive: its centralized watering system allows for the recovery of rainwater to maintain its 2,000 sqm of gardens; heating and the cooling is done through underground seepage water; and 96 sqm of solar panels generate 15,000 kWh of electricity, which totals an environmental gain of 1.4T per year of CO₂.

In fact, the emphasis on eco-responsibility runs across the entire supply chain. The city promotes environmentally friendly and responsible transport, from bike rentals and e-scooters to a car-sharing system and the Vaporetto hybrid river shuttle, which saves 40 percent on diesel. Landscaping the banks of the Rhône and Saône

rivers alone has been a huge selling factor both for Lyon’s inhabitants and visitors.

Lyon is now gaining the attention it deserves for its sustainable measures as a green city. Just look at the Quartier de la Confluence, an inspiring example of urban planning for a large-scale, low-carbon district, which won the Sustainable District Grand Prize at the Green Solutions Awards last year. As Valérie Ducaud, manager of Lyon Convention Bureau, puts it: *“Lyon’s many initiatives in the smart and sustainable realms – which would be too long to list here – are testament to the city’s efforts to be a leader in the field. The good thing about sustainability is that nothing is ever granted – there is always room for improvement. We constantly have to show our dedication to make our city a great place to live and to visit – and this is a challenge we’re gladly taking on.”*

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Read This Article & Minimize Your Impact

With eleven protected regional or national parks, 1,000 kilometers of coastline, coves, inlets, capes and peninsulas, it's only normal the Provence and Côte d'Azur region puts sustainability and the protection of the environment high on the list of its priorities. This dedication extends all the way to business events, as they support association planners in the organization of green conferences across the whole value chain.

As the local authorities launched the 'One COP Ahead' program, comprising 100 concrete actions which, in reference to the UN Climate Change Conference, help combine economic development and nature preservation, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur has set an ambitious goal for itself: to become the N°1 Smart Region in Europe for Sustainability & Quality of Life. To do so, new forms of mobility and the development of renewable energy are encouraged in the form of corporate incentives, while the preservation of the region's natural heritage and the well-being of residents are on top of the agenda.

Among the stakeholders of the meetings industry, destinations like Cannes, Marseille, Nice and Toulon stand out with the promise of sustainable development initiatives which can help you minimize the impact of your events. For instance, two conventions centres - the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès in Cannes and the Marseille Chanot Exhibition and Convention Centre - are ISO 20121 certified, a voluntary international standard for sustainable event management. Meanwhile, as most cities in the region are clearly walkable, delegates are encouraged to use soft and carbon-free transportation

modes, from bicycles to electric scooters or buses, especially since the sun shines, on average, 300 days a year.

Many hotels are also playing by the rules and have implemented eco-initiatives. In Marseille for example, the city has committed to supporting 60 hotels to obtain, within five years, a Green Key certification, a leading standard for excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry.

Additionally, the regional convention bureau can support you in finding the right suppliers - the local experts that integrate social and environmental responsibility in their daily work - among a network of more than 200 professionals. Add to this exceptional flavors and fragrances, coming fresh from local food markets and vineyards of the South, and the unique gastronomy combining Mediterranean accents with a contemporary twist, and you'll get a value-add proposition for your conference.

Of course, these are just a few tips. There are many more which we strongly incite you to discover for yourself. They will surely come in addition to your own initiatives (paperless meetings anyone?) which we are sure you are already implementing to minimize your impact on the environment. As players of a global industry, we know we all have a role to play.

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Sustainable Strategies & Green Visions

Many people consider Montpellier, in southern France, to be the very definition of a Mediterranean city. With its rich historical heritage and prime and easily accessible location just 10 kilometers from the coast, the city has emerged as one of France's fastest-growing – and one of the top ten French cities in the country in terms of congresses and international exhibitions. Montpellier is also excelling in the sustainability sector and has great cards to play with – cards that are appreciated by association planners and delegates alike.

Words Remi Deve

Located in the heart of France's largest vineyard – only 1h10m from Paris by air – Montpellier is a centre of excellence and innovation. The city has managed to combine history with a certain contemporary flair, making it stand out from other destinations. Home to the fourth-best incubator in the world for business start-ups, Montpellier boasts strengths in key sectors like medicine and healthcare research, which have positioned the city as a strong contender on the global stage.

ACTION MODE

When it comes to sustainability, actions speak louder than words, and Montpellier has effectively shown its strong vision at a local government level.

The Mayor and President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole used the municipal council last July as an opportunity to announce a state of climate emergency. With this declaration, Montpellier became the first city to create a Climate Emergency Fund (FUC) to direct investments toward ecological transition, particularly in the areas of transport, energy, the thermal renovation of buildings, clean and positive industries, risk management, and revegetation. The fund falls right in line with the many green initiatives that Montpellier instilled nearly decade ago, such as championing the use of

renewable energy in public buildings and the expansion of pedestrian areas.

Another telling example of Montpellier's commitment to sustainability took place last October with the Fifth Annual Gathering of the signatory cities of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). The pact aims to build a monitoring framework process to assess the progress made by cities building sustainable food systems. Initiated in 2015 by the mayor of Milan, the pact aims to implement sustainable development policies, in addition to reflecting and sharing

Herd Mentality

The grazing of herbivorous animals (sheep, goats, llamas) is an alternative solution to the mechanical maintenance of green spaces. Eco-grazing reduces the green waste associated with mowing and contributes to the natural fertilization of the soil (a win for plants and animals alike!). It also helps limit overgrowth and control invasive plant species – even on sites that are difficult to access. In 2016, Montpellier successfully launched the solution on 15 hectares in the Malbosc Park. Now, the eco-grazing project is renewed every spring in different parks throughout the city.



strategies between cities to preserve the agri-food and ecological future of the world.

As a metropolis that strongly believes its actions should be aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Montpellier published a manifesto summarizing its green commitments for the future. *“The Montpellier Manifesto is a sort of constitution at municipality level,”* said the Mayor of Montpellier in a public in a public statement. *“It is intended to be a founding act that affirms our values and principles and helps guide the city toward a bright future, where we can live sustainably and minimize climate change. The question we are looking to answer now is how so many people can inhabit the planet at once and stop abusing it.”*

GEARING UP FOR GREEN EVENTS

In Montpellier, this eco-conscience mindset can be found across the entire supply chain. More and more venues are adopting environmentally friendly or sustainable development initiatives. A few examples include drastically reducing the use of plastic and replacing it by bamboo (when possible); carefully managing food waste; encouraging soft mobility; and advising toward locally sourced organic food.

As a one-stop shop for association planners, the Montpellier Convention Bureau can help organize sustainable events that align

with the association's green goals. According to the bureau, there's been an uptick in congress organizers expressing a strong desire for events that have a minimum impact on the environment. The bureau's role is to raise awareness on this very matter – which means addressing these types of sustainability requests.

In this context, the Montpellier Convention Bureau has been supporting many of its stakeholders in their efforts to manage events and control their social, economic and environmental impact. In fact, a few key steps forward have been taken by some, in areas such as gender equality in the workplace, careful management of waste or a definite move to sustainable supply chains.

On its side, the city has implemented accessibility programs for people with disabilities or reduced mobility; and Montpellier has encouraged collaboration with “ESAT” (*établissements d'aide par le travail*) companies, which encourage disabled people to exercise a fulfilling professional activity while benefiting from medical, social and educational follow-up. When it comes to CSR, Montpellier really walk the talk.

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An Innovative Approach to Scaling Up

The future of business travel is sustainable. As the world starts to travel again, to connect in person and meet face-to-face, it will be more important than ever that each aspect of the convention experience is aligned with a more sustainable, holistic approach. While many destinations and convention centres rush to adapt, there are a few that don't need to change – they've long understood the importance of hosting events while giving back and leaving little footprint.

Words Samantha Shankman

Ōtautahi Christchurch, New Zealand, is one of those cities. While the smart, connected city has hosted hundreds of events, it's also thoughtfully prepared to now welcome international conferences of scale while remaining true to its values.

"As a future-focused city, we understand the important role sustainability plays in making sure Christchurch remains an enjoyable place to visit and live for generations to come," explains Claire Hector-Taylor, Convention Bureau Manager of ChristchurchNZ.

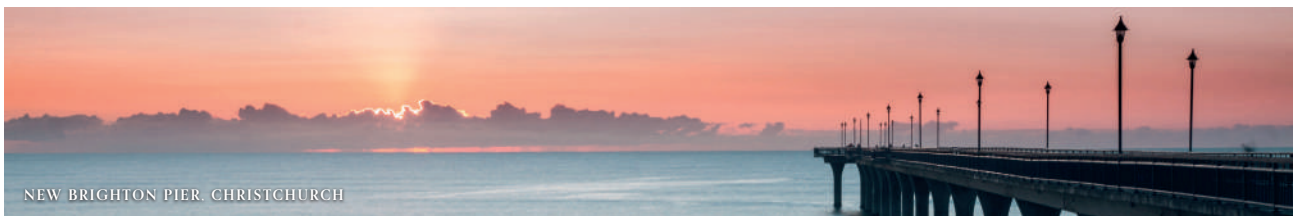
Marking the start of a new era is the opening of Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre – New Zealand's first purpose-built convention centre – in early

2021. The convention centre is at the heart of the city's intentional infrastructure growth. Designed to meet the full range of requirements for diverse international events, the venue boasts modern and flexible spaces including 24 meeting rooms, a 1,400-seat auditorium, an exhibition hall for 200 booths as well as dedicated dining rooms, VIP spaces, and offices.

"The convention centre is building sustainability into its core operations and has aligned with the United Nations SDGs since inception," says Ross Steele General Manager of Te Pae Christchurch. *"As a champion of the local community, the intention is to drive incremental visitation by welcoming*

events and associations that align with the city's foundational values. In preparation for opening, the centre is prioritizing sustainable energy management, developing programs to minimize waste, and sourcing menus from local farmers and growers to connect visitors with the abundance of the local land," he says.

Association organizers are encouraged to work with local stakeholders to understand how they minimize their conferences' environmental footprint. For example, Total Waste Solutions can minimize and divert conference waste from landfill while delivering on the Composting Food Packaging at Events (CFPE) initiative.



NEW BRIGHTON PIER, CHRISTCHURCH



DEFINING THE FUTURE

Christchurch fosters a culture of creative thinking and innovation, which aids the global growth of industries – as well as the birth of new businesses. The knowledge hub, known for award-winning business mentoring and support for startups, has emerged as one of New Zealand's most progressive cities, where industries like agriculture business, earth and health sciences, engineering and construction technology, and disaster planning and recovery thrive.

"We are finding associations and corporations that are aligned with these sectors choose Christchurch as a conference destination of choice," explains Hector-Taylor.

For example, the city will host the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting, which is scheduled to bring up to 1000 delegates to Christchurch in late 2021. The city became a living classroom for emergency response after the powerful 2010 earthquake and has since developed a

multi-disciplinary patient-centered health-care system which is garnering a global reputation.

The pursuit of knowledge and community is respected throughout the city, which is home to three of New Zealand's leading higher education institutions and a renowned patient-oriented health system that is recognized around the world. This pursuit is also realized by local stakeholders who have identified industries with the highest potential for good and growth: Aerospace & future transport; health tech and resilient communities; food, fibre & agritech; and hi-tech services.

"ChristchurchNZ – the economic development agency for the city – has developed four supernodes. We see these areas all experiencing global growth and our region already has existing capability or local advantage in each. We are actively seeking new business events opportunities aligned with these industries," says Hector-Taylor.

EXPLORING A WALKABLE CITY

As any association planner understands, what happens inside the conference hall is as important as the connections and relationships forged when the talk tracks end.

A promising selection of hotel developments are in the pipeline adding fresh, eco-friendly itinerary to downtown. Additionally, the grassroots growth of boutique neighborhoods with local shopping, restaurants, and art exhibitions provides a vibrant culture for association attendees to explore.

The city's sustainable ethos is also evident in how you move through it: Christchurch's appeal definitely lies in its walkability – there will be over 2,000 hotel rooms within easy walking distance of Te Pae, while world-class infrastructure now underway in the city include cutting-edge health and innovation precincts, and a metro sports facility, all a stone's throw from each other. The international airport is also a short 15-minute drive from the centre, and once there, it is possible to walk or cycle with more than 330 kilometers of on and off-road bike paths.

The city council set a target for the district of having net zero greenhouse emissions by 2045 – five years ahead of the government's proposed Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act. The council itself aims to be net carbon neutral by 2030, highlighting its leadership around climate change and community stewardship for the natural environment.

Beyond the charm of the city itself, Christchurch is the doorway to New Zealand's undisputed natural wonders that are close enough for visit before or after the conference.

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Helping Clients Achieve Sustainability Goals

Australia is known as a clean, green destination, and as a country, it's fiercely protective of this reputation. Proof of this is, for instance, a strong belief system focused on protecting the country's natural environments, from the rainforests through to its pristine beaches. It's only normal conventions centres, like ICC Sydney in particular, are leading the way when it comes to sustainable practices.

Words Rémi Dève, with ICC Sydney



The meetings industry has long realized it must create a sustainable path if it is to validate its societal license to operate, to deliver value to clients and to provide good return to its shareholders. The key to achieving this has been leadership and knowledge, as the stakeholders of the business events industry have committed to engaged collaboration to share knowledge, to train the workforce and to include sustainability as part of measuring the success of any given event.

In this context, ICC Sydney's commitment to sustainability runs deep. The convention centre on Sydney's Darling Harbour, which opened in 2016 following a major redevelopment, is Gold Certified by the US Green Building Council for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Many of the building's features and fixtures were designed with energy efficiency in mind, and 4% of the venue's electricity use is supplied by a 520kWh, community funded, photovoltaic (PV) array. Water is also a major focus for the harbourside venue, with a 200kL rainwater tank serving to reduce ICC Sydney's reliance on the city's mains supply.

But beyond the innovative design features and global certifications, the venue's philosophy is solidly grounded in social and environmental sustainability. ICC Sydney as an organization is genuinely committed to sustainability, and to helping its clients tap into unique programs that contribute to the preservation of Sydney's natural environment and the betterment of local communities.

PEOPLE. PLANET. PROFIT

An enthusiastic proponent of the triple bottom line approach to business, ICC Sydney boasts a progressive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan. Over the past few years, the organization has launched a number of CSR initiatives designed to improve the situation on the ground, such as instituting a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to facilitate better engagement with Australia's First Nations people and removing plastic straws from circulation. The Legacy Program takes things even further, by inviting clients and delegates to get involved in the good work.

With CSR deeply embedded in ICC Sydney's culture and business model, the aim is that each business event the venue hosts creates the maximum economic – and well as community – impact, as was the case with Sibos, which attracted a global audience of senior decision makers from the banking sector to Sydney in 2018.

As Chantal Van Es, Head of Sibos, testified: *"ICC Sydney helped us every step of the way, from the very moment it was announced Sibos 2018 would take place in the city. We worked closely with ICC*

Sydney's CSR team to develop multi-faceted initiatives that helped us meet our ambitious social, environmental and economic goals, focusing on everything from recycling to community engagement."

Echoing Van Es' comment, ICC Sydney CEO Geoff Donaghy explained: *"The program focused on reducing the ecological footprint of Sibos at all stages of event delivery, as well as supporting community engagement. This included organic waste and recycling processing initiatives, minimization of plastic water bottle consumption, excess food donations and the establishment of the first ICC Sydney Charity Market Day. Here, event exhibitors collectively donated 150 items to seven local charity organizations to be repurposed for their communities, from artificial turf to umbrellas and potted plants."*

In a record result for an event of its size and scale, a waste diversion rate of 62.5% was achieved, including 88% of materials being diverted from landfills during the event bump out and the reduction of 15,200 plastic water bottles. ICC Sydney's partnership with OzHarvest and Matthew Talbot Hostel also helped save 855 kilograms of food, equivalent to 2,564 meals that were donated to community members and 1,120 tons of fertilizer produced from organic waste matter.

"We're committed to reducing the event's environmental footprint and contributing positively to the local communities who welcome us so warmly each year," Van Es said. In that regard, the opportunity for ICC Sydney was to create a new paradigm in the way that venues like them operate and to deliver the maximum community impact by ensuring the flow of benefits from events reaches a broad cross section of the community.

ALIGNED TO THE UN SDGS

It's one thing to preach sustainability, but it's quite another to say exactly what you intend to do to get there. Yet that is exactly what ICC Sydney has done by highlighting which of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it is committed to achieving. Announced in 2015 and endorsed by 193 countries, the SDGs provide a framework for global action on sustainable development.

In 2018, ICC Sydney identified six relevant SDGs and committed to various actions under each:

- SDG No.8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Team member engagement and stakeholder partnership are key areas the venue is focused on.

- SDG No. 10: Reduced Inequalities

ICC Sydney set up their first-ever Reconciliation Action Plan and supports a host of charities.

- SDG No. 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

ICC Sydney feeds the performance of its delegates and visitors, its own people and the intellectual and economic performance of the city, as well as its surrounding regional areas through its food and wine philosophy focused on direct relationships.

- SDG No. 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Sustainable procurement, a diversity of suppliers and careful waste management are of paramount importance for ICC Sydney.

- SDG No. 13: Climate Action

The venue closely manages the use of energy and water.

- SDG No. 17: Partnerships for the Goals

ICC Sydney works with clients and stakeholders to deliver sustainable and community minded events through its Legacy Program.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

The numbers speak for themselves. Sydney is currently ranked 8th in the world on the Global Destination Sustainability Index, up from 15th in 2017. The result owes much to the city's

progressive approach to sustainability, and to the contributions of organizations like ICC Sydney.

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Destination Partnership, for instance, is a collection of venues, cultural institutions, hotels and other businesses working together to make Sydney a truly sustainable visitor destination. Partners pledge to eliminate single-use items from their operations, halve the amount of food waste they generate, and move to sustainable supply chains. They're big commitments, but that hasn't stopped Partners embracing them enthusiastically, none more so than ICC Sydney. As a key member of the Partnership, the organization is actively contributing to the positive changes currently taking place in the harbour city.

Staging an event for thousands of delegates doesn't have to leave an enormous environmental footprint behind, either. ICC Sydney's CSR team supports sustainability-conscious clients to achieve the social and environmental objectives they set for their events. Whether it's practical measures, like offering edible centerpieces which are transformed into meals for the homeless after the event, or more innovative solutions, like providing Australia's largest EV charging station, ICC Sydney helps clients

SOLAR PANELS ON ICC SYDNEY'S ROOFTOP



organize events that don't come at unnecessary environmental costs.

In terms of social sustainability, the organization's unique Legacy Program streamlines clients' community contributions and experiences. Clients can join forces with one or more of ICC Sydney's Community Partners; tap into the organization's donations program to reduce waste and landfill; embrace Australia's First Nations cultures with a traditional Welcome to Country or cultural performance; welcome local students to their event, or connect with the city's creative class. In other words, ICC Sydney makes it possible to both contribute to and benefit from the city's enviable cultural capital.

To find out more about ICC Sydney, contact:

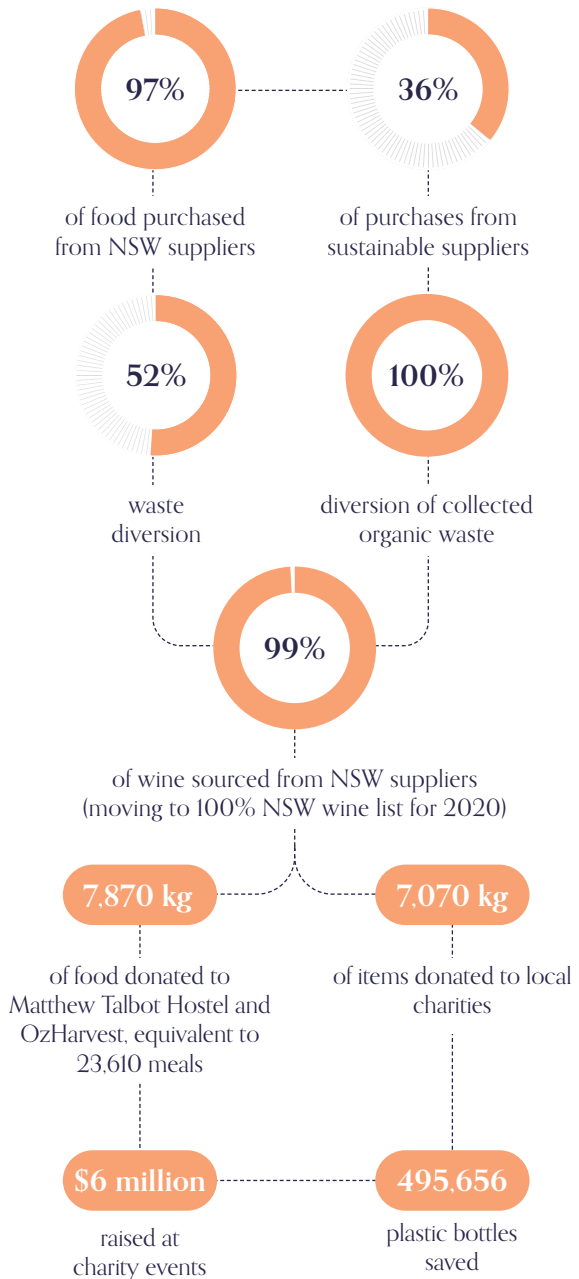
Helen Mantellato | Business Development Manager - International
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To find out more about Australia as a business events destination, contact:

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and Partnerships | Business Events Australia
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ICC Sydney's 2019 Sustainability Stats



United. Resilient. Proud.

To the global business events industry, our extended family...

Remember who you are and what you represent.

We are an industry that contributes US\$1.5 trillion of GDP to the global economy*. As we've demonstrated many times before, we will be part of the solution to drive recovery, growth and social impact that will transform the world.

Ray Bloom & Carina Bauer

#WeWillMeetAgain



*Figures from The Events Industry Council's Global Economic Significance of Business Events Study 2018.

WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

A Corridor of Innovation

In a fast-changing world, the Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC) sits at the forefront of innovation. An incubator of knowledge as well as an engine for growth, the ACC brings together flexible and technologically advanced facilities with big thinkers and game changers. The Centre's positioning at the heart of Adelaide's Innovation Corridor – right in the heart of the CBD – is another key attraction for association planners and delegates alike, especially since the all-new Lot Fourteen saw the light of day.

Words Remi Deve, with Adelaide Convention Centre

Over the last decade, huge investment has been made in the Adelaide Riverbank, a downtown convention, entertainment and research precinct dedicated to business events, medical research, educational facilities, the arts, and sports. The epitome of this? Adelaide's BioMed City life sciences cluster, the largest one in the Southern hemisphere, sitting immediately adjacent to the ACC and spearheaded by the futuristic-looking South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) which conducts collaborative interdisciplinary research with South Australia's three universities and the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

In more recent times, there's been another innovation precinct that emerged in the South Australian capital's CBD, increasingly capturing the attention of meetings planners: Lot Fourteen. An initiative of the South Australian Government, Lot Fourteen is dedicated to showcasing some of the world's fastest growing industries, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, defence and space technologies, media and creative industries.

As Jim Whalley, South Australia's Chief Entrepreneur, explains: "Anchored by the Australian Space Agency [a lasting legacy from the 2017

International Astronautical Congress at the ACC] which opened in February 2020, the precinct is also home to the Smart Satellite CRC. Together, these elements make Adelaide the unequivocal head of space in Australia. There's also the Australian Cyber Collaboration Centre and the Australian Institute of Machine Learning... Arguably the largest entrepreneurial neighbourhood in the Southern Hemisphere, Lot Fourteen has been designed as a centre of collaboration between industry, academia and government". In this context, the Australian Space Agency will soon be joined by a new Mission Control and Space Discovery Centre (2021) which will further bolster Adelaide strengths in space and defence, providing additional opportunities for knowledge transfer.

Echoing Whalley's comment, Simon Burgess, General Manager of Adelaide

Convention Centre, recognizes that "Our proximity to Adelaide's Innovation Corridor – which includes Lot Fourteen – means we've got greater access to thought leaders, industry, government and research institutions. When it comes to events, our team is really committed to being an 'event partner' and helping facilitate these important connections to add value to conference programs and support lasting legacies. In fact, Adelaide is a great illustration of a city where all stakeholders, whether from the public or private sector, know how to collaborate. We've found it is a really potent combination in attracting conferences to the destination."

Contact

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Hear Stories.

Australia's Northern Territory offers a multi-sensory experience that transcends the physical and connects you to the land, the ancient culture and the people.

We are a destination that empowers delegates to disconnect from their hectic, always-on lifestyle and reconnect to what matters.

Learn how we are different in every sense for business events at:

ntbusinessevents.com.au

*Different in every sense
for business events*



The Value of Place, Time & People in a Complex World

With its spectacular scenery, ancient Aboriginal culture and laid-back way of life, Australia's Northern Territory (NT) is a mecca for visitors who are keen to sample an authentic Australian experience. It is, however, its unique set of knowledge clusters, attention to local engagement, and the innovative ways it delivers ideas and learnings that makes it stand out as a congress destination, as explains Lyndon Frearson, Managing Director of Ekistica, an indigenous-owned engineering consultancy, and enthusiastic advocate of Northern Territory Business Events.

Words Remi Deve, with Northern Territory Business Events

Equivalent in size to France, Italy and Spain combined, Australia's vast Northern Territory (NT) is divided into two distinctly different regions, each with its own weather system. The lush, green 'Top End' has a tropical climate and is home to the cosmopolitan capital city Darwin and the World-Heritage listed Kakadu, the country's largest national park. In contrast, the ochre-coloured, desert-like landscape of the south has a semi-arid climate and is where you'll find landmarks such as Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) and Alice Springs, Australia's most famous outback town.

INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

Lyndon Frearson has been providing advocacy support to Northern Territory Business Events for many years. As the Managing Director and Principal Consultant of Ekistica, he is one of Australia's leading engineer specialists in

the renewable energy sector and provides a perfect example of Northern Territory innovation and leadership. Ekistica's solutions for remote area infrastructure development are used around the world.

"Northern Territory is my home," says Lyndon. "It is the place where my children were born and where my best memories have been formed. We have seen countless sunsets and night skies the likes of which you can't find anywhere else. My kids have a relationship to the bush and the environment that is a rare commodity in an increasingly urbanized world. But most of all it is the people. They truly are what makes the Northern Territory great."

Professionally, Lyndon has led the design and development of some of the largest and most innovative renewable energy projects in Australia, including 'Uterne' (Australia's first utility scale - 1 MW solar farm), the Ti Tree, Kalkarindji and Lake

Nash high penetration grid connect solar power stations and various roof-mounted solar power systems on commercial premises including hotels, airports and community centres. He was also involved with the development of the Desert Knowledge Australia Solar Centre, a whole-of-system demonstration facility in Alice Springs that has become a resource for the international Photovoltaics (PV) industry.

His success is due to the very nature and character of the Northern Territory. *"Once I can explain how living in the NT, and particularly Alice Springs, makes us think differently about complex issues and the relationship between people and place, then we often find people willing to engage more deeply. Being an enthusiastic and authentic ambassador for the NT is critical for me and for the future of Ekistica and most importantly for the individuals and families whom have chosen to call the NT home,"* he says.



THE SPECTACULAR FIELD OF LIGHT AT ULURU IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OPERATES ON SOLAR POWER

For him indeed, the Northern Territory is all about understanding the value of place, time and people. *"This can be a tough, and at times, cruel landscape,"* Lyndon points out. *"Yet for thousands of years communities of people have survived and thrived in this environment. They have survived through a deep engagement with the land – sitting in it, being at one with it. This has been communicated down through the years through the telling of stories, the sharing of a deep belief in the connection between people and place. This characteristic has informed our understanding of how to think differently about solving complex problems."*

Lyndon says it's actually the very essence of NT that helps appreciate complex problems, and seeing them as an opportunity to think differently. But to do so, one has to engage deeply, to understand the context behind the issues, and this is done through working with people and communities – after all, solving the kind of problems he's asked to solve can have a direct impact on them.

THE POWER OF CONFERENCES

As for the power of conferences he's been instrumental in bringing to NT, Lyndon recognizes they no longer serve as a place to provide information and in fact are better placed to be a basis to network, engage in debate and to hear issues of the day being discussed. *"Conferences of today are a place for stories to be told and bonds to be formed. So what better place to host a conference than an environment that has been defined by stories for eon's. Having a conference in the NT forces people to disengage from the daily grind, to challenge their thinking for a little while and to let the ethereal majesty of this ancient landscape start to work its way into people's hearts and souls,"* he concludes.

Planners looking to host events in the NT can benefit from the Northern Territory Business Events Support Fund, which provides financial assistance of AUD\$100 per delegate. To meet the criteria, the event needs to be at the consideration

or bidding stage, yield delegates from outside the NT and beyond, and align with the NT's priority industry sectors. These include health, agribusiness, land management, mining, renewable energy, education, tourism, creative industries and defence.

Northern Territory Business Events is a key contact for setting the wheels in motion for any event. With 25 years of experience, it has built up an invaluable network of local contacts from the professional sector, government, business and industry. It also provides free, expert advice and assistance on the planning, bidding and delivery of business events in the NT.

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A City Making Green Improvements

Although combating the coronavirus poses an exceptionally big challenge for the meeting industry, the Congress Center Basel (CCB) also recognizes the opportunities that this crisis is opening up. While recent events have led to greater attention being focused on the negative impact of travel, they have also highlighted two key concerns of Switzerland's biggest congress centre: increasing sustainability and improving the quality of the services offered.

In geographical terms, Basel is the ideal place for staging a congress with the smallest possible ecological footprint. The city is, after all, located right at the heart of Europe with good rail links to all the major urban centres in its neighboring countries. The tram and bus network is so well developed that hardly anyone drives by car to get from A to B. And guests staying in Basel hotels can even use public transport free of charge. The city has also been committed to sustainability for many years. Only recently was Basel awarded the "Green City of Switzerland" Silver Label for its many green and unbuilt spaces. All its electricity comes from renewable energy sources and, by 2050, annual CO₂ emissions will be cut to less than one metric ton per inhabitant.

In the light of all these factors, it is not surprising that the CCB is also intent on ensuring environmentally friendly standards. To reduce the amount of waste and pollutants, it selects its suppliers carefully, while endeavoring to make sparing use of consumables. The CCB has now boosted its recycling rate to more than 90%. And that's not all. Back in 2016 it set up its own in-house "Green Team" – committed employees who put together environmentally-friendly offers and communicate these.

One of the Green Team's key achievements is the CO₂ calculator. Organizers enter the data for mobility, location, overnight accommodation, and energy and water consumption, and then calculate the overall emissions of their events and the costs these generate. Evaluating the emissions is one aspect, and keeping them to a minimum the other. The Green Team thus works with the eminent Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, which is currently running a number of different climate-related projects. Organizers can now make a financial contribution to these projects, linking their event directly to the conservation of natural resources.

"The happenings of the past few weeks have sped up developments that we were already working toward", explains Jonas Scharf, Head of the CCB. "Independently of environmental issues, one thing is certain: In the post-corona era, meetings must become more worthwhile for participants." The CCB is convinced that it is well-positioned here, since the cliché of Swiss perfectionism is not without foundation. In addition to unique scenery, an outstanding specialist competence and quality of service await you in Switzerland. At the same time, the CCB offers attractive premises and state-of-the-art technical infrastructure. *"And we can promise you," says Scharf, "that we are using this quiet period to make even more improvements."*

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Green as a Strategic Plan

Known for its high quality of life, popular transit system and thriving finance industry, Zurich is constantly topping the lists ranking the most sustainable cities in the world. For association planners and delegates, this is definitely an asset – Zurich might well be the destination where organizing sustainable events is the easiest.

Words Rémi Dévé



Zurich has developed successfully over the past few years and its population has been growing continuously since the turn of the century. The city has never ceased to flourish thanks to a favorable economic situation, which has also proved relatively stable during the global crisis. At the same time, the local authorities have pursued various programs for sustainable urban development in areas such as energy management to conserve resources, residential building policy and mobility.

2,000 WATTS PER PERSON

It all started in 2008, when the people of Zurich voted in favor of a 2000-watt society and thus the sustainable development of their city. Specifically, this means that Zurich aims to reduce its energy consumption to 2,000 watts per person and its CO₂ emissions to one tonne per person and year by 2050. This ambitious long-term goal is now part of the municipal code and Zurich is working hard at it, as well as to promote the use of renewables, such as environmental heat, solar power, solar collectors or district heat with financial incentives and consultation.

Sustainability, in fact, is Zurich's primary objective in terms of urban policy, and the city council has sketched a path to the future in its so-called "Zurich Strategies 2035", which tackles key challenges in eight fields of action and highlights possible solutions. In this regard, the city has set itself far-reaching targets in important areas as far as sustainable development is concerned.

Ranking third in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS) 2019, a destination level program that measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meeting cities, Zurich has a wealth to offer environment-conscious planners. Climate-neutral excursion activities, hotels with sustainability certifications and a highly efficient public transportation network all provide a good framework for holding sustainable events.

GETTING IN & AROUND

In Zurich, distances are short and commuting from one place to the other is easy and efficient. Zurich airport is in the immediate vicinity of the city centre, while all congress venues and the great majority of hotels – with 73% of them holding a sustainability certificate from a recognized label – are close to one another. And as delegates can explore the city in a resources-saving manner thanks to activities offered by Zürich Tourism, numerous city bikes

are available free of charge, allowing for environment-friendly fun after a hard day's work at a conference.

In terms of venues, the Umwelt Arena is considered one of the most sustainable event locations in the world: it is completely CO₂ neutral due to the photovoltaic system that is integrated in the building, which produces more energy than it needs. Meanwhile, in the heart of the city, the refurbished Zurich Convention Center which will re-open in March 2021 is very much committed to sustainability as well. As CEO Roger Büchel explains: *"We will be able to track the effectiveness of our climate protection measures over time. For instance, we will cover 70% of our heating and cooling requirements by our own seawater central from the nearby lake of Zurich. By supporting a forest protection project in Peru, we will also offset unavoidable CO₂ emissions and ensure that every event in the new Zurich Convention Center is completely climate neutral without extra expenses for the organizer."*

In Zurich, it's actually the whole supply and value chain that is keen on helping you organize an event that has the smallest possible impact on the environment and the planet. In fact, Zürich Tourism has intensively been committed to sustainability since 2010: as Switzerland's first climate-neutral tourism organization at the time, it was instrumental in helping the destination make the complex topic of sustainability into an accessible and understandable one to all its stakeholders, and by extension its visitors. Step by step, together with the Zurich Convention Bureau, they implemented a wide variety of measures, including, for instance, the compensation of all unavoidable CO₂ emissions or the setting up of a dedicated webpage for sustainable event planning.

In this context, a wide variety of eco-friendly projects have been set up by both public and private initiatives, and the tourism sector and local hotel industry are continuing to invest heavily in sustainability initiatives. This shared vision is definitely the most effective way to become a business event destination like no other.

More info on planning sustainable meetings in Zurich:

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More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

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CCHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

The new CCH. Reopening 2020

12,000 m² of exhibition space. 12,000 m² of foyer space. 12,000 seats in 50 different halls. The modernized CCH in the vibrant metropolis of Hamburg is coming. Discover the new dimensions of future events.

Delivering Purpose for Associations

With business demand severely curtailed because of COVID-19, destinations are scrambling to determine how best to create value now and in the future. In Hamburg, with a refurbished and renovated convention centre, CCH – Congress Center Hamburg, due to reopen later this year, you can position your association thanks to state-of-the-art infrastructure and a city that is betting on its cluster industries.

Words Rémi Dévé

Hamburg, Germany's second largest city, has long served the role as northern Europe's gateway to the world. Cosmopolitan, vibrant, smart, eco-minded – the adjectives don't seem to do the destination justice, especially since it's at the height of its transformation.

Everywhere in the city, new venues, hotels and office buildings seem to have risen from the ground. Some have gentrified the former, often quite bleak, riverside warehouse districts – HafenCity is considered to this day Europe's largest and most innovative urban redevelopment site. A stone's throw away lies the restored Speicherstadt area, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the now world-famous Elbphilharmonie, an awe-inspiring 12-story glass structure set on top of a former brick warehouse overlooking the Elbe River.

LEVERAGING KNOWLEDGE

"In Hamburg, all stakeholders work hand in hand to profile the destination as a place where everything is possible. Simply put, we are here to help associations deliver on their purpose – something that is definitely a differentiator in these unprecedented circumstances," says Heike Mahmoud, Chief Operating Officer of the new CCH – Congress Center



Hamburg. *"We work closely with scientists, professors, and academia to help leverage the knowledge we have. Our goal is to create a network of excellence, and position Hamburg as a knowledge hub, and the best place for peer-to-peer exchange and best practice sharing. The new CCH will be the ideal platform to do just that."*

Hamburg's positioning and the CCH's features were definitely a draw for the 73rd German Jurist Convention, which will take place in a form and a shape that, at the time of writing, has yet to be decided – digital solutions are being explored. A not-for-profit organization established in 1860,

with almost 7,000 members throughout the Federal Republic of Germany, it gathers law professionals from all areas of specialization and across all generations. The German Jurist Convention is Europe's biggest event for legal professionals.

In terms of layout, the contemporary style of the CCH's new entrance area has been designed to give a foretaste of the unique interior of the venue. Even on darker days, the glass façade will let plenty of natural light enter the complex. Meanwhile, throughout the building, an innovative lighting system will provide perfect illumination at any time. It is being implemented by Austria-based Bartenbach GmbH who designed a network that will be particularly sustainable.

"We want all our guests to feel totally happy and at ease in our building when they are attending a conference or an event," says Heike Mahmoud. *"Our state-of-the-art features and well-designed layout will easily allow us to provide a unique experience to them."*

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A Smart Country Leads by Example

Wedged between France, Germany and Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg with its small territory enjoys more nature-covered areas than residential and industrial ones. Its people, locals and expats alike, and, as a consequence, its government have the greatest respect for their surroundings, thus making sustainability a mantra to live by in every aspect, both personal and business. Luxembourg Convention Bureau plays a big part in keeping the high sustainability standards of the country.

Words Vicky Koffa

Luxembourg now boasts a newly founded Convention Bureau aiming to punch above its weight where business meetings are concerned. The task is not hard considering the country's vast offerings; founding member of the EU, safety, political and economic stability, easy accessibility by land and air and multiculturalism are but a few of the strong points associations can benefit from. Add the principles of sustainable development found in most governmental policies, and an ideal conference destination appears.

ALL ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

François Lafont, CEO of Luxembourg Convention Bureau, emphasizes the consciousness of the bureau concerning green meetings and sustainability. *"Even before the bureau got created there was a task group that was put in place between the actors of the meetings sector that worked on this topic. The idea is to involve our partners from the very beginning. One of the first decisions was to create three strategic goals and task groups for the future and for 2020: digitalization of the Luxembourg event industry, green meetings and future of meetings."*

To this end, the Bureau worked with a national association, Ecocenter, who had worked previously with the Bureau's partners in order to create good interaction. Once proper communication channels are in place, then the plan is to move on to associations interested in organizing sustainable events in Luxembourg.

The Bureau's goal is to register the destination in the GDS-Index, a program which aims to engage, inspire and enable destinations to become more sustainable places to host meetings. Lafont explains: *"It is very important to have the same vision and to compare to other destinations and to be part of the international ranking about sustainability. The key point is that Luxembourg is not only a city, but will be registered as a country, and it will be the first time that a country will be benchmarked in the index."*

Practicing what it preaches, the Bureau's first event was all about sustainability. François Lafont says: *"For the first event and launch of the bureau, in Luxexpo the Box, it was important to have a green event. So, the Bureau worked together with the venue's team to cater local food and recycle what was left over. A carpet was not placed on the floor,*

as these are thrown away after one event and not reused and only LED projectors were used. These are just a few of the actions taken."

Proof of this commitment is the fact that Luxembourg became as of this March the first country in the world to make public transport free of charge nationwide. The initiative is trying to reduce traffic jams and help the environment by boosting the use of trams, buses and trains by residents, tourists and commuters, all while saving travel cost for residents. The systematic expansion of capacity in the national rail network, doubling the current number of Park&Ride car parking spaces, real-time passenger information, an increase in the number of charging points for electric cars across the country to 1,600 units by the end of 2020 and a cohesive network of cycle routes are being implemented to facilitate achievement of the objective.

DIGITAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Progressive projects on sustainability do not stop there. Setting the pace in eco-technology products, cleaner and more efficient production and



consumption systems, innovative materials and the rational use of natural resources, Luxembourg is home to many cleantech companies working in energy storage, waste management, water and eco-construction, strongly supported by government action plans. Newcomers may find a roof under the national incubator Technoport offering 16,000 sqm of facilities access to tools such as 3D printers, CNC milling machines and laser cutters.

Lafont notices the sustainability efforts around him: *"In construction, Luxembourg is building energy positive houses, the first time that a country takes this decision. The government goal is, as of this year, that 11% of the country's total energy consumption comes from renewable energies. To this end, Luxembourg opened the largest windmill park that will 'feed' 30,000 people with energy, which is a record for Luxembourg."*

Becoming 'smart' is priority. Smart cities with electromobility (800 public charging stations will be available all over the country in 2020) and autonomous driving (cross-border digital test site for autonomous and connected driving

technologies) are already in place, as well as smart buildings with energy-efficiency AAA certification and environmentally friendly material. A smart grid, managed by Creos Luxembourg, will monitor and distribute energy produced at wind turbine or solar panel parks in the coming years and smart water management will offer efficient sustainable consumption.

Academia and research centres are also in the loop; the University of Luxembourg conducts high-level research in fields including photovoltaics, energy materials and advanced materials, whereas the Environmental Research and Innovation (ERIN) department of the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST) specializes in water security and safety, plant sciences and biotechnologies and e-science.

GREEN CONSCIENCE

The sustainability cycle would not be complete without the country's conference venues doing their best to raise the standards. Mondorf Domaine Thermal has been awarded with the Gold category of EcoLabel, promoting the eco-responsible

tourism in Luxembourg. Bright examples include a new approach in catering with a buffet proposing a continuous service by portions instead of installing once the whole buffet can save food, while smoothies served during coffee breaks covered with a small knitted hat donate 0,20€ per bottle to the association "Petits Frères des Pauvres" which helps isolated elderly people.

Luxexpo The Box, the largest venue in Luxembourg, successfully organized a 35,000-people sustainable festival. Free entry on presentation of a public transportation ticket, no disposable plastic tableware or unnecessary gadgets, dimmed lights, recycling and local food offer from organic farming were some of the approaches and procedures implemented to make such a challenge work.

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It's All About Being Green

There is something about Norway. You can't place your finger on whether it is the unique fjords, the limitless forests and the northern lights or rather the innovative way of thinking, the vibrant economy and the strong focus on sustainability. Whatever the reason, holding your event in one of Norway's major cities guarantees an eco-friendly experience which combines the best of both worlds, i.e. advanced technology and respect for your surroundings.

Words Vicky Koffa

In the universal struggle towards a sustainable planet, Norway is not holding back. From providing 'off-grid' clean energy solutions to farmers for the world's most extreme climates and using local resources for innovative constructions (like the world's tallest timber building), Norwegians have imbued 'greenness' in every aspect of everyday life.

This inherent 'need for green' is evidently embedded in businesses and business tourism. VisitNorway, the country's Convention Bureau, is actually part of a larger organization, Innovation Norway, powered by the government. With a mission to support companies and tourism in developing their competitive advantage and to enhance innovation, this innovative instrument has a 50% environmentally focused profile within its financial portfolio.

BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY IN OSLO

Recognition of such efforts starts already in the capital, Oslo. Under the banner "City for everyone, putting people first," Oslo was awarded the title of European Green Capital for 2019. One of the city's environmental initiatives was reducing the cars in the city centre and creating more open urban spaces that can be filled with activities and green areas. Another one was reopening its waterways, which is beneficial both for biodiversity and for a healthier urban environment. No wonder the same year the city ranked among the top 20 sustainable congress destinations in Europe, according to the 2019 GDS-Index list.

A leader in green innovation, Oslo prides itself in companies like Klemetsrud CHP, a waste-to-energy plant where residual waste is incinerated and used in production of environment-friendly district heating and electricity. In addition, the city is collaborating with the national authorities on a carbon capture facility at the Klemetsrud plant, which will be one of the most advanced in its kind worldwide once completed. The construction sector is also being electrified. The vision is to achieve zero-emission construction sites by 2025.

And it almost feels redundant to mention that Ruter – the public transport company for the greater Oslo region – has stated that all its modes of transport will become emission free by 2028. The city plans to reduce the number of cars in the city centre, not just to cut transport emissions, but also to improve public health by reducing local air pollution. Half of all new cars sold in the city are electric, making it the world's capital for electric vehicles.

In this context, it won't come as a surprise green conferences seem to pile up in Oslo. The Nordic EV Summit held there for the last three years, the World Conference on Timber Engineering (WCTE) in 2022 and the Electric Vehicle Symposium and Exhibition (EVS35) in 2022 are proof of the city's attraction as a sustainable destination. Espen Hauge, President of AVERE, the European Association for Electromobility, explains why: *"We know that Norway will still be years ahead of most other countries in terms of electric vehicle*

market penetration, and Oslo will still be full of green inspiration. Therefore, EVS35 in Oslo is a more relevant destination than ever."

FOSSIL-FREE FUTURE IN BERGEN

In fact, examples of sustainability spread across the entire country. Bergen, Norway's second largest city, is committed to winning the bet against pollution. Claiming the 18th place in the 2018 GDS-Index list, it boldly aims to become fossil-free by 2030. Innovation goes well into an advanced waste management system, efficient housing construction, and, of course, the hospitality sector with big hotel chains pledging to radically reduce food and water waste down to half by 2030. It ranks number 1 on the GDS-Index when it comes to sharing hotel rooms with third party sustainable certification.

Norway's biggest cruise port and the renewable energy company BKK have now established a joint company, Plug AS, with the aim of building Europe's largest onshore power supply, as well as Bergen's first shore power facility for cruise vessels. The facility that will supply three cruise vessels simultaneously and will start operations from May 2020.

With facilities for up to 2,200 delegates, Bergen is gearing up for four days of talks, collaboration and commitments to action, diving into how to cut our carbon footprint in areas like energy, transportation, food, forestation and more. The TED Countdown Summit, set to take place in October 2020, is a worldwide movement to find ways to shift, more rapidly, to a world with net zero greenhouse emissions; a perfect fit for the only city in Europe invited to become a member of the European Climate Forum.

CLEAR ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS IN TRONDHEIM

Sustainability commitment reaches as far north as Trondheim. The city is given a unique place in the work of sustainable development, when, in October last year, it received official status as a UN centre of excellence. This means that the UN recognizes Trondheim as one of the foremost in the world to manage the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Trondheim municipality and NTNU (Norwegian Technical University) have already for several years collaborated on how the sustainability goals should be incorporated in all parts of society.

Trondheim is an active participant in the +CityxChange proposal, which describes a structured approach on how to develop and deploy Positive Energy Blocks and Districts and scale these out as part of the Clean Energy Transition. New forms of integrated innovations will deliver citizen observatories, innovation playgrounds, regulatory sandboxes, and Bold City Visions.

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The Dutch Touch

Holland is considered a country as small as a city. Within an hour's drive, you can go from the museums in the capital of Amsterdam to the Dutch dunes along the coast. The ultimate Dutch touch? Provide bikes for your delegates. Holland features 32,000 kilometers of bike paths, and its compact cities make it easier for attendees to quickly cycle from meeting venues back to their hotel. In the first part of our Dutch series, we take a look at two destinations in Holland that are paving the way toward a sustainable future.

Words Lane Nieset



REINVENTING ROTTERDAM

After the Second World War, Rotterdam turned toward innovation and reinvented itself as a young, modern city. Even today, the destination is continually growing and embracing new concepts. Case in point: it is home to the first indoor market hall in the Netherlands.

Since 1971, Rotterdam Ahoy in South Rotterdam has been considered one of the largest venues on the globe. Over the past few years, it has seen innovations like the introduction of a geothermal energy system, solar panels on the roof of the largest event hall, and a thermal smart grid to store surplus heat and cold—all part of a

plan to reduce CO₂ emissions and energy costs by 25 percent. Rotterdam Ahoy has also incorporated sustainable catering and culinary initiatives. Ingredients are sourced locally to limit food miles, and the remainder of coffee grounds from machines are saved and used to cultivate oyster mushrooms. As a way to reduce waste, Ahoy plans to focus on waste separation during events by setting up recycling stations in public spaces.

The area around Rotterdam Ahoy is also undergoing a revitalization in an effort to create a new urban centre for South Rotterdam, part of a project dubbed Hart van Zuid. The heart of the

new neighborhood: Rotterdam Ahoy Convention Centre (RACC), slated to debut in September. The new venue will incorporate energy-saving measures by minimizing the power requirement and utilizing residual heat. *“As a large event accommodation, we see it as our job to set an example in terms of sustainability and we feel it as our duty to offer coming generations the same privileges our generation has. Moreover, we notice customers are still becoming more and more keen on sustainability, which will be one of the major facets of the new convention centre,”* explains Susanne Blaas, Rotterdam Ahoy’s marketing and communications manager.

SMART CITIES

One of six partner cities involved in the EU's smart city programme RUGGEDISED, Rotterdam is looking to serve as an example for smart solutions by working on large-scale urban pilot projects in the areas of energy, transport and digital technology. *"We, as humanity, can do something about the enormous climate crisis that is in front of us. We all have to take responsibility, and that is why Ahoy is participating in the RUGGEDISED project,"* explained Ahoy's CEO, Jolanda Jansen, at the RUGGEDISED "Sharing Capacities" conference held at the venue in November 2019.

Over 100 participants from the six RUGGEDISED cities gathered to discuss how—and why—destinations around the globe should take on smart initiatives. As moderator Jacqueline Cramer, professor of sustainable innovation at the University of Utrecht and former environment minister, put it: *"Smart cities are the heart of everything we need to do to be able to transform into a more sustainable society. It's not the technology that holds us back, but we must change ourselves—and we can only do that together, through cooperation in projects and cities."*

CLIMATE-NEUTRAL LIVING

The Hague, located on the North Sea coast, is known as the international city of Peace & Justice and is one of the greenest and most compact cities on the globe. A 30-minute train ride from Amsterdam Schiphol, the world's legal capital and the second seat of the United Nations is home to 100 multinational companies, 115 foreign embassies and 200 institutions, in addition to the Dutch royal family and Dutch parliament. As the only major



WORLD FORUM THE HAGUE

Dutch city located directly on the coast—and with most of the Netherlands being below sea level—The Hague has emerged as a leader in urban environmental innovation.

The city's goal of becoming climate-neutral is reinforced by World Forum The Hague, one of the country's largest convention centres. One of the venue's recent additions to The Hague's sustainability policy is the climate-neutral "Fresh Air Zone," a green canopy intended to prevent flooding and *"leave something tangible with or around the venue that inspires other cities who want to replicate green roofing at their venues,"* explains general manager Michiel Middendorf.

In February, the venue launched another project to reduce the number of plastic bottles used during events. Working with local water company DUNE, World Forum installed five indoor fresh water tap points to provide drinking water for delegates, part of a larger project to eliminate the sale of plastic PET bottles, saving around 16,000 bottles a year.

"The craziness has to stop," Middendorf says. *"We allow water to be resourced in*

other countries, allow it to be bottled there, put it on trucks driving all over Europe to a distribution centre. From the distribution centre, we drive those bottles to our venues, hotels and restaurants... when we have some of the best drinking water of the world right here, in The Hague."

World Forum has a working group that continuously brainstorms ideas like these in an attempt to *"cause a chain reaction in the country,"* as Middendorf says, all while working to hold on to the ISO 20121 status for sustainable events. For nearly a decade now, the venue has strived to instill sustainable initiatives through three programmes: Think Green, Think People and Think Local.

As Middendorf explains, *"We're not increasing sustainability measures to appeal to groups and associations—we do it because this is the new economy, the normal new way to run a business nowadays."*

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Shaping Equality Starts in a Conference Room

In our fast-paced time, more than ever associations see the need for community service, for creating a platform (through their conferences) to facilitate knowledge influx and exchange; to bring policy makers together who can act upon the findings of these events for the betterment of citizens' life. This positive, sought after impact is in harmony with Business Events Sarawak (BESarawak) mission to pave the way for successful, disruptive association conferences that leave their mark on the state, in particular, and the country, as a whole.

Words Vicky Koffa

A POWERFUL CONFERENCE

July last year marked the beginning of a new era for young Malaysian children after the conclusion of the 2nd edition of the Sarawak Conference on Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE). Organized by Fu Yuan Kindergarten – a community-based kindergarten which has implemented inclusive education for Early Years' children for the past ten years, the three-day conference aimed at bringing together health and education professionals, social welfare officers, policy makers, community leaders and even parents of children with special needs.

Under the theme 'Accept, Accompany and Achieve,' an intensive discussion was initiated on strategies to improve the recognition of children with special needs, as well as assessment and implementing strategies to enable them to achieve their future goals. The sensitive issue of equality of all children to access education and health has been gradually gaining ground in Malaysia, a country which had already signed the Convention of the Rights of the Children (CRC) by the United Nations in 1995, stating just that.

The diverse program of the convention brought into Sarawak more than 83 international and Malaysian speakers to provide participants with a range of topics divided into plenary, dialogue, concurrent workshops and interactive sessions. Delegate attendance exceeded all expectations, as more than 800 people from over 20 countries had the opportunity for professional networking and knowledge exchange on ways of supporting and implementing inclusive ECE.

ALL FOR A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN EDUCATION

Dr. Toh Teck Hock, Vice President of the National Early Childhood Intervention Council, Malaysia cum Paediatrician at Sibü Hospital and one of the organizers of the conference, believes strongly in education as a means of acquiring knowledge for all children equally. The uniqueness of each child leads to different potentials and skills, all necessary for personal growth as well as for the world's future. Dr. Toh has been instrumental in developing and shaping the community and state's response to special needs education and care for the last fifteen years.

With the conclusion of the conference, he was optimistic that its mission had been fulfilled: *"The conference aimed to create awareness and participants had learned practical skills to help special needs children. While these are useful locally and benefited those who attended from worldwide, together, participants also discussed strategies to push for inclusive ECE policy, which will see government and organizations implement such policy that will ensure children with special needs are not left out."*

In fact, the change in Sarawak had already started at the beginning of last year, when the Ministry of Education adopted a zero-reject policy, making it possible for special needs children to receive education corresponding to their individual abilities, either through mainstream schools via the Inclusive Education Programme (IEP), the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) or in a Special Education School (SES), covering from preschool up to secondary levels. One of the Ministry's key strategies in implementing this policy is training preschool teachers on how to screen and identify developmental delays.

Amelia Roziman, Chief Operating Officer of Business Events Sarawak, praised the efforts and achievements of the conference: *"The key to a successful conference is to cover topics which echo society's concerns, making them relevant. Dr. Toh and his team have pulled this off brilliantly, doubling the delegate numbers and en route to making gradual changes to Sarawak's inclusive ECE policies."*

This conference reflects exactly the efforts of BESarawak and its alignment to the vision of the government to attract conferences reflecting the values of the destination for positive societal impact. The combination of dedicated knowledgeable members of the society and a far-sighted convention bureau, along with the necessary support from the government, prove to be once again a guaranteed success recipe for Sarawak.

RESTLESS EFFORTS

The event's unparalleled success has urged Dr. Toh to put together another conference with several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Miri, Sarawak. The 8th National Early Childhood Intervention Conference is to be held in 2020 with the theme 'Empower, Equip, Expand' and is organized by the National Early Childhood Intervention Council as a key event to promote early recognition of special needs children. Following the outline of its predecessor, the program will include plenary sessions and practical workshops covering topics in the interest of teachers and parents alike.

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Leading the Conversation on Climate Change

In November, the Durban International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) made history when world leaders came together and planted a “Tree of Peace.” South Africa’s minister of defence challenged other countries to do the same and join the global “Plant Trees Not Bombs” campaign to promote world peace and spread awareness about climate change. The goal is to plant 75 million trees by September 2020 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UN. This is just one example of the fight against climate change taking place at Durban ICC.

Words Lane Nieset



When former president Nelson Mandela opened the Durban ICC in 1997, it was South Africa's first international convention centre. It has since been voted "Africa's Leading Meetings and Conference Centre" by the World Travel Awards no fewer than 17 times. But the real game changer came in 2011, when the centre achieved the ISO 14001 certification for its environmental responsibility – proof of its pledge to improve its environmental performance.

The Durban ICC hasn't pulled the brakes on how green it can go since. The centre continues striving for international ISO Certifications, obtaining and maintaining the ISO9001 certification for quality management in its operational systems; OHSAS18001 for health and safety; and the ISO22000 certification, which ensures the highest standards of food safety. *"Today, award-winning meeting venues such as the Durban ICC have a moral and ethical imperative to pave the way in environmental initiatives,"* explains Scott Langley, Durban ICC's marketing, sales and events director. *"We need to be an example to other global players of the ways in which our business can be done in more responsible ways."*

SETTING STANDARDS

To create a sustainable environment inside and out, Durban ICC took advantage of indigenous landscaping. Most of the plants are local, so unlike exotic plants, there is less need for irrigation. In fact, the 112,000-sqm centre's water usage is low considering its size. Sensor taps have been installed in the bathrooms to prevent water waste, toilets have been converted to a more efficient water usage system, and the centre is exploring grey water harvesting.

Waste is separated and sorted on site before being sent out for recycling, and this even includes cooking oil from the

culinary department. Simple switches like tap water-filled jugs (Durban has excellent water quality) in place of plastic bottles, bio-degradable cutlery and food containers, and a shift from using tablecloths at conferences have helped reduce the complex's annual waste by nearly 40 percent. The centre uses an innovative ice-harvesting system to cool the venue which uses a fraction of the energy of traditional air-conditioning. In addition, basement parking lights have been switched out for energy-efficient LED light fittings—reducing energy by 75 percent—and 25 percent of the new light fixtures were fitted with motion sensors. Thanks to an energy efficiency retrofit that incorporated the latest in lighting technology, the complex was able to reduce its energy requirements by an impressive 7 percent.

The centre even went a step further and partnered with eThekweni Municipality, Philips Lighting Southern Africa, and Eskom, to retrofit 155 street lights in the Durban ICC precinct with energy-efficient Iridium LED street lights, in addition to installing solar traffic lighting at four of the major road intersections. *"Intelligent architecture, sustainable meeting design, and green initiatives in our operations are the way forward,"* Langley says. *"Thankfully, the majority of clients in our industry are of the same mind and are actively choosing venues which have made these practices part of their daily operations."*

CHATting CLIMATE CHANGE

Green initiatives are part of the daily operating procedures at Durban ICC, but one recent event that brought sustainability to the forefront of the conversation was the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), held in January 2019. At the weeklong meeting, experts gathered to discuss "climate change adaptation in the developing world." This

is a topic that hits close to home, since the South African interior temperatures are rising at *"twice the global rate of temperature increase,"* according to South Africa's deputy director-general on climate change, sustainable development and air quality, Dr. Tsakani Ngomane.

In an African News Agency article, the deputy director-general is quoted saying: *"Rapid urbanization is expected in Africa over the next few decades and into the 21st century, and how this growth can be sustained under climate change is a critical question."* The working group of delegates at the IPCC meeting gives the Durban ICC a chance to play a personal role in realm of climate change. The working group of experts who gathered for the meeting will help contribute to a report on the impacts of "climate change on natural and human systems and their vulnerabilities," which will be incorporated into the 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

"The Durban ICC is committed to protecting and preserving the environment in all of its activities," says CEO Lindiwe Rakharebe. *"This entails continuous improvement, not only in the quality of the events we host, but also in our daily operations; we are doing everything we can to reduce our energy consumption, minimise our waste and actively promote our recycling programme. It is important that every member of our team embraces these values, not only for themselves, but also for the benefit of future generations to come."*

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AC Forum's Current Challenges & Opportunities

What a roller coaster the last few weeks have been; things have evolved in such a short time at pace. We know that the word 'unprecedented' is not far from any statement attached to COVID-19 and the situation we find ourselves in; we are all dealing with uncertainty and rapid changes in a way few can have been fully prepared for. How do you plan as an association, re-evaluate your risk assessments and shift your priorities and activities? That's what **Carola van der Hoeft**, President-Elect and **Tracy Bury**, President, AC Forum, ask themselves.

Associations are mission driven, advancing knowledge, sharing science and supporting communities of practice are at the heart of what we do, and our congresses play a significant part in this mission. Do any of us know how far ahead it is 'safe' to plan when it comes to our events? The challenges are various and cut across all aspects of association business, not just congresses.

Sharing and supporting each other at times like this is a key strength of a community of associations, such as AC Forum. We know from our members that many have had to postpone events, some have had to cancel and others are moving to fully virtual conferences. Even those without events this year are challenged to assess future plans and evaluate the longer term consequences of the immediate impact.

Reflecting on the experience of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), a member of AC Forum, Carola van der Hoeft, FIP's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Congresses and current AC Forum President-Elect comments, *"FIP has a duty of care to its members, volunteers and congress participants. Consequently, we are in close contact with the World Health Organization (WHO). Our policy is to follow WHO health advisories, together with specific guidance issued by national, provincial and state governmental*

offices. We were also in regular contact with our partner organizations collaborating on our planned events. Taking all of this into account, we had to postpone three of our congresses. We could not deliver a high-level program due to the travel restrictions implemented by a number of countries and/or private organizations which limited our speakers to travel."

FIP was lucky that the stakeholders were very flexible, meaning that there were no extra cost as a result of moving the congress to the next year. However, as Tracy Bury, AC Forum President, noted that there were other AC Forum members who were having more difficult discussions with some destinations and trying to find the compromise and win-win position was proving challenging. Where successful changes were achieved, multi-stakeholder collaboration had been key.

Cancelling a congress is a really significant decision for anyone, but everyone is committed to doing the right thing in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact for associations, like others, is huge; not only are there expenses associated with a cancelled event, but cash flow and predicted income are impacted, and the scale of this will depend on the size of the association.

And what will happen next year and beyond? We don't yet know how this virus

will go; will there be a second wave with further restrictions? Will there be an impact on people's willingness to travel? Will there be a reduction in funding to attend events? What will have happened in the related industry sectors, important for exhibitions and sponsorship? What will be the impact on the future membership income for associations? We all believe in the value of what we can do when we come together face to face.

But amongst all this uncertainty we also see opportunities and rapid innovations. The Board of AC Forum and its members are watching eagerly to learn how colleagues from the European Academy of Neurology (EAN), the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) and the International AIDS Society (IAS) get on as they make the move to go virtual with their congress this year.

As AC Forum, we start now to plan for our annual meeting in January 2021 in Rotterdam. We can certainly say we won't be short on content and valuable experiences to share and learn from as we look to the future.

For Associations wanting to learn more about AC Forum and membership, please visit acforum.net

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Appointed in July 2014, Silke is in charge of the oversight and management of the Euroheat & Power office, events organisation and relations with Euroheat & Power members and partners. She joined Euroheat & Power in March 2011 from Colloquium Brussels, an international events agency.

Jennifer has been with ISA since July 2014 when the association moved its headquarters to the University of Connecticut. She is responsible for the management of ISA headquarter staff and has responsibility for managing the ISA's budget and finances as well as coordinating future convention planning.

Prior to joining ACC, Giuseppe Marletta was the General Manager of the International Association of Young Lawyers. In his career, he has managed several European and international groups and associations, in the field of intercultural dialogue, policy making, project management as well as in the health sector. Giuseppe is President of ESAE, the European Society of Association Executives.

Mohamed worked at UITP as Senior Manager (1999-2001), Director Knowledge and Membership Services (2001-2006) and Senior Adviser to the Secretary General (2006-2013). He also carried out several technical assistance and training projects in Africa and the Middle-East. He established the UITP office for the Middle-East and North Africa in Dubai.

Matthew previously worked as the CEO of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). He holds an MBA from the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Tufts University. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Association Executives and has also served as a member of the Board of Directors of both ASAE and the ASAE Foundation.



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