



BOARDROOM
THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP IN TIMES OF DISRUPTION

— VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | **2021 VOLUME 3** | VOLUME 4 —

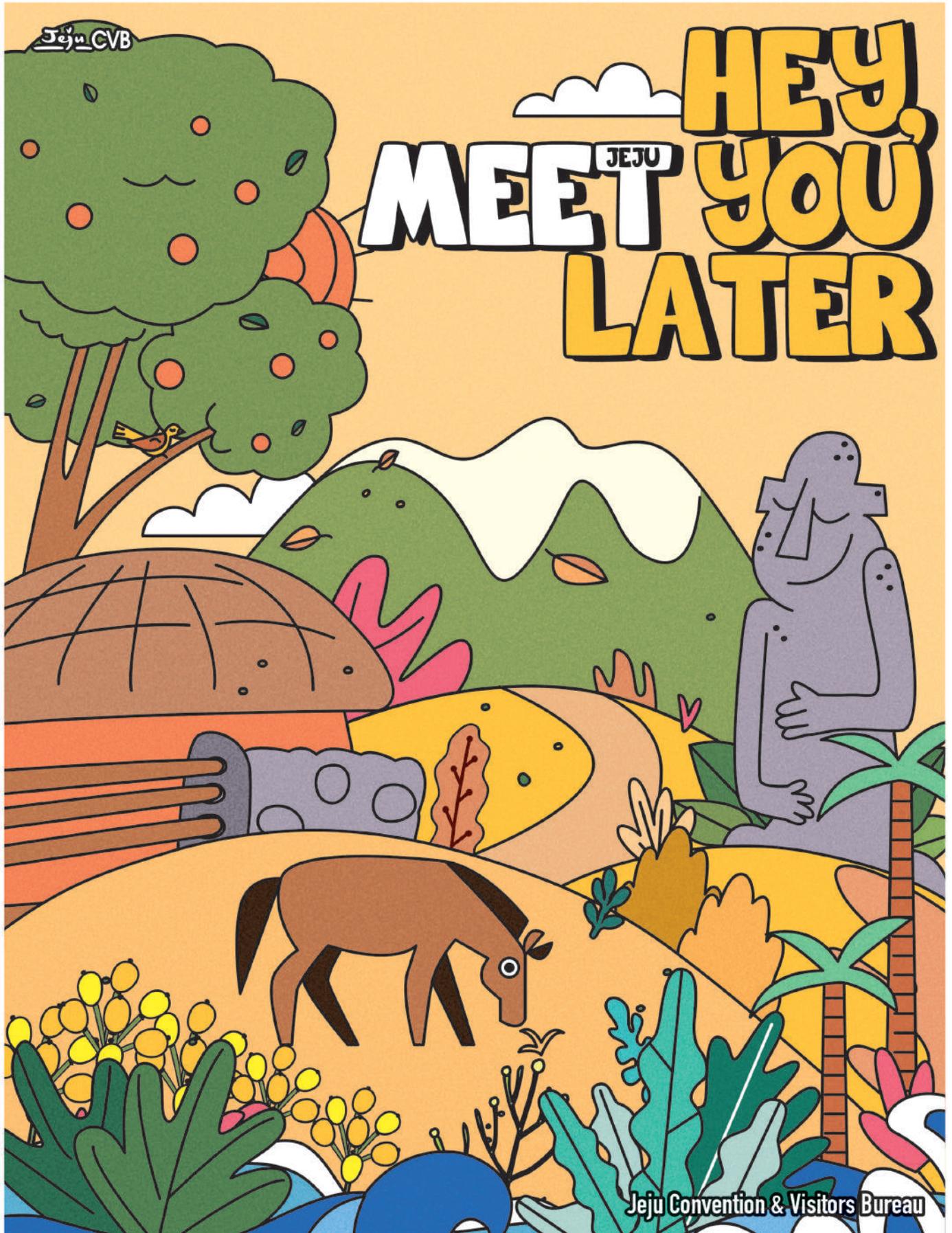
THE NEW GLOBAL
PARADIGM

ASSOCIATIONS AS
FORCES FOR GOOD

THE GOLDEN RULES
OF GDPR

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The Art of Reinvention

Over the last few years, significant changes have occurred – and organizations, whether nonprofits, trade associations, professional societies, shouldn't stay on the side, especially when it comes to the way they operate and strategize.

If they want to remain relevant, associations have to master the art of reinvention. But in a world of constant disruption and change, it can be a hard thing to do. After all, how do you win the game when the game itself is always changing?

It also concerns us, at Boardroom. And today we'd like to show how a paradigm shift should be possible in the publishing world, too. In this very issue, Martin Sirk and Tommy Goodwin came up with a new, innovative content format (page 10). This new way of transferring knowledge may be overwhelming at first, but a second reading might give you another opinion – and provide valuable inspiration and insights. And guess what? We bet it will.

The challenge of trying to keep up with change is daunting, also for associations. However, committing to adapting and focusing on what is really important to you and your association is the best answer to making change work for you. You will quickly find that the longer you wait to make changes, the “behinder” you get.

A recent Harvard Business Review research project found that *“Making a commitment to reinvention before the need is glaringly obvious doesn't come naturally. Things often look rosier just before a company heads into decline: Revenues from the current business model are surging, profits are robust, and the company stock commands a hefty premium. But that's exactly when managers need to take action.”* This could be definitely applied to associations. Boards, CEOs and staff should take the lead, assess the current situation, and make a plan to reinvent their organization so that it's aligned – more than ever – with its original mission and vision.

When you begin to understand that your members might already be ahead of you, in the realm of social media for instance, you are already reinventing. Take a sampling of your database (the whole thing! Include all stakeholders in your value chain) and talk to them. Ask them directly how you can help them meet their challenges.

That's what we're discussing in the main Feature of this issue. Continuing to fall back on *“we've always done it this way”* is costing you added revenue. Your competitors are using disruptive methods to shake up their organizations and so should you.



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Building Back Better Series

Do You Hear the Call?
Time for Associations to
Help their Members Become
Forces for Good



For Boardroom's Building Back Better series, Vancouver-based **Coro Strandberg** makes the case for associations playing a strengthened role in helping their members contribute to accelerated social good.

This Special Series is sponsored by Madrid Convention Bureau, whose values align with the Building Back Better concept.



MADRID
CONVENTION
BUREAU

The intersecting crises of the pandemic, accelerating climate change, and increasing inequality are driving associations and their members to reinvent themselves for the future. The race is on to re-engineer association mandates and member value propositions to secure their relevance and put humanity on a sustainable footing. These times call for associations to repurpose themselves to serve not just their members but society.

One association responding to the summons is **UK Water**, whose members are water and wastewater service suppliers in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Two years ago, the association adopted a Public Interest Commitment to:

- Encourage members to enshrine operating in the public interest within their business purpose (aka become a social purpose company).
- Work together towards achieving a net zero carbon sector, 100 per cent adoption of a Social Mobility Pledge, preventing plastic bottle waste, reducing water leakage, and ending water poverty.

With this announcement, the water industry pledged to go above and beyond the provision of clean, fresh drinking water and effective treatment of used water to deliver wider benefits to society.

Another association committed to supporting its members to be greater forces of good is **Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)**, with nearly 150 members across the country. Two years ago, the association adopted a new vision of “*better futures for peoples and communities*” and a value proposition to be a force multiplier for Canadian colleges and institutes. As documented in a set of seven sustainable association case studies, CICan holistically embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its North Star and pivoted its lobbying and programming to do its part to help its members achieve these global goals.

Professional associations, too, are diving into the work. The **Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP)** adopted policies and roadmaps on climate change, Indigenous reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion and healthy communities, providing guidance and tools on the roles its professional members can play in these areas. The association is committed to carbon neutral operations, and collaborates with allied professions on climate action, using its voice with government to lobby for climate leadership. It requires its professionals to demonstrate sustainable development, equity, diversity and inclusion, and Indigenous relations competencies.

Some associations make adoption of their sustainability program a condition of membership, and expect members to transparently disclose their sustainability performance, such as the **Mining Association of Canada (MAC)**. As documented in the case study report of seven sustainable associations, MAC requires its members to endorse Towards Sustainable Mining Principles, and report on a

set of social and environmental performance metrics to enable peer benchmarking and continuous improvement. It has a target that its members have the highest performance levels in the program, and it collaborates with industries around the world such as steel and jewelry for aligned sustainability programs. Its own program has been adopted by seven other national mining associations, transporting the Canadian mining brand around the world. The association champions the transition to the low carbon economy, and the role its members are playing to enable it.

More and more associations are stepping up to help their members make - and hasten - the transition to the low carbon, circular and equitable economy. Another is the **Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities**. It works with local authorities to translate the SDGs at the local level, offering promotional materials and tools and practical examples. It published a guide to integrate the Global Goals into municipal policy plans and encourages municipal councils to put sustainability at the heart of their organization with the guide.

As associations emerge from the global pandemic and seek to build relevance, they become more interested in futureproofing themselves and their members by embracing societal missions and creating sustainability blueprints for their sectors and professions. Some refer to their transformation as “social or public purpose”, others as “ESG” (Environmental, Social and Governance) and others as “sustainability”. Regardless of what associations call it, the rising interest of sectors and professions to play a stronger societal role is indisputable. At a recent discussion on the topic, association professionals commented:

“Our historical mission has been to develop and defend markets for our product. Is this the game we should be in anymore?”

“We are looking to transition to become an ESG-focused organization.”

“We have been focused on environmental regulatory compliance. We want to be more proactive.”

Evidence shows that the top driver of the shift is maintaining relevance to members and stakeholders. Other drivers include:

- Attracting, retaining and engaging members
- Attracting, retaining and engaging employees
- Showing sector / profession leadership

Anecdotally, association executives report their sustainability programs attract new members (in one case, a 30 per cent increase), and that their younger employees are agitating for greater leadership in this area. Other associations observe that improved member ESG practices give associations more credibility with government when lobbying for their sector.

HOW TO BUILD A SUSTAINABILITY, SDG OR ESG PROGRAM TO HELP MEMBERS SUCCEED?

But how to get started or advance? Some associations feel in the dark about the steps to take to help their members transition to the low-carbon, circular, regenerative, diverse, equitable, and purpose-driven economy. The Canadian government commissioned this research paper to shed light on this pivot. It began with the question:

“How to unlock the potential of sectors and professions to become forces for greater good in society?”

... and answered by developing two tools for associations to help their members accelerate a just and sustainable future.

ESG / SDG ASSOCIATION HUB

The first tool, the ESG / SDG hub for associations, depicted below, sets out 17 practice areas, from consultation to public engagement. The 17 practices are divided into foundational and advanced

actions. The internal practices are basic, easy wins, and necessary to have in place to get to the other, external, practices.

The innermost circle is directed at ESG and the SDGs (ESG/SDGs). An association can replace this with the term relevant to their sector or profession, such as sustainability, social purpose, social impact, or corporate social responsibility. The hub can be applied to both a suite of ESG topics, or to a single ESG topic, like climate change or diversity. In other words, associations can put any topic in the centre of the rubric to guide their ESG approach.

Associations can use the hub as a benchmark tool to identify achievements and prioritize gaps to fill. It can be used by boards for strategic planning. Once the organization has prioritized its efforts, it can add them to its strategic or operational plan.

The hub can be used:

- As a blueprint to guide an association’s approach and figure out what to do next. It can be a starting point for conversations.

BEST PRACTICE ESG/SDG HUB FOR ASSOCIATIONS



- To have conversations with members, especially in areas that are conflicted and where some members are ahead or behind. It can help identify where members are comfortable to move forward and determine where there is consensus.
- To think about the cumulative impact all members can make. For example, how might associations use their role to influence their members? This is where associations could focus on the outer parts of the circle: advocacy, public education, etc.

For associations that would like a tool to benchmark their practices, here is a resource that can help identify gaps and opportunities, linked to the best practice hub.

ASSOCIATION ESG / SDG STRATEGY ROADMAP

The second tool, the association ESG strategy roadmap, is a complementary resource for organizational leaders to assess

their organization’s current state and determine how far they would like to advance on ESG in the future (see below). The roadmap captures a continuum of practices: from basic and opportunistic, to strategic and targeted, then visionary and collaborative, and finally, to the social purpose and transformational stage. Each is equated to a level - one through four - enabling organizations to better envision how far they would like to advance in the maturity model.

As with the previous tool, this framework can be used by associations and their boards to determine their strategic approach. They can use it to decide where they want to be, how much more they want to do, and what they should put into their strategic plan to advance their progress.

Many associations will want to skip to level four, becoming social purpose and transformational as they reboot themselves and their sector or profession for the times ahead.

ASSOCIATION ESG STRATEGY ROADMAP



PRACTICE AREA	LEVEL 1 Basic & Opportunistic	LEVEL 2 Strategic & Targeted	LEVEL 3 Visionary & Collaborative	LEVEL 4 Social Purpose & Transformational
Operations & Strategy	Includes ESG practices in its operations	Adopts ESG policies and definitions, includes ESG in values and workplan	Adopts ESG vision, goals, targets for members to pursue together	Adopts societal purpose as reason association/sector profession exists. Strategy includes societal goals, targets, and metrics
Knowledge & Capacity	Provides ESG information and education	Provides information on ESG trends and risks	Develops ESG standards, benchmarks, designations, curriculum	Requires members to participate in ESG program/training; develops social purpose resources for members
Member Engagement	Establishes ESG task force and consults members on priorities	Creates ESG working groups for members to research and learn together	Creates ESG working groups to collaborate on ESG issues	Supports members to provide solutions to ESG / society's challenges
Government & Stakeholders	Engages in ESG advocacy with governments	Engages in ESG partnerships with government and other stakeholders	Engages in multi-stakeholder collaborations to tackle ESG issues	Engages other associations to address ESG / society issues together
Staffing	No designated ESG staff	Designated lead ESG staff	ESG designation on leadership team; ESG training provided to staff	CEO is ESG and social purpose leader; all staff have ESG and social purpose responsibilities

Society is at an inflection point, and associations are poised to play a strengthened role in helping their members contribute to accelerated social good. In so doing, the sectors, industries, and professions that make the economy tick will be put on a more viable path for one and all. The association management profession can - and must - heed the call and lead the way.

Coro Strandberg is President of Strandberg Consulting, based in Vancouver, Canada. She has 30 years’ experience advising governments, businesses and associations on strategies to leverage the market as a force for good. Coro is a nationally recognized Canadian thought leader on the future of business, sectors, professions and associations in society. She publishes her thought leadership on her website at www.corostrandberg.com.

Resources \ Sustainable and Just Association Report: corostrandberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/sustainable-association-report.pdf / \ Sustainable Association Case Studies: corostrandberg.com/publication/sustainable-association-case-studies/ \ Association Sustainability Benchmark: corostrandberg.com/publication/sustainable-and-just-association-benchmark/ / Climate Change Guide for Associations: www.bccic.ca/climateguide/



Think Different

How Associations Can Thrive in the New Global Paradigm

Let's experiment with content format: that's the intention behind this piece by Global Association Hubs' **Martin Sirk** and Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance's **Tommy Goodwin**. And at Boardroom, we decided to go for it, though the initial reaction was a definite 'no way, we can't look like a simple blog post!' But indeed, if you can't cope with this kind of change to your media consumption, how do you expect to deal with much bigger changes facing your own organization?



Martin Sirk and Tommy Goodwin struggled to compress the huge volume of insights from an online education session they designed for this year's ASAE annual conference into a traditional magazine article, especially given the wealth of additional ideas generated in pre-event planning sessions with other panel members Elissa Myers from the Academy for Eating Disorders, Alfons Westgeest from global AMC Kellen, and Sylvia Gonner from CultureWiz.

But since the session was concerned with new global paradigm-shifts, Martin and Tommy decided to dispense with the normal conventions of writing articles for Boardroom. This is the result!

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

Think different about media articles!

- Content over style
- Bullet points versus polished paragraphs
- Reasoned arguments can take place later
- Opportunity for readers to respond point-by-point
- Bite-sized smorgasbord can be tastier than plated banquet!

Introduction:

- Need to think differently after COVID-19: the world has changed
- Global development faces economic/political/technological paradigm shifts
- Courage to think big → not incremental, small-scale change
- Serious innovation mindset, not just tinkering around the edges
- Re-examine everything, think differently about everything

1. Think different about risk

- Can no longer just be a box-ticking exercise
- Different categories: financial, governance, reputational, geopolitical
- Risk literacy: importance of risk across the organization (staff and board)
- Not all risk is bad risk → risk can be positive
- Example: Global decoupling/geopolitical risk as threat and opportunity

2. Think different about revenue

- One big event miss → bankruptcy
- Need for revenue diversification, but keep mission front and center
- Nobody wants associations to simply be commercial providers of products and services
- Potential revenue is hidden in all your assets: human, tech, events, community

3. Think different about digital

- Every association is now a digital-first association
- This requires both new skill sets and new mindsets
- Build and leverage online community → think platforms first
- Members want to learn from each other, not just the association
- Universal applicability can be deployed regionally or country-by-country

4. Think different about value delivery

- Associations need to think like a startup company
- Transformation mindset constantly required

- Sensing and responding: associations are good at sensing, but not responding
- Test and learn, co-create with members and stakeholders
- Get things into market → perfect is the enemy of good/delivered
- Constant plan/do/check/act cycles

5. Think different about events

- Opportunity to re-invent flagship event(s)
- Hybrid/digital allows associations to engage more globally
- Conferences and events around the world → chasing the sun, translation, etc.
- F2F will be tighter/smaller in the near term, but associations can attract and retain a large audience via digital/hybrid
- Pay attention to other associations' experiments & outcomes!

6. Think different about inclusion

- Involve have and have-nots
- Think about ability to deliver resources in different locations
- Economic disparity: price according to World Bank economic zone, but what else?
- Remember to be inclusive globally... think cultural differences
- Attune to cultural nuances that allows you to thrive in each location
- Link diversity and inclusion to national and global, not just local

7. Think different about governance

- Boards need to be sensitive to a fast-changing environment
- Board members' skills/aptitude, not just representation
- Need for agile governance
- Need to redefine & challenge understanding of "agile"!

8. Think different about "global"

- No HQ-driven one-size-fits-all strategy anymore
- Coming out of the pandemic, expect big regional/sub-regional/country differences
- First move advantage will be critical

- Need boots on the ground → different models (staff, AMC, chapter/volunteers)
- If members are screaming somewhere, it mustn't be a whisper when it hits HQ

9. Think different about partnerships

- The near/medium-term future of global will be regional
- Hybrid/regional events, conferences, education, but with whom?
- Partnerships will be key to achieving global reach amidst logistical hurdles
- How can global partnerships help to create something new/better/different?
- Example: Singapore Fintech Association – 50 partnership agreements
- Cities can be brilliant partners – if they understand associations

10. Think different about competition

- Landscape is only going to get more competitive, especially for attention
- Attention is the new data (data was once the new oil)
- Need antennae out to see where other associations, interest groups, etc. are going
- Next competitor may not be an association... or even know it's an association today

11. Think different about sustainability

- Climate change front and center going forward
- Will be critical to attendees' evaluation of meeting opportunities in the future
- Embedding sustainability into events, programming, external reporting, etc.
- Example: European Commission's recent "Fit for 55" proposal

12. Think different about the role of associations

- Broken trust in many aspects of life around the world
- Actively managing reputation and integrity has never been more important
- Associations are never offstage
- Associations have to take the lead, members expect it!
- Society needs associations to form connective tissue amidst disruption and decoupling

Tell us what you think!

If you'd like the authors to expand on any of the bullet points, send a mail to editor@boardroom.global. Remember this is an experiment: if you don't like it, shout it out, if you do, send us your feedback.



To continue recruiting and retaining members should have its ear to the ground and be aware of market trends and the competitive landscape.

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FEATURE

Association Membership in Times of Disruption

How to attract new members, how to engage existing members, how to retain them in times of disruption, how to make sure you deliver value and you keep being relevant to them ... the list could go on and on when it comes to the challenges and the opportunities of association membership. In this Boardroom Special Feature, our wealth of contributors explore how traditional membership models are being disrupted, how you should comply to GDPR at all levels of communication, how some organizations are innovating... Read on and send your feedback!

The New Faces of Association Membership

For ESAE, **Angela Guillemet** looks at associations that have performed well and successfully attracted, retained and engaged members.

The pandemic redefined expectations of associations and many rose to the occasion accelerating innovation, changing services and relationships with members. Associations learned the importance of the member value proposition, using technology, offering services to better fit what their members really want and keeping members engaged.

So what is the outlook for association membership? Research findings have been broadly positive. A recent **ESAE** member retention survey found that only 17% of those surveyed have actually suffered member retention issues over the last 18 months. Furthermore, the 2021 Membership **Benchmarking report by Marketing General** reported a 84% median retention rate. A statistic which was validated in a recent **US study of associations** presented at the ASAE Annual Meeting by Willow Marketing. In their findings, 86% of respondents said they were likely to renew their memberships.

It is evident that associations that embraced opportunities like introducing communities of practice, curating relevant content and creating year-long points of learning and engagement have demonstrated some remarkable results which offers a model for future association communications and engagement.

THE CHANGING FACE OF MEMBERSHIP

This Spring through research and working groups, ESAE explored current member retention challenges and potential measures that could be put in place to respond to them. We learned that membership organizations are facing varied pressures including: competition from other associations and from the private sector; outdated membership models and services; economic and technology disruption; aging demographics and cumbersome governance rules.

In response to challenges, associations are adapting their membership models, customising offers and pursuing new opportunities. Evidence of the changing face of membership could be seen with the successful People-First Strategy introduced by the **International Association of Public Transport (UITP)** which launched different initiatives to be closer to their members, to better understand their needs and by extension ensuring a deeper connection with the “Why” of the association. Examples are increased points of contact such as webinars, online committee meetings and meetings to improve member engagement.

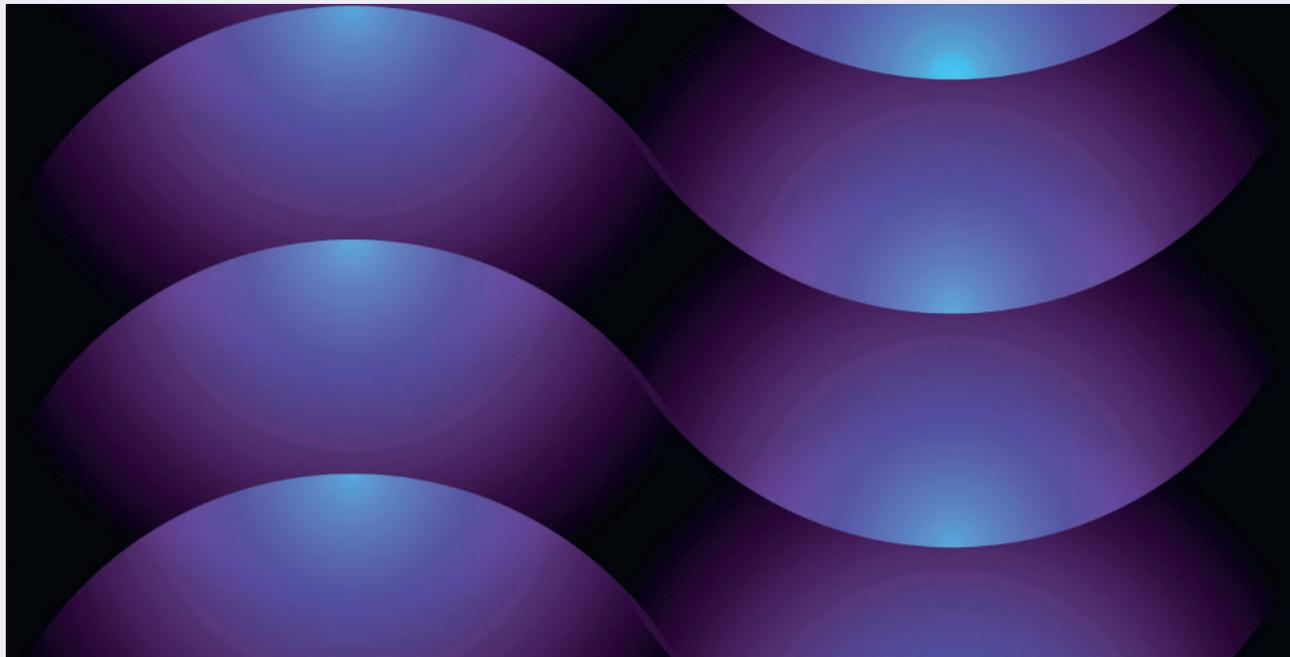
Patrick Heffer from the International Fertilizer Association (IFA) leading an ESAE

discussion on how to introduce new member categories to your association, concluded that *“it all comes down to strong, trusted and transparent communication with members about the direction the association is going and the need to embrace change. Change then needs to be carefully planned and justified with relevant data.”*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The pandemic revealed new opportunities for year-long engagement with existing and new audiences. Remarkably, over the last 18 months the world suddenly seemed to become smaller and more connected which was an opportunity for associations to expand and deepen their reach.

The Chartered Governance Institute (CGI) is a good case in point. They put in place a community portal which proved to be a successful platform for members to engage and support each other across countries and continents. With daily digests reaching 5,000 professionals worldwide, it created excellent sponsorship opportunities. The association recorded many benefits from this tool: it powers conversations, informs conference content, empowers members to have their say, delivers global engagement, grows members especially younger professionals and drives the value proposition.



But investment in association engagement like this takes more than just customizing a platform. It also requires a holistic strategy that encompasses investment in time and resources to ensure relevant content is promoted with effective community management.

ENGAGING FUTURE MEMBERS

Another upside of the pandemic is that many associations found that they were better able to engage with younger audiences by using more attractive platforms. This was demonstrated by the International Society of Transport Aircraft Trading (ISTAT) which created the **ISTAT Rising Executives Program**. The 700 professionals who participated in the program received online education and mentoring from key industry leaders.

Post pandemic, the association plans to continue to develop their digital offerings, to address their shifting membership demographics and to create sponsorship revenue streams.

RETAINING CORPORATE MEMBERS

During another ESAE workshop, Sylvie Hua from EuropeanIssuers led a discussion on deepening the ties between the association and corporate members so that relationships are maintained even when individual members move on. It was broadly agreed that associations need to be vigilant and anticipate member changes.

Some associations put in place systematic member communication to get to know members and their colleagues to ensure the value proposition fits and is being delivered. Every staff member in an association should be empowered to get to know the members better. When there are leadership changes amongst members, for example, it helps to schedule a conversation to discuss the benefits of the association to them and their profession. Some associations have even gone so far as to set up account managers to look after key members.

DATA DRIVEN CONVERSATIONS

During the pandemic, many associations saw the value of properly managed data which enables them to draw new insights, deepen their knowledge about members, sponsors, their broader stakeholders and to better segment communications.

The associations that capitalized on these insights to power meaningful conversations will be the winners. The experience of the **Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO)** is a good case study to demonstrate this. While reviewing their membership data, they looked at the companies that were lapsing. After conducting exit interviews, they realized that there was a category of members who were interested in business development. In response, they created a new member category that was more targeted. The icing on the cake was that once they made a few tweaks to the category and asked people what they would pay for it, the price doubled.

Robust data has also allowed associations to demonstrate the value added that they can bring to sponsors by the ability to track engagement, impressions and clicks.

LISTENING TO MEMBERS

To continue recruiting and retaining members, an association should have its ear to the ground and be aware of member views and the competitive landscape. A member needs assessment would be useful to a) identify the products and services that matter, and to b) validate that everything the association is doing is adding value and fulfilling expectations. This will allow the association to find its own market niche, one that value can be built upon.

In times of disruption, the value proposition is going to be stress-tested. Associations need to be agile enough to respond and innovate. During the recent ASAE Annual Meeting, the **American Nurses Association** presented their successful campaign which grew membership by 8.2% in two months. The CARE campaign involved: Coordination of a cross-functional team, Asking the audience what they need most with several focused surveys, Responding promptly with education and information, and Executing membership marketing that is appropriate.

THE SAFE COMMUNITY

Those associations that rapidly opened up communication with their members, listened to them and established how they could help them meet current and future challenges found that they did indeed have a role to play in a disrupted world. In some cases, it was providing opportunities for members to connect virtually,

learn from each other as many were facing the same issues, helping members identify new funding streams or opportunities to collaborate.

Some associations were, however, in the regrettable position where member fees were cut or grace periods offered. For those that kept listening and innovating, this short-term financial pain will have long term benefits. Relationships have been strengthened and trust forged, with and between members, as they felt they had a safe community to go to for support, inspiration and advice. This will hopefully stand associations in good stead when the pandemic is over.

GOVERNANCE & MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Another learning from the pandemic was how associations could demonstrate their value and differentiate themselves in a world where content is so freely available.

Colm Clarke, Partner at Exempla who made a presentation to the ESAB membership retention session remarked: *“With a proliferation of online events, often launched for commercial objectives, association’s governance structures and non-profit status can be an important differentiator. Members should be able to understand how governance works to represent their interests and add value to their ‘customer experience,’ even if they aren’t active volunteers.”*

FOCUS

Now more than ever, it is important for associations to prioritize. Being able to adapt is key, but knowing how to prioritize and understand what the association can realistically deliver is just as critical. It

is great to have digital tools at our fingertips to deliver new member benefits but having a clear strategy in place so that the association remains rooted to its mission and goals is very important for the future.

As we progress out of the global pandemic, we must look positively at the contributions that associations can make and how far we have evolved. There is no going back to the 2019 ways of doing things. The idea that connections and education only happen at the annual conference has become well and truly a thing of the past. The pandemic-fuelled digital transformation has enabled associations to meet member needs, transform their member experience and be better positioned to leverage new opportunities. Faced with a changing world, meaningful conversations are needed to confront realities and respond with member services that have meaning and value to members.

The key is to remain nimble, focused, to keep listening, innovating and responding to member needs with open, honest, transparent and regular two-way communication.

Angela Guillemet is the Executive Director of INCON, International Conference Partnership, and Co-Chair of the ESAB, Communications & Membership Committee. For more information about ESAB, with which Boardroom has an exclusive partnership, visit www.esab.eu



The Voice of AC Forum

Capturing Member Voices Amidst the Noises of COVID-19

Carola van der Hoeft, COO and Congress Director of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and President Elect of AC Forum, explores the lessons learnt and lessons still to be learnt when it comes to understanding and engaging association members.

Amidst the multifaceted disruption faced by various business models including those of non-profit and non-governmental organizations, maintaining connectivity with customers, partners, members, and stakeholders doesn't come without challenges.

What is it that customers "need" and "want"? What effective methods or strategies need to be experimented to better understand customers' "needs" and "wants"? Which of those methods reap great benefits to customers and which ones don't? And how does this information help define an organization's "brand" positioning and in keeping up with the ever-changing customer expectations, competitive markets and products.

In this article I'd like to shed light on lessons learnt; and how to react to those yet to be learnt, through our responsive member engagement initiatives shared by our organization: the International Pharmaceutical Federation - FIP.

Founded in 1912, FIP is a non-governmental organization headquartered in the Hague, Netherlands. 146 national organizations (both pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences.), 180 academic institutions (pharmaceutical education) and 4,000 individual pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists, it represents more than 4 million members globally. FIP's mission is to advance pharmacy worldwide through collaborative relations with its members and partners.

Investing in membership engagement should be a top strategic priority, particularly with an ongoing pandemic. As we moved into a second year (2021) with no face-to-face meetings or gatherings, mandated travel bans and restrictions, the need to be nimble, adaptable, and flexible in our approach to engage with members has been heightened. Member engagement has never been more of an imperative. With staff transitioning into remote working and extended screen times, ensuring we remain connected with our members has not been an easy task.

To simply state that communication and innovative ways of working are vital strategies to effective member engagement is not enough. During a global pandemic, engaging and communicating with our members has never been more crucial; especially when we all live through so much uncertainty. Today, organizations are more than ever challenged as they have cancelled face-to-face meetings with clients/members or postponed global congresses and conferences (to a yet to be determined date and place). The good thing is that all these challenges have collectively accentuated creative thinking and boosted teamwork.

MEMBER-FOCUSED

Before we thought about how many new members we should attract into our globally and health-focused organization, we seriously considered how we would listen to existing members. We did so by creating and sustaining a better experience for our members which started with a commitment in our approach to *be member-focused, member-led, member-driven*.

In 2021, we have brought our members on a journey of engagement, by ensuring all activities are engaging themselves and all opportunities to engage are counted and fed back. We have delivered a series of online regional meetings (spanning all the way to Q1 2022) to host our members from various countries. Members were invited to be listened to and their voices enabled us to fill the social/professional void that was created by the pandemic. This was further strengthened by defining the scope and objectives of our meetings, and related events and programmes.

PERSONALIZED APPROACH

We embraced a personalized approach to member engagement that started and ended with two questions:

What member needs do we meet? What benefits do we provide?

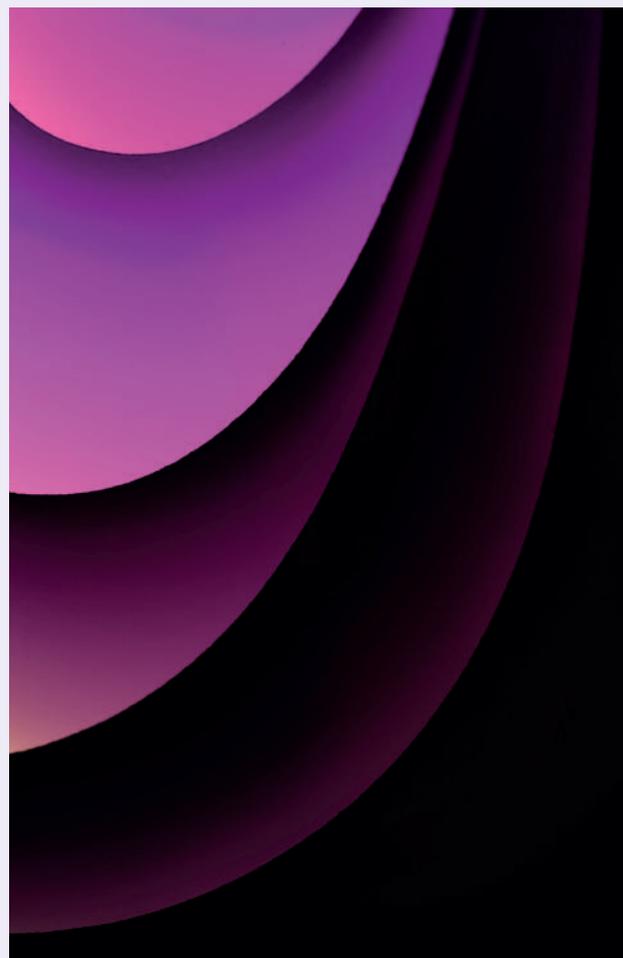
Members have to feel they can connect with the experiences we are offering: from the outset, we decided to involve them and to have them actively engaged through our digital events and regional meetings. To put it simply, our members have been actively present at every stage of everything we have been doing.

A similar approach was adopted when conducting high-level meetings with leaders and engaging across regions to better connect with our members.

While exploring our members' national profiles and priorities, comparable needs and priorities have emerged, which we have been able to identify, highlight, and interconnect across nations, regions and FIP goals for the decade ahead. Through greater member engagement, we asked our members questions, listened to their requirements, and then prioritized, aligned, and delivered our programmes.

MAINTAINING & RETAINING MEMBERS

The challenge is not constrained to recruiting new members; it also affects existing members and retention through loyalty and delivery is a major priority. One of the reasons members join an organization is to get a distinctive and significant added value to their professional lives or those of their members. To showcase value-added member benefits, we must communicate them, ensure they are accessible, especially through the official website, newsletters, and social media platforms. This offers "exclusivity" to our members and unique experiences. Member benefits can take the shape of accessible guidelines, reports, publications, live events, webinars, infographics, letters – the options are vast.



Finally, when certain requests may be impracticable or unfeasible, we seek to undertake frequent evaluations to update and develop existing approaches, as well as consider rational modifications, to remain on top of their professional practice. By taking a member centric approach, we ensure we hear their voices and feed back our responses, create conversations of progress as we all seek to advance pharmacy worldwide.

Carola van der Hoeft wishes to acknowledge the help and support that her FIP colleagues have provided for this article. A true demonstration of teamwork which is key for success for associations. For organizations wanting to learn more about AC Forum and membership, please visit www.acforum.net



Dealing with Member Information

The Golden Rules of GDPR

When attracting new members or engaging existing ones through communications, newsletter and/or the organization of events, GDPR rules shall always be taken into consideration by association's board and secretariat in order to avoid any privacy infringement. In this article, **Frederique Jos**, partner at Brussels-based law firm Kadrant, addresses the main points of attention and recommendations associations shall be aware of to remain GDPR compliant in the scope of their relations with their members.

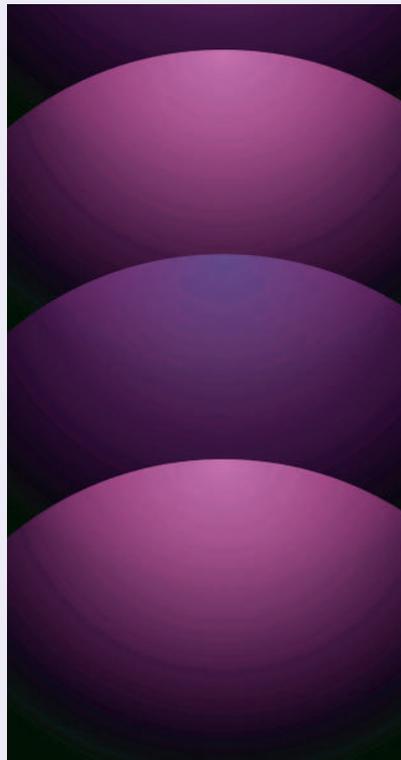
The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) affects associations of all sizes, whether you have an office in the EU or not. Every communication and business practice will be impacted by GDPR, including membership forms, emails, data storage, file transfers, print processes, etc. As an association, your primary concern should be to make sure that you are fully compliant with the requirements of GDPR. This requires both organizational and technical measures

LAWFUL BASIS

For most marketing activity done as a non-profit organization, you will have to rely on consent as its lawful basis. **Consent** means offering people genuine choice and control over how you use their data and the new rules are much clearer about exactly what this means.

Under GDPR, consent must be:

- **Unbundled** - separate from general terms and conditions



- **Active opt-in** - no pre-ticked boxes
- **Named** - clear who is given consent; not just 'third parties'
- **Documented** - records are kept of the consent
- **Easy to withdraw**

When communicating about your association's services, typically events and membership, you have to make sure you have secured the explicit consent to market those services to your contacts directly, irrespective of it being by telephone, email or direct mail. You also need to be careful to recognize that consent is given only for specific purposes. Should you wish to also approach them for another purpose, then you will need to secure their consent again.

When you collect member information on your website or through the membership form you must give the member clear information about how you will treat their data. As part of your contract with

your members you can contact them about their membership but for marketing activities you'll need to ask them to give clear consent for a specific purpose. If you don't get consent at this point, through a clear opt-in, then you don't have permission to use that data for marketing as explained above.

On newsletter subscription forms you'll need to explain clearly what the subscriber will receive.

REGULAR REVIEW

It is also recommended to carefully and regularly review your contact database to understand how an individual ended up there.

1. The individual has participated previously in a certain activity of your association. This could be membership, conference registration, webinar attendance, etc.
2. The individual has been contacted previously in relation to a certain activity but did not confirm participation. This could be in response to an enquiry being made or an unfulfilled expression of interest.

For reasons 1 & 2, you can assign them to a "Yes" list as long as you can trace their previous opt-in consent. If no opt-in history exists, you should assign them to a "Maybe" list along with those associated with reason 4 below.

3. The individual was part of another mailing list. This could be the result of the individual being part of a national member society's list (if you are an international federation) or was part of a purchased mailing list. If there is a legitimate reason (such as being part of a national member society's list) you should assign them to the "Maybe" list. But if there is no legitimate reason and

if there is no record of an opt-in, you should assign them to a "No" list.

4. You do not know for sure.

Then once you have done this exercise, you will end up with three lists:

- A "Yes" list means that opt-in has been secured and that it is okay to email the individual;
- A "Maybe" list means you may tentatively reach out to the individual (eg through social media or at an event) but not yet by email.
- A "No" list means they should not be contacted by email (even to ask them for consent to be able to contact them again).

In a nutshell the principles behind GDPR are really quite simple when interacting with your member.

- Don't contact someone unless they have specifically asked you to.
- Don't assume they want to hear from you.
- Don't cold contact them.
- Don't send them information they didn't request.

Associations that adhere to these principles and comply with these GDPR regulations are on the right path. Doing so, you will build trust and loyalty with your members if you value their right to data privacy, and if you are transparent about how you use the data you collect.

For more information on Kadrant visit www.kadrantlaw.com

A GDPR Compliance Summary

- **Written policy** – Adopt a written policy in which you document your approach to data protection in your organization.
- **Specify management responsibility** – assign someone to the organization of data protection and document this in your written policy
- **Staff training** – regularly offer staff training on practical data protection issues like clearing out old information, keeping their access passwords secure, etc.
- **Privacy notices** – make your privacy policy clearly visible on your website and all the forms through which you collect personal data
- **Responding to requests** – adopt a written policy to deal with requests individuals may make to access their personal data or have it removed from your systems.
- **Appropriate collection** – audit your systems to ensure the data you collect is (a) the minimum data for legitimate business need and (b) kept up-to-date
- **Appropriate disposal** – include within your written policy details about how you will ensure that unused and out-of-date data will be safely disposed of
- **Security** – include within your written policy the steps you have taken and will take to ensure the systems you use to process data are secure
- **Outsourcing** – you are responsible for data processed on your behalf by a third party so check that their processing is also compliant

Uniting Members in Challenging Times

The Case of the Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine



For IAPCO, **Yukari Ikeda**, of the Meeting Industry Research Institute, Japan Convention Services, Inc., looks back at how the Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine has redefined its strategy to be more relevant to its members.

At the time of writing these lines, major sporting events – yes, the Olympics – are being held in Japan amid the country's fourth state of emergency. States of emergency in Japan are not as strict as the lockdowns that have been adopted in other countries. Naturally, the food and beverage industry, the tourism industry and the meeting industry have been seriously affected, just like anywhere else obviously.

That being said, it is the medical system, which cares for COVID-19 patients, that is particularly heavily impacted. Japan boasts a world-class public healthcare system, with 13.1 hospital beds for every 1,000 citizens, 2.8 times the OECD average of 4.7. Most Japanese take it as a given that they will go to a hospital or clinic if they fall ill, thanks to their trust in the Japanese medical system. However, this pandemic has highlighted the fragility of Japan's medical care. One of the reasons for the declarations of the states of emergency is to prevent the overstretching of the medical system. COVID-19 patients require a greater level of care from doctors and nurses, and in severe cases, patients have to receive extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, which requires specialists with greater expertise.

A STRONG ONLINE OFFER

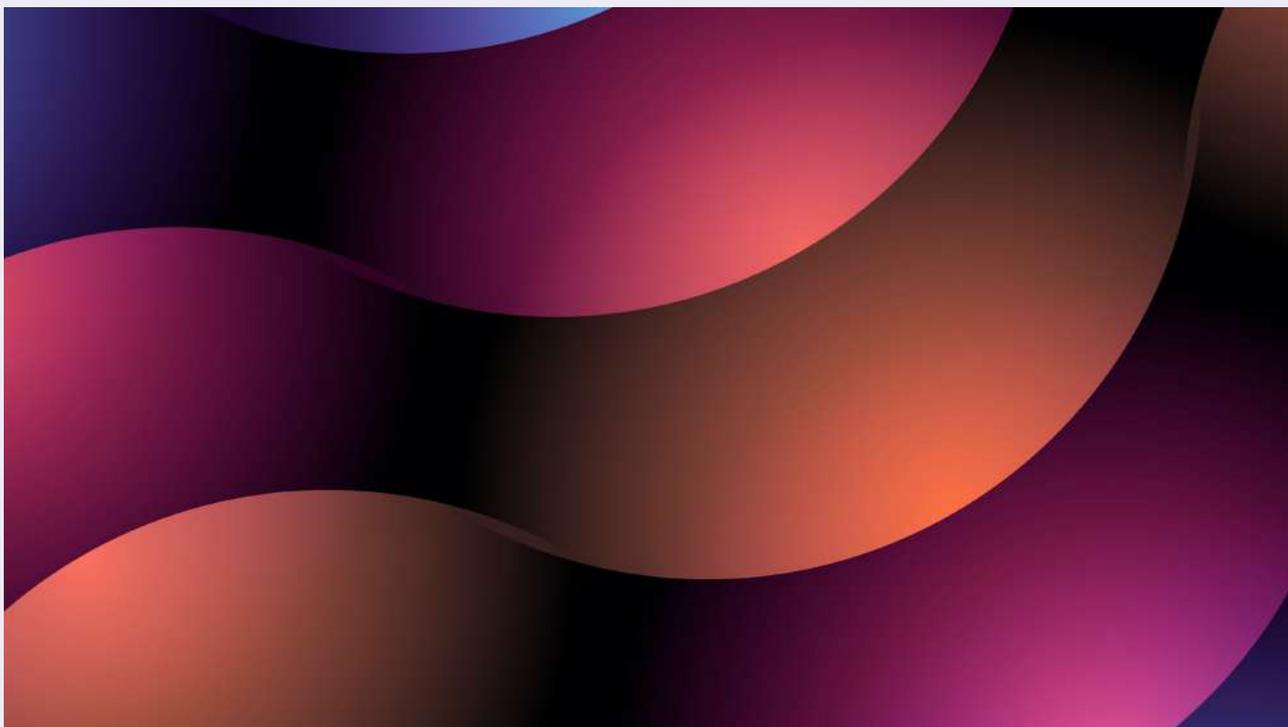
COVID-19 patients are treated in hospitals' intensive care units (ICUs). Intensive care physicians play a central role in these units and a lot of them are members of the Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine (JSICM). In March last year, amid the

spreading pandemic, most annual meetings in Japan were at first cancelled or postponed, before subsequently being held virtually.

The JSICM holds its annual congress every March, but in 2020 it abandoned plans for an in-person meeting. Nevertheless, it was quickly reinvented as an online event, and thanks to a strong offer of on-demand resources, 6,000 people registered to take part. To the Society's great surprise, sessions were viewed some 17,000 times, showing that even while combatting COVID-19, members took time in their busy schedule to further their knowledge and look for better ways to help patients under their immediate care.

A BRIEF HISTORY

JSICM was set up in 1974 and as of June 2021 it has over 10,000 members. Over the years, it has become a collaborative framework of many occupational categories, comprising doctors, nurses, pharmacists, clinical technologists and physical therapists. JSICM has a history of proactive international exchange, including holding the fifth World Federation of Societies of Critical Care Medicine Congress in Kyoto in 1989. In 2013, its internationalization was given an added boost when it began publishing the Journal of Intensive Care, an English journal. In June 2020, the journal's impact factor reached 3.953, a very good score. The Journal now ranks 12th among 36 critical care medicine journals, and the news that it reached such a high impact factor during the COVID-19 pandemic has definitely energized the Society's members as they continue to combat the disease.



Osamu Nishida was appointed as President of the JSICM in March 2020, near the start of the pandemic, and chaired the Society's Annual Congress. While offering strong encouragement to the frontline ICU doctors grappling with COVID-19, he delivered the following message on the Society's strategy and explained the 12 pillars that define it.

"JSICM aims to be an open Society with a clearly defined significance to the public and its members!"

Of the 12 pillars, one that I consider particularly important is "Reexamination of Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Organizational Reform."

The JSICM serves as the standard bearer of team-based medicine. To live up to that role, I recognize that we must continue to further build "specialty-specific educational systems and society certification systems." At the same time, I am also committed to reexamining the organization of the Board of Directors and the Board of Councilors while taking into consideration their multiple professions, fields of expertise, and regionalities. Another item that I consider important is "Improvement of Membership Services and Website Content." We must create membership

benefits that are worth the annual membership fee. To this end, we have begun to implement a multifaceted approach, including establishing a committee to seek the views of our members, who come from a number of specialties, so as to be able to deliver services tailored to their needs. Furthermore, via our website, we are pursuing initiatives that include not only disseminating information to our members, but also utilizing video content to showcase ICU doctors, who have become a more familiar presence in the public's eyes amid the spread of COVID-19."

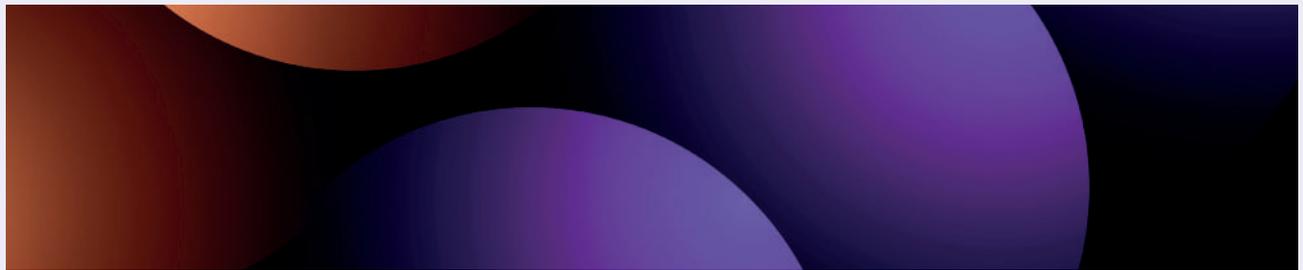
The JSICM brings together ICU doctors who are the last line of defense against COVID-19. The powerful message that the Society delivers to its members - that "no ordeal is unsurmountable" - is exactly what unites them and convince them to retain their membership, as they continue the fight against the virus in ICUs.

IAPCO represents today 137 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 info@iapco.org \ www.iapco.org



Creating a Community of Practice

Greg O'Dell, President of AIPC and CEO of Events DC, and **Sven Bossu**, CEO of AIPC, explain how AIPC's core activities will always be to support the global community of convention centres – and what the association has done over the last few months to retain existing and get new members.



Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. In the case of AIPC, the international association of convention centres, this community consists of the CEOs of convention centres worldwide, sharing one passion: delivering excellence. As the notion of excellence is rapidly evolving in a changing business environment, AIPC is adapting the way it services its community to retain and grow membership.

This year's AIPC Annual Conference had Elevation as a theme, reflecting the ambition of the members to re-open for organized events and to bring these events to a higher level. The messages given by the different speakers and during the panel discussions were very consistent: our industry will thrive again.

At the same time, we need to remain very agile, and customer focused, because event organizers are searching for new ways to connect with their communities and are looking at venues, destinations, and services suppliers for guidance on how to do so successfully. Continuous change will become even more inherent to the management of convention centres and will touch all aspects: from facility design to business models. In addition, our future needs to be a sustainable one and during the conference, the G3 Alliance (comprising UFI, the association for the exhibition industry, ICCA, the international congress and conference association, and AIPC) announced they launched an initiative which will lead to the creation of an industry wide roadmap to become carbon neutral.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR AIPC MEMBERS?

First, it means that the management of convention centres has a lot of plates spinning: engaging with organizers, convincing investors, pleading with authorities, motivating staff and keeping the lights on by attracting new type of business – just to name a few.

Second, conventions centres are in the process of (sometimes fundamentally) reviewing their business models. In some cases, it is about integrating digital services in the overall value proposal, in others it is about giving (parts of) their facility an entirely different purpose.

Third, talent is more needed than ever in order to turn all these challenges into opportunities and make the community of convention centres thrive again.

And the 18-month COVID-19 crisis has not enhanced the reputation of the event industry as an attractive place to work in. So, attracting, growing and retaining talent is a true challenge.

Before going any further, we do want to take the opportunity to express our admiration for the way convention centres are dealing with these challenges. The level of creativity and innovation have truly reached new summits and in addition, congress venues have stepped up in their role of community bridge-builder, by transforming themselves first in hospitals, then in testing facilities and now into vaccination centres. The role of convention centres in dealing with the pandemic challenges should indeed not be underestimated and it makes us extremely proud to represent this community.

IMPACT ON AIPC

Obviously, all the above has had an impact on AIPC. Activities such as the Annual Conference or the AIPC Academy – a one-week boot camp for convention centre professionals – had to be revisited or simply postponed. At the same time new needs emerged. Convention centres, together with the other stakeholders in the event value chain, were seeking for ways to address the challenges which came with COVID-19.

Almost naturally, AIPC partnered with UFI and ICCA to create best practices guides, covering the different phases of the pandemic with the latest guide covering the best practices related to being a vaccination centre. These valuable resources were produced in record time, based on the combined knowledge of members of the three associations (G3) and were put at the disposal of the entire industry. Regional associations took it on them to translate the guide into local languages, which resulted in some cases to be considered as the official standard to apply.

Next to best practices, there was also a clear need to advocate the case of the organized events. Here also, AIPC partnered with UFI and ICCA, to align messages and to express concerns and recommendations with one voice – unfortunately not resulting in the same type of impact as the best practices guides.

BEING MORE STRATEGIC

All this was tactical however and a more strategic plan was required at the level of AIPC. Under the leadership of the previous President of AIPC, Aloysius Arlando, the Board of Directors of AIPC initiated the transformation of the association two years before the pandemic with the onboarding of an association management company and, last year, the appointment of a CEO. Under the motto “never waste a good crisis”, Board and Management revisited the activities of AIPC and aligned costs with reduced revenues. This resulted into a very lean and agile organization, ready to take on the challenge of revamping the AIPC value proposal.

The core elements of this proposal have not and will not change. AIPC’s reason for existence is to support its global community of convention centres in addressing industry challenges by doing research, feeding into the two other core activities: education and defining quality standards.

To do so, format and content needed to be changed. We switched to digital courses on specific topics, addressing specific needs. An example was the Masterclass on Risk Management and Crisis Communication, which resulted in the creation of crisis teams at several participating organizations. We also did a lot of experimentation in terms of technology and formats – with a varying level of success – and always did so in full transparency with our members, sharing lessons learned while navigating uncharted territories.

One thing we quickly identified was the challenge of retaining talent at convention centres. To address this, a group of four professionals created in four months a brand-new talent program (Future Shapers), which was launched at the AIPC Annual Conference mid-July. It will offer 20 talented convention centre professionals a unique opportunity to learn, share and connect, bringing value to the participants, the organizations they work for and the full AIPC Community.

In parallel, we also re-engaged with our business partners, leveraging the knowledge they have by creating discussion platforms on topics like technology, design, or business development, which proved to be enriching for both members and business partners. A great outcome of this was the presentation of “The Convention Centre of the Future” by Adam Paulitsch, architect at Populous during the AIPC Annual Conference – a concept fully based on input received from discussion with the AIPC members.

So similar to our members, a lot of spinning plates for AIPC – and many more to come. Our ambition is clear: provide more and tangible value to our members by providing resources allowing them to come stronger out of this challenging period and become once again the drivers for innovation, collaboration and global trade. A true community of practice, delivering excellence.

This article was contributed by Greg O'Dell and Sven Bossu for AIPC, with which Boardroom has a special partnership. 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.
www.aipc.org





Business events are
just about dates, re
anymore. As the n
begins rising from
now all about safe
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Hybrid Strength

By combining digital tools and innovative campaign strategies, Seoul is keeping associations engaged no matter where they're located on the globe.

Words Lane Nieset

The capital city of South Korea has earned a few accolades as a world-class business events destination. Last year, Seoul ranked 15th among ICCA host cities, was the third Asian city to win ICCA BMA—and first domestically—and was selected as the world's third-largest host city of international conferences for its fifth consecutive year by the UIA. If the pandemic proved anything, it showed that even in times of crisis, Seoul's resilience and innovative spirit will find a solution to continue boosting its blossoming events industry.

As a way to engage with the associations, the Seoul Convention Bureau organised an online shopping promotion in July in partnership with Seoul MICE Alliance

(SMA), which included 13 SMA members from four categories—unique venue, entertainment, transportation and hotel—including Courtyard Marriott Seoul Namdaemun, Courtyard Marriott Seoul Times Square, E-Land Cruise, Floating Island Convention, Four Points by Sheraton Seoul (Guro), Golden Blue Marina, Lotte World, N Seoul Tower, Korea House, Seoul Garden Hotel, Seoul Tour Bus Travel Service, Swiss Grand Hotel and Trick Eye Museum.

"This year's trending topic for Seoul MICE Alliance is 'Sustainable Transformation ON,' in the context of encouraging members to overcome the coronavirus crisis together through the sustainable transformation," explains Jihyun Kim, director of the MICE

Planning team at the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO). *"We will take the lead in the proactive transformation of the MICE ecosystem by stepping up the COVID-19 containment service for hybrid events, upgrading the virtual Seoul venue, and developing and supporting the 'new normal' contents."*

The promotion was on one of Korea's major shopping channels and included livestream shopping and exclusive experiences like yacht packages from Golden Blue Marina, as well as restaurant vouchers and city tour bus tickets, and was intended to show the challenging situation the industry is facing to the public. As Kim puts it: *"The MICE industry around the world is in an unprecedented crisis due*



to the pandemic. Despite the challenges, this online shopping promotion was an excellent opportunity to promote MICE industry to the public and make known the difficult state, nevertheless. We will maintain our effort of proactively seeking new ways to support the industry and our SMA members.”

VIRTUAL REALITY

The 66th IPSF World Congress—the first private international conference held on Virtual SEOUL—was also recently held through Virtual Seoul and via Zoom (at Dongguk University Seoul campus). The event drew nearly 2,000 students from around the globe. As Cho Mi-Sook, director of the Tourism Policy Division, puts it: *“Although the MICE industry, where face-to-face contact is important, is shrinking due to the prolonged pandemic, we are actively promoting MICE Seoul, by taking advantage of our status as IT powerhouse and charming virtual images of MICE city.”*

Seoul also recently held the Virtual MICE Show: SEOUL LIVE ON in collaboration with SMA members to show international planners and buyers how STO can support events and continue the transformation to the digital business model through hybrid formats via an online virtual venue, online booths in the metaverse space and live-commerce. Seoul’s landmarks—Changdeokgung Palace, Sebitseom Island and DDP—served as a backdrop for the online, 3D event platform. The event connected 107 organizations from eight countries with local MICE businesses and prepared virtual field programs for those who can’t visit in person. For example, 360-degree VR videos showcased 61 spots around the city, including iconic hotels and unique venues, while games like cooking gimpap at Gyeongbokgung Palace offered another type of digital engagement.

“Unlike the offline MICE show at the existing exhibition booths, this virtual MICE show provides a very effective way to introduce and promote the various visualized materials of the hotel through a completely one-on-one session with each customer,” explains participant Kaylee Jo, sales manager of Fairmont Ambassador Seoul. *“We’re expecting to form positive relationships with leading overseas companies and PCOs, which has been very difficult due to the pandemic.”*

Suzu Kim, general manager of FNF Korea Travel & DMC, agrees, saying that the advantage of a virtual show like this is that the burden of business travel is removed. *“In the past, to participate in events such as the MICE Show, I had to fly for several hours, and I started preparing for a business trip the days before the show and planning for the days after the trip at the same time.”*

Kim explains. *“There were many difficult days due to much energy spent for the trip. But now, participating in online events like the Virtual Mice Show, I think the best thing is that you can spend more time and energy exclusively for the event.”*

SUPPORT SYSTEM

As a response to the prolongment of the pandemic and to help staff that might experience stress due to it, STO has introduced psychological counseling for tourism and MICE companies feeling the “Corona Blue.” Two counselors are working to provide group counseling for companies to help with communication skills, conflict resolution and teambuilding activities. Salin, Hyunjoo Kwak, a senior researcher who participated in group counselling, says that *“recognizing how my colleagues differ from one another has helped me understand my colleagues and get to know myself as well. It was good because through the program, we many areas that we didn’t know or know very well so we can develop closer relationships forward.”*

The Seoul Tourism and MICE Business Center, which opened in 2019 and has since expanded and moved to the seventh floor of Seoul Tourism Plaza, will also include psychological healing programmes and offer business advice to assist associations in understanding and tackling major issues in the tourism and events industries, as well as offer free online education twice a year.

Contact

convention@sto.or.kr \
 www.miceseoul.com



ONLINE MEETING AT SEOUL TOURISM PLAZA

The Global Value of the Tropics

The health crisis has turned the focus of business meetings to the improvement of communities, small or big, remote or not. Associations are looking more and more for event destinations off the beaten track to bring knowledge, inclusion, and awareness to second- and third-tier destinations. Cairns, in the northeast of Australia, is a city ready to share its expertise on agribusiness, aviation, education, renewable energy, tourism and tropical health with the associations that choose to come to its shores.

Words Vicky Koffa

Located in tropical Far North Queensland and the gateway to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Cairns has become an important centre for the surrounding area. Its seaport and busy international airport help connect the city to the rest of Australia and the world. Short walking distances within the city and substantial meeting venue infrastructure for all kinds of events - like the award-winning and recently expanded Cairns Convention Centre - are part of the charm of this modern waterfront city.

However, the real value for associations lies within the city's expertise in a wide range of sectors. These key industries do not just offer financial and academic progress for Cairns, but also unique knowledge to the rest of the world because of the tropical location of the city.

Aviation is one of the main drivers in the city with a thriving airport which facilitates the transportation of millions of people and goods every year, hence contributing to trade and tourism. Cairns

Airport is also the base for the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS), one of the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical organisations in the world, which offers medical help for those living in remote and rural locations rapidly. Academically speaking, Cairns Aviation Skills Centre and CQUniversity Aviation Campus, also located at the airport, offer aircraft maintenance engineering courses. Forward-looking projects like the development of a business case for an advanced, composite fibre manufacturing and repair facility sponsored by the State Government paint the future of the sector in the region.

Taking a closer look into the **academic world**, Cairns wins the impressions once again. James Cook University consistently ranks as one of the top universities in the world, joined by CQUniversity and the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM). The academic world in Cairns often opens to the business world to create products and processes with real commercial application that can



CAIRNS CONVENTION CENTRE

drive economic growth; this is the case with the JCU Ideas Lab, which aims to develop the innovation ecosystem in Far North Queensland by enabling regional digital transformation. The city's motto seems to be 'Education for all', since there are educational programs to reach remote indigenous communities developing alternative learning opportunities.

Cairns is surrounded by nature, with water, wind and sun being its driving force; no wonder the city has a high interest when it comes to the development of



renewable energy. Advancing solar power technology, AC (alternative current) Solar Warehouse specializes in solar and energy storage technologies which are not only environmentally friendly, but safer than DC (direct current). The state has also invested heavily in wind power, making Cairns a major world player for **renewable energy** and reducing living costs. A major project has been the Portagrid units - modular, transportable containers which ensure energy generation and storage and a continuous supply of power that can be shipped anywhere around the world. This guarantees easily accessible energy to remote places, farmers and areas with damaged networks.

The main economic sector in the region is by far **tourism**: in fact, the industry contributes to approximately 20% of jobs. The location offers itself for 'must do' things with two world heritage listed sites - the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics Rainforest. However, the city's academics have dived deeper, with research exploring, for example, ways in which tourism can be more dementia friendly, and how humor can affect tourists' experience making them more considerate of their surroundings. Sustainable tourism is clearly on the rise, as students are encouraged towards modern management methods and agritourism grows by the day.

Life sciences play a major role in a remote tropical place like Cairns; diseases like malaria and tuberculosis are a threat to the local population and not only. The Australian Institute of

Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) based at James Cook University has made advancements in research against such tropical diseases. A high-tech laser microscopy imaging model allowing scientists to watch immune cell behavior in real-time, a new test that detects the magnetic properties of malaria-infected blood and a vaccine that protects against all five species of the Malaria parasite are bright examples of the Institute's work. Benefiting the community on a different level, women-specific research in travel medicine is also examined by AITHM members.

A fertile land like Queensland could not but thrive with **agricultural products**. Mainly fruit - bananas, mangoes, avocados, pineapples - but also vegetables are grown using cutting-edge techniques and in collaboration with Growcom, the Queensland's peak industry body for horticulture. Innovative solutions like Nutrolock™, a natural, organic process that transforms raw product into powder form in a fast, efficient process, promoting sustainability and circular economy. Aquaculture could not but be a key factor in the industry, as Cairns is an important fishing port. Again, James Cook University offers research for sustainable food production through the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture (CSTFA).

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Resilience in the European Capital

Capital of 500 million Europeans, a multicultural population and heritage with the most diverse styles, a contagious creativity tinged with surrealism and humor, a certain sociable and epicurean art de vivre... there are many facets to Brussels. All of them are true, but none of them encompasses its true and unique character. As it's emerging from lockdowns – just like pretty much all its destination peers – and preparing to be the 2030 European Capital Culture, Brussels is on the road to recovery, and association meetings are part of it.

Words Remi Deve



A city of many dimensions, both green and urban, equally industrial and cultural, Brussels has been attracting international and European associations for some time now, having made the strategic decision to be the major European gateway for more than 2,400 organizations. Helping them achieve their international business goals is a top priority: Brussels joined a few years ago Washington, Dubai and Singapore in the Global Association Hubs Partnership to help associations grow in the world's key regions and serve their overseas members.

ADDED ATTRACTION

The presence of the European Union, NATO, 15,000 lobbyists, more than 1,000 press correspondents, regular summits of the 28 heads of state, as well as the many facilities such as the AISBL status, good universities and hospitals, its central geographical position and accessibility, the professional services and the presence of the FAIB (Federation of European and International Associations established in Belgium) and the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE) have definitely added to the

attraction of Brussels. The capital of Europe also regularly makes the top of the Union of International Associations (UIA) rankings, ahead of many bigger rivals.

As Brussels is showcasing its resilience, being born again, tourism – and business tourism – is part of the plan. Of course, things can't really go back to the way they were pre-COVID: the strategy for the future of the tourism sector is set to stimulate a dual transition towards a more sustainable and smarter sector, also benefitting the city's residents. This will lead to the development of safe and seamless tourism experiences powered by investment in venues, digitalization (data sharing, multimodal travel) and greener and more inclusive and accessible holidays (eco-tourism).

In this regard, Brussels has many cards to play. The smart city and mobility programmes of the Brussels Capital Region are steadily being put in place, with new applications, digital investments and an increasing share of cycling paths and public transport development. Meanwhile, the Green Key label has been awarded to many of its meeting venues, and Brussels' hotel offer continues to grow, with the opening of the Residence Inn by Marriott at Brussels Airport, Moxy Hotel in Ixelles, Hotel Avenue Louise by Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn Express Grande Place, Juliana Hotel Brussels, Corinthia Hotels Limited and DoubleTree by Hilton. New meeting venues include Brussels Airport Company's Skyhall for up to 2000 people, the Gare Maritime and Maison de la Poste conference centre at Tour & Taxis, and Comet Meetings building in the business quarter Louise.

RETURN OF MEETINGS

This summer, Brussels has seen the return of large open-air events, such as music festivals, like newcomer Arena5, and popular sport events, such as the Memorial Van Damme in athletics or BXL cycling tour, as well as in-house trainings, business conferences and scientific congresses. Case in point: the NATO Summit was successfully held last June.

There is an understanding that business events are no longer about space and room nights anymore, but about security and transparency. The Brussels Health and Safety Label was recently deployed and applies to all operators in the tourism, hospitality, events and cultural sector. Its objective is to put the necessary measures related to sanitary safety aspects undertaken by



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the organization towards its staff and visitors. The label has a certification process and the list of those who have obtained it is constantly updated.

"We will continuously be working to improve the experience of trade fair and congress participants," says Elisabeth Van Ingelgem, Director visit.brussels Association & Convention Bureau. "Brussels, being the world capital of international associations, is a city of many possibilities: our job is to promote the opportunities to organize meetings in our destination, in view of several new European challenges, such as the Green Deal, health, education, architecture and urbanism, artificial intelligence and technological evolution. Additionally, we are currently analyzing the possibility of setting up, within the sector, an incubator for the creation of new events."

STRONG NETWORK

For this, Brussels can count on a strong network of ambassadors, who have been in recent years instrumental in attracting conferences to the city. In fact, the Ambassadors Programme which the Convention Bureau created in 2015 is entering a new phase. *"Its five years of existence have been extremely satisfactory,"* explains Van Ingelgem. *"We've recently had a good discussion about the future with our Ambassadors. Now, our experience allows us to be more specialized when we target the medical sector, social sciences, territorial development or new technologies, which is aligned with Brussels key economic and scientific clusters."*

As Brussels is steadily developing and continuing to adapt its international dimension within the current circumstances, it shows how resilient it is, seizing opportunities and making sure its strategy will benefit both its residents and visitors in the long term.

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Building a Principality's Sustainable Future

Monaco is steadfastly stepping beyond its reputation as a glamorous destination to take its rightful position as a leader in the global fight for a more sustainable and healthy planet. If the pandemic has taught some valuable lessons, one is that things cannot really go back to how they were pre-COVID. In that regard, the Principality has solid cards to play as it positions itself as a destination that puts sustainability, in the broadest sense of the term, at the forefront.

Words Remi Deve

For Monaco, protecting the environment has been a central concern for many years. In the early 20th century, Prince Albert I had the foresight to encourage His people to *"raise awareness, love and protect the oceans."* This commitment has continued to intensify, all the more so since the accession of H.S.H. Prince Albert II who is pursuing a strong policy in support of sustainable development at a national and international level.

Therefore the Sovereign founded the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation immediately upon taking his role to support public and private projects including limiting greenhouse gas emissions, developing renewable energies, protecting biodiversity, managing water resources and combating desertification.

AMBITIOUS TARGETS

The Foundation's efforts stand out for their ambitious targets – the Principality will need to cut emissions four times faster than the current rate to achieve its goals – as well as a commitment to achieving them with practical initiatives. Monaco's unique positioning is part of what makes it such a powerhouse in this area. Its sustainability efforts extend beyond the 2-km country itself; it has a global plan with a real sustainable vision.

Nationally, the initiatives in place focus on biodiversity, resource management and the reduction of greenhouse gases. In this

respect, the Sovereign has committed the Principality to reducing its greenhouse gas by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

The Government is leading the way with a strong whole-of-a-city approach - that includes the entire Monegasque society and visitors in the major energy transition - which means adopting new habits and evolving as a society. If Monaco has been blessed with economic growth over the past few years, the whole intention of the residents and government is to give back, especially in these challenging times when things don't look that they can go back as they were before.

ROLE TO PLAY

In this area, the meetings industry has an instrumental role to play. Altogether, the Monegasque tourist sector is dedicated to applying the high environmental and sustainability standards instilled by the Prince's Government and all the tourism stakeholders are committed to a more responsible tourism. The Monaco Tourism and Convention Authority and its partners work hand in hand to implement innovative solutions for optimal resource management.

As an example, Monaco has 2202 certified bedrooms (Green Globe, Green Key, Planet 21) ie 88% of hotel capacity, while 97% of hotels have signed the National Pact for Energy Transition (i.e. 2,418 bedrooms). Green transport is promoted thanks to the development of an energy efficient public transport network and effective intermodal connection solutions. For instance, the water-bus which allows you to cross the main harbour, connecting Monaco-Ville and Monte Carlo is electric and solar-powered, and the buses run by the Compagnie des Autobus de Monaco which covers the whole territory are powered by di-ester or electricity.

Awareness-raising activities are also regularly organized with themes such as waste sorting, fighting food waste, protecting biodiversity, etc. Meanwhile, visitors can dine at the first 100-percent organic Michelin star restaurant Elsa, enjoy a tour of the organic urban gardens run by Terrae, or have a stroll through one of Monaco's many parks and gardens, which cover no less than 20% of the Principality.

ACROSS THE WHOLE SUPPLY CHAIN

The sustainability of Monaco and commitment to its efforts might be one of the most important factors in drawing associations to its shores today. Monaco is part of the GDS Index, the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for destinations around the world.

The attraction to Monaco's congress centre, the Grimaldi Forum, goes beyond the history, quality, affordability, stability and beauty of the destination. The venue has a strong sustainability policy where visitors have seen the use of eco-friendly materials, photovoltaic panels on the rooftop, and sustainably-powered air conditioning at work.

Grimaldi Forum Monaco was one of Europe's first congress and culture centres to receive the ISO 14001:2015 environmental management certification in 2008, and this certification was renewed at the end of last year. In this regard, the Grimaldi Forum Monaco is constantly optimizing its environmental management system. This is based on continuous improvement, focusing on optimal sustainable water management, energy management, the sorting and recycling of its waste, an ecologically responsible



purchasing policy, good risk management and of course active communications.

In 2019, the venue even built a 2,500 sqm urban solar power plant on its roof, making it the Principality's leading energy producer. This initiative is in perfect harmony with the creation of the eco-district Mareterra, currently under construction, which will be adjacent to the Grimaldi Forum. With an annual production of 640,000 kWh, this is equivalent to supplying 170 Monegasque households with electricity all year round.

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Going Hybrid in Switzerland

After a year of developing digital technologies to replicate—and strengthen—in-person events, Switzerland is showing the staying power of hybrid events post-pandemic.

Words Lane Nieset

“Hybrid” has been one of the big buzz words in the events industry over the past year as destinations have grappled with how to safely meet in person, while still engaging with delegates who aren’t able to travel. Many venues have set up streaming services, and destinations have had test runs with both virtual and hybrid events. But in light of new variants, travel restrictions and vaccination delays, is hybrid the way forward for events, even in the “new normal”? In Switzerland, venues across the country are placing hybrid events at the forefront of their offering by integrating the necessary infrastructure and technical equipment to make the process successful straight from the start.

Take, for example, some of the pioneering events that took place last fall at Messe Basel, one of the city’s newer landmarks whose hall complex was developed by Herzog & de Meuron. Basel—which sits at the meeting point of Switzerland, France and Germany—is Europe’s No. 1 life science cluster, thanks to global players like Novartis and Roche, and hosts major fairs like the world’s watch fair HourUniverse and Art Basel.

Art Basel Hong Kong, the Asian offshoot, held a hybrid event in May 2021 that featured a line-up of 104 galleries from Asia and abroad, the majority of which participated with a satellite stand—a new concept developed to support gallerists unable to attend in person. The event was successful, which offers hope for the 50th edition of Art Basel in its namesake city, which will take place the 23 to 26 September 2021 and feature digital platforms like online viewing rooms, which bring together thousands of artists and artwork by connecting galleries, artists and art enthusiasts.

In addition to looking to sister events, Geneva, Zurich and Lausanne have joined the Hybrid City Alliance, which was launched in December 2020. The partnership between CVB offices around the globe is intended to help share best practices and assist event organisers in planning international events safely and efficiently using the multiple city hub format, drawing on the collective expertise of the alliance.

FUTURE PLANNING

Messe Basel is looking to some of its first digital events from last fall to continue tweaking and perfecting hybrid events in the future. The Annual Meeting of the German, Austrian and Swiss Societies for Hematology and Medical Oncology (DGHO), which took place over three days in October, brought together 5,200 participants to the online platform, while the Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting (ABIM), held at the Congress Center Basel in October, had 500 registrations and received more than 1,200 logins over the course of the three-day event. CLINAM, the twelfth European and Global Summit for Nanomedicine, also saw similar numbers, but for this event, both the speakers and attendees participated virtually.

What these events showed organisers is that even though they’re virtual, participants still need breaks and shorter sessions create more engagement online. And even though attendees couldn’t meet in person, they still wanted online interaction, which requires staffing and supervision of the chats to create a strong virtual presence.



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CREATIVE NETWORKING

As a way to replicate the types of in-person activities at congresses, Zurich Convention Bureau has designed virtual teambuilding offerings like gourmet online cooking classes, online wine tastings and apéro boxes to make socializing via Zoom more appealing. In the Federal City of Bern, meanwhile, known for its public administration and education cluster (it's where Albert Einstein studied and worked), digital impact network and ICT sector, and finance and banking, many venues have set up streaming studios and are working with organizers on how to make a digital or hybrid event successful through the use of tools like chats, live surveys and virtual coffee breaks.

In October 2020, BERNEXPO, home to the largest open-air grounds in Switzerland, hosted the nine-day gaming and e-sport event HeroFest/SwitzerLAN. It brought together 150 people onsite and more than 300,000 online participants, and there were 1.6 million minutes watched in total. Another great example of a successful hybrid event is the two-day Schweizer Implantat Kongress for dentists from Switzerland and other German-speaking countries, which was held in November 2020 at Kursaal

Bern Arena. The event gathered 21 speakers, eight hosts and 12 technicians onsite, in addition to 700 online participants, and was recorded and available for replay for a fee through the end of March 2021.

As Benjamin Blaser, chairman of the board and director of business development at Bern-based technology provider Newsroom Communication AG, *"In my opinion, hybrid will be the prevailing solution in the future, with a limited number of participants on-site and a complementing digital component. This format will also endure in post-COVID times as it has many advantages, such as lower CO2 emissions, fewer costs, and less travel time for the participants, for example. However, people miss the networking aspect, which is why we are convinced that entirely virtual event formats will be the exception."*

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

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Helping Associations Plan Safe Meetings

Hosting meetings and events in a world affected by COVID-19 has required major adjustments on the part of planners, venues and destinations. As the world gradually emerges from lockdowns, safety has to be ensured at every level of the event planning process. In this context, Taiwan is releasing a guide that will help build a favorable environment for meetings, conferences and congresses, initiating an industry reboot under what is now known as the new normal.

Words Remi Deve



Business events are definitely not just about dates, rates, and space anymore. As the meetings industry begins rising from the ashes, it is now all about safety, efficiency, and transparency. If in-person meetings and events may have been on pause during many months all over the world, innovation has been in full swing: in this respect, professionals across the whole supply chain had to find permanent solutions to problems the pandemic brought up, discovering new opportunities to be more efficient at a greater scale of business.

The meetings that are taking place in person all have virtual or hybrid components—and it looks like it will stay that way. Planners have found that indeed they can be more inclusive, can reach more people, and can do so more safely and effectively.

Having a safe protocol in place is a crucial element for any destination that is preparing itself for a new, sustainable MICE future. In that regard, one has to stay up-to-date with all local, state, and federal guidelines to ensure that all protocols are being met in order to make meetings and events safe.

But having the right policies is not the only important thing—communication is also key and any initiatives in this area have to be clearly conveyed to event professionals, starting with association planners.

STEPPING UP THE GAME

As vaccination campaigns progress across the world, bringing clarity to the recovery timeline, Taiwan is stepping up its game and going to launch a much-anticipated Taiwan Safe Meetings & Exhibitions Guide.

Building on ICCA's Market Intelligence Report on COVID-19 Affected Meetings, they have recognized the importance of having—and communicating—a clear plan about hosting safe meetings in Taiwan.

Senthil Gopinath, CEO of the International Congress and Convention Association, said: *"We encourage our member-suppliers and associations to be pragmatic in these challenging times, but to also share positive messages where possible. Big events are continuing to take place in their destinations, despite worries and complications brought from the COVID-19 outbreak. To boost the meetings industry during this difficult period, we should send out encouraging messages to show we are united, resilient and confident as an industry. Although we are in a period of uncertainty, we must look forward and proceed as best we can, working together to ensure all member-suppliers and association's well-being and safety is at the forefront of our decision making, while trying to continue with upcoming activities."*

Embracing ICCA's vision—actually taking things further—MEET TAIWAN plans to release the Guide as a reference for domestic and foreign organizers who intend to organize MICE events in the country, providing them with recommendations in all safety-related areas.

The content will consist of all the information planners need to respect Taiwan's regulatory environment and the sanitary measures in place in venues that are operated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It will be broken down into three

points of views: that of the organizers, participants and venues. The ultimate aim is to co-create a safe and secure Taiwan MICE environment for companies and organizations all across the value chain.

DEDICATED WEBSITE

Additionally, in order for the information to be up-to-date and reliable, MEET TAIWAN is planning to launch a dedicated website, with state-of-the-art interactivity. By using, for instance, a question-and-answer system, the potential 'health' risk of any event can be determined and 'safe' solutions can be suggested accordingly.

In doing so, MEET TAIWAN, whose role is to ensure the country is on the international meetings map, will promote Taiwan as a "Safe MICE Destination", an effort that has yielded fruit over the past few months. By showcasing the concrete actions that can be taken for MICE events in Taiwan, the governmental organization plays an instrumental role in making sure the industry recovers as quickly as possible from a situation that has been lasting far too long.

Contact

www.meettaiwan.com

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Stress-Free Events in France's Second Congress City

Both the second-largest metropolitan area and the second-busiest convention city in France, Lyon is a UNESCO World Heritage city which has been attracting the attention of international associations for some time. The good news is that Lyon Convention Bureau has just made life easier for organizers who are planning an event in 2021, with a very special Business Welcome Charter.

Situated at the confluence of the Rhone and Saone rivers, considered by many as the French Capital of gastronomy, Lyon distinguishes itself as a major European metropolitan area all the while offering the charms of a French city. Conveniently located at the crossroads of Europe, its central location offers easy access to many key European cities, thanks to an airport that has been carbon neutral since 2017, and to good intercontinental connections via the TGV high-speed train.

Home to the 1,500 decision centres and 8 competitiveness clusters, Lyon offers a vibrant and dynamic labor market, all the while revealing the beauty of its roman foundations building on the advantages offered by its two hills and two rivers. Over the past decades Lyon has been

performing well in four key areas, namely sustainability, accessibility, digitalization and cultural heritage. It was also recently awarded the coveted title of 'European Capital of Smart Tourism'.

For those wanting to organize an event in Lyon in 2021, the Business Welcome Charter, which has been created by Lyon Convention Bureau and its partners, ensures that it can be done both risk- and stress-free. After all, these circumstances are unprecedented and it's only normal special arrangements can be made for your conference, meeting or congress.

In this context - and until 31 December 2021 - Lyon can take care of, as the Charter puts it, *"everything: your transport, your accommodation and your piece of mind."* Lyon's hoteliers are for instance imposing

less restrictive terms and conditions for existing bookings and free cancellation up to 30 days before arrival is possible - there are 18,000 rooms in all categories in the Lyon Metropolitan Region. Transport can also be taken care of, with preferential rates for delegates when in Lyon.

Additionally, Lyon Convention Bureau and the Lyon Metropolitan Region have developed a commitment charter, co-signed by all business events stakeholders in Lyon, guaranteeing compliance with health regulations. As a member of the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index, the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for destinations around the world, Lyon also promotes a local, environmentally friendly, social and inclusive economy. Last but not least, some of the Convention Bureau's partners are ISO 20121 certified, and can offer guidance and best practice to help you manage your event while controlling its social, economic and environmental impact.



HÔTEL DIEU

For more info on the Welcome Charter:
pro.lyon-france.com/Tourisme-d-affaires/charte-d-accueil-tourisme-d-affaires-de-lyon

For more on Lyon's sustainable efforts
www.lyon-france.com/je-decouvre-lyon/lyon-et-sa-metropole-s-engagent

BOARDROOM ADVISORY BOARD



Silke Schlinnertz

Head of Growth,
Euroheat & Power

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 Fontanella

Director of Operations and
Finance, International Studies
Association (ISA)

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.



Mohamed Mezghani

Secretary General,
UITP: Advancing Public
Transport

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 R.
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American Association for the
Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD)

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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More information

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Over 25 years ago, the VGF was initiated by the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC), the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, and some twenty organisations in the Dutch conference industry.