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Digital Transformation is Just a Buzzword

'Digital transformation', 'agile organizations', 'nimble' - these are words that we keep hearing and read about. For associations to remain relevant, they need to transform digitally, especially in this volatile environment. Those who don't know how to face the digital challenges of today's world won't simply be there tomorrow. But is digital transformation a genuine challenge, or simply a buzzword?

According to Nathan Furr and Andrew Shipilov, professors at INSEAD, a non-profit business school widely considered as one of the most prestigious in the world, digital transformation "*simply means adapting an organization's strategy and structure to capture opportunities enabled by digital technology.*"

If the new businesses born in today's digital world don't need to transform, it's because they are born and grow digital. For older ones, adopting digital ways of working can be a huge challenge. Digital transformation isn't just about using cloud servers. It is about new products and services, new ways of being in business and new ways of thinking.

And this is where we make our case. Would digital transformation be purely a matter of moving with the times?

A few years back, the main tools at our disposal to do business were our computers and to communicate were our phone, our fax machine or the postal service. When email first arrived in the 1990s, we found a whole new way of communicating. Did we call it digital transformation at the time? Not sure we did.

Of course, organizing a hybrid conference or offering services online only to your members is a bit more complicated than writing an email. But in today's digital world - where nobody knows what the future holds - the way we work goes hand in hand with the way technology allows us to do. And this may mean mindsets need to change to embrace innovative ways of working.

So instead of rambling about digital transformation all the time and how associations of all kinds and sizes need to embrace it, it might well be 'just' about changing mindsets.

Digital transformation isn't simply the implementation of cutting-edge technologies, no matter how hard or obscure they may appear. It's a new way of thinking about value, business models and member proposition. It requires a mindset that adopts a new way of operating by encouraging transformation at all levels of the organization.



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Building Back Better Series

Associations Advancing the Future



In the wake of the pandemic, associations are proving that now more than ever, they play an instrumental part in designing the future world we want to live in, one that is better capable of tackling pandemics and providing for populations of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. For example, the pandemic showed the limits of residential care systems and the need for better standards in terms of safety and wellbeing—especially in emergency situations.

Words Lane Nieset

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



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While healthcare was one of the more obvious sectors impacted by COVID-19, technology has also played a significant role, both in the midst and post-pandemic, as businesses look to long-term investments in AI, IoT, blockchain, and the cloud as part of their recovery plan. In the latest piece of *Boardroom's* Building Back Better series, we'll take a deeper dive into some of the ways associations are assisting in future-planning in the wake of the pandemic to build a new—and more sustainable—world.

DRIVE TOWARD DIGITALIZATION

As the pandemic sent the world into lockdown, in-person meetings were quickly replaced with Zoom chats and video conferences. Companies quickly embraced digitalization as they struggled to stay afloat and adjust to the rapidly changing global environment. In a recent article on the World Economic Forum (part of *The Davos Agenda*), five agents of change were specifically pinpointed to help Europe's post-pandemic recovery. Accelerated digitalization is the first, since more than 90% of firms have increased remote work and 60% have increased online purchases or sales. In the article, it says that many executives reported they moved 20 to 25 times faster than they did pre-pandemic for things such as building supply-chain redundancies, improving data security, and increasing the amount of usage of advanced technologies in operations.

Not only are companies looking to adopt new technology like AI, data analytics and IoT in the "age of data," a larger percentage are anticipated to make technology a partner in areas like risk management, security, and regulatory compliance; customer experience; and decision-making, according to a *survey conducted by the Cognizant Center for the Future of Work (CFoW)*. As the survey showed, companies need to "make digital competency the prime competency for everyone" and increase digital literacy and specialized skills, even for those who aren't specifically in the technology sector.

A similar sentiment is expressed in The Davos agenda article, which states: *"There must be a widespread effort to up- and reskill people to enable generations of workers and employees to benefit adequately from growth areas in sustainability and digital. According to the Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2020, an accelerated pace of automation could disrupt 85 million jobs by 2025, yet 97 million 'jobs of the future' could emerge with a new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms."*

ENHANCING EDUCATION

Digital transformation is also the main focus in the realm of higher education, where the *International Association of Universities* is working toward *strategic goals by 2022* to bridge divides in terms of access to knowledge and information by advocating for equity and solidarity between and within higher educational institutions and promoting the design of inclusive digital transformation strategies by encouraging and facilitating cooperation between higher education institutions, international, and national bodies.

The *ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning (ICT4IAL) project*—which worked with experts in education and ICT from

across Europe—is another example of how technology can assist in terms of equal opportunities and accessibility of learning, particularly for those with special educational needs.

As the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education put it: *"Providing information on and for learning so it is accessible to all users is crucial, as non-compliance creates a barrier for learners with disabilities that compounds their special educational needs. Key information providers within lifelong learning need to act as role models in the field of accessibility and ensure that all information and resources shared are as accessible as possible for users with and without special needs."*

DESIGN FOR ALL

According to a joint statement from *ANEC, AGE Platform Europe, and the European Disability Forum*, the pandemic showed the limits and flaws in residential care systems, and thereby challenged the way society thinks about age and aging. So what is the solution to improve the way society addresses aging and health care? For these organisations, principles based around a "design for all" mentality is key. *For Europe in particular, ANEC-AGE-EDF believe that "standards, if based on the principles of 'design for all' and used, can play an essential role in supporting everyone's right to equal access, autonomy and participation. 'Design for all' means designing products and services for as many consumers as possible, regardless of age and abilities."*

In addition to aging, another issue in the realm of health care was raised during the pandemic was chronic disease like obesity. *According to a statement from the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO)*, the COVID-19 pandemic *"is likely to have a significant impact on people on people with obesity... and the lockdowns imposed by many countries, combined with extensive efforts to isolate both vulnerable populations and people with diagnosed or suspected COVID-19 and to quarantine potential contacts, have many consequences for health behaviours and well-being."*

Following a similar mentality of access for all, associations like EASO are ensuring that those struggling with chronic disease like obesity have access to data and resources they need, such as the proper size equipment at health centres or virtual assistance like telemedicine when physical consultations aren't an option. *As EASO explains in the statement, "Our global ability to adapt to the demands of the pandemic will be determined by our willingness to develop resilient systems that are particularly protective of high-risk individuals and vulnerable populations."*

This is a sentiment that many associations seem to be adopting as we navigate the "new normal" and work to build back better and create a sustainable society for generations to come. As these associations show, technology and healthcare are two pillars that play a major role in this transformational shift in society, but in future articles in the Building Back Better series, *Boardroom* will continue to assess and analyse other sectors and the systems organisations putting in place to improve and enhance the world we're living in.

Associations in the World: Speaking Truth to Power

As part of the exclusive partnership between Boardroom and the Union of International Associations, **Cyril Ritchie**, UIA President, argues that associations have a duty to speak the truth: this will lead to efficient decision-making and better governance.

Let's begin by outlining some frameworks. Firstly, as regards nomenclature, I shall use the term 'associations' throughout, recognizing that associations occupy a vast and highly diversified field in which many names are in common use: non-governmental organization, civil society organization, third sector, voluntary agency, extra-governmental organization, community-based organization, stakeholder, non-state actor... What some intergovernmental bodies label 'partners' or major groups could also be included.

The second framework concerns the extraordinary range of activities of associations in the world, whatever the designated

name they use. An immense number of associations work day and night to promote "a good cause" - for example: gender equality, social justice, preserving the environment and combating climate change, protecting and housing refugees, humanitarian and disaster-relief interventions... and a thousand more good causes.

Innumerable associations in the world are also committed to combating "an evil cause" - racism, trafficking, gender-based violence, drug abuse, corruption and far too many more. Beyond these two very broad categories of association action, there are those that cover professional, scientific,



technical or trade union domains; and those active in promoting culture, heritage, faith, ethics, information and communications. Cooperatives are another special category, grouping millions of persons around the globe.

ASSOCIATION INDEPENDENCE

It is with these immensely variegated backgrounds in mind that I want to draw attention to some vital common factors of associations throughout the world. An association is essentially a grouping of individuals exercising their right to freely assemble; to freely determine their goals, their standards, and their internal structures and responsibilities; and to freely hold and express opinions, including on public policy. These fundamental freedoms are laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in subsequent United Nations Covenants, and in several regional Human Rights Conventions. They are the incontrovertible bases of association independence.

This independence does not in itself imply opposition to government policies or decrees, nor defiance of just laws. It reflects the inalienable rights of individuals, on their own or collectively, as they choose, to participate constructively in public policy deliberations, to contribute positively to decision-making by parliaments and authorities, and to hold governments to account and to ethical standards.

It is therein that we enter the area of associations' relationship to "power". The independence of associations is an inherent element of democracy and a contributing factor to the Rule of Law, the bedrock of human rights and social justice. The participatory democracy embodied by the existence of active and responsible associations - of all categories - is a complement to representative democracy embedded in parliaments that are freely and fairly elected on a recurring schedule. Associations do not in general represent electorates; they above all represent the cause or ideal or goal for which they are established, and which they pursue every day and every year.

IMPLICATIONS

What then is the implication of the words "Speaking truth to Power"? In some parts of the world, governments label themselves as "The Power". (Perhaps these are countries where free and fair elections are not the rule.) In other parts, national constitutions specify that "The People" are the ultimate Power, this being exercised through open elections and perhaps referenda. Even democratically-elected governments may lose touch with their electorate. Some may downplay parliamentary initiative and control. Some may prove unable or unwilling to achieve the societal goals that constituted the platform on which they were elected. Government leaders and officials may believe that only they have the "right answers",

only they have "the truth" and have no need to consult citizens and relevant associations.

Therein lies the need, and the justification, for associations to Speak Truth to Power. We all have our duty to contribute to the wellbeing of society, to good human relations, to social and economic justice. Because of the causes, ideals or goals that associations have freely adopted, we have not just the right but the duty to contribute to public policy discussions, each association on the basis of its members' competence, their experience, their availability, their willingness to Stand Up & Speak Up. Public policy is everyone's business. To those who may say that this is "political", my response is simple. Changing the world for the better - even only one step at a time - is plainly political.

I will give just two quite different illustrations of this thesis. Firstly: Abolishing patriarchal laws and practices that suppress women's rights is not just a juridical imperative, not just a humanitarian imperative, but an urgent political imperative. Secondly: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a body of eminent scientists basing their multi-year research and conclusions on inputs from many hundreds of other scientists. When the IPCC tells governments that climate change is real, is threatening and needs urgent action today, that is Science Speaking truth to Power, for we have all seen that governmental responses to impending climate chaos largely fall short of what science has clearly indicated to be needed. So Speaking Truth to Power is not just the prerogative of "political" associations but of scientists and many other academics and professionals.

To sum up: When competent and responsible associations - of whatever shape, form or purpose - mobilize their constituencies and their strengths to Speak Truth to Power, their input leads to better-informed decision-making by the authorities, and therefore to better governmental output. This enhanced output, whether in the form of new or amended laws or of more realistic decisions of the bureaucracy, is more likely to generate public support in the subsequent stages of implementation. Yet another reason for governments to welcome hearing the truth coming from outside the corridors of Power.

Cyril Ritchie has been President of the [Union of International Associations](http://www.uia.org) since 2017, he's also first Vice-President of CoNGO - [Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations](http://www.uia.org). More information on www.uia.org



We're Going to Need a Bigger Dictionary

International Advisor to the Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** makes the case for associations to adopt new language in order to drive a more imaginative reinvention agenda, and to open up deeper conversations with the destinations that host their conferences.

As the protagonists in iconic movie *Jaws* suddenly grasped the true scale of their quest, the tools at hand (and underfoot!) were revealed to be antiquated, waterlogged and undersized, and only a lucky bullet saved the day!

The adventures facing associations in the post-pandemic world are not quite so blood-curdling, but the risk is that we'll try to address future challenges and opportunities using the - inadequate and outdated - language of the past, when what we need is a grammar and vocabulary capable of articulating and debating new concepts, frameworks and ways of thinking.

THE ADJACENT POSSIBLE

Let's start talking about Serendipity, Exaptation and Co-option - methodologies for exploring and exploiting "the adjacent possible" within and beyond our communities, during events and 24/7/365. This language will help us bring together intellectual tribes with different yet potentially overlapping circles of know-how and knowledge, with different assumption-environments, with different default ways of thinking about problems: these Venn diagram intersections and inter-reactions can accelerate the speed of change and the discovery of novel



solutions from incremental to exponential! Imagine designing a conference or community engagement platform entirely around these concepts, and a whole new universe of possibilities opens up.

Tacit knowledge - that which isn't formally written down or catalogued, instead embedded in the wealth of experience and skills of our members and partners - is one of the most valuable and under-developed sources of unique value within any association. But what are associations doing to systematically unlock it? How many have even included the phrase on a Board agenda dedicated to knowledge exploitation strategy? If we're not talking about "tacit", we can't do anything to maximise its value.

Let's introduce concepts such as "nested communities." As Dianna Steinbach from ISSA, the Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association put it in a recent webinar: *"during the pandemic the customers of our members have become our customers"*; but why not go further, and recognize that the challenges facing our members' customers or clients or staff or patients will become each association's most pressing challenges and hottest conference topics. Some healthcare associations such as World Parkinson's Coalition have incorporated patients and patient-support groups at the heart of their strategy for many years, and many others are adding this element to their own events and advocacy communication, but this is really the tip of the iceberg. Every member of almost every association is potentially a gateway to a new circle of interested parties and interesting issues, which in turn leads on to other circles that potentially have value for and interest in the unique viewpoints and services of the association that sits at the centre.

Let's start talking about multilingualism, and start thinking about how multiple languages might transform an association's potential influence and engagement. Over recent decades we have sleepwalked into the assumption that English will forever rule

our member communications and at our events. But everyone is more articulate, technically accurate, and able to display their unique personality when they use their native tongue, and our events have increasingly self-selected for confidence in conversational English, disenfranchising uncounted masses who could benefit from our offerings.

We now have the interpretation and translation tools to allow any association to adopt a true multilingual strategy, whether translating reports and databases, transcribing huge video libraries, or enabling truly global access to content delivered from any corner of an association's global network. At the moment the Russian chapter's event content only circulates amongst the Russian-speakers; but why not open it up to everyone? This isn't just about making English language content from the annual congress available to Latin America and China! AI-driven live event interpretation tools like **Wordly** are one great solution, with 16 languages covered and more on the way, cloud-based human interpretation through companies like **Kudo** and **Interprefy** is another solution.

Association events and their component parts need new labels: Catalyst; Accelerator; SolutionFest; Problem-space investigation; Hackathon (OK, this one is not quite so new, but has never been widely adopted beyond the programming and engineering tribes).

Associations need to think far more creatively about their own names! Survey after survey indicates that most young people don't particularly want to "join associations," even if they care passionately about the association's Mission! And the thousands of new (online for now, face-to-face in future) communities of interest that are being born throughout the pandemic are certainly not calling themselves by this name, even though in truth that is exactly what they are. Once we change what we call ourselves, every other change becomes possible, because words have power, and language shapes minds.

LINGUISTIC LABELS

Others apart from associations are in the process of reinvention, and are developing new linguistic labels: the Strategic Alliance of National Convention Bureaux of Europe has just released a White Paper: "The Future Role & Purpose of Convention Bureaux". They described four elemental roles for the reinvented bureau of the future: Strategist, Facilitator, Expert and Communicator (I would add Advocate to this list).

But things get interesting when one starts to name potential subsidiary roles under each heading, which is where the action and interactions with associations will take place. For example, under "Strategist" one could include Anticipator, Imagineer, Ideacopyist, and Creator. Under "Expert" we can imagine Curator, Advisor, Guide and Guru, whilst "Facilitator" could contain Incubator, Enabler, Interpreter and Door-opener. "Communicator" can encompass Brand-building, Citywide Motivator, and Amplifier (of associations' messages, amongst others). What kind of conversations will associations hold with destination Imagineers? Think about the opportunities that an Incubator (of a brand-new association or never-before-conceived event) could unlock, once we all speak the same new conceptual language!

All the Global Association Hubs partner cities - Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC - are prominent amongst the destinations that are attempting to become fluent in the new languages of association impact-strategy and destination regenerative-development strategy. We look forward to some extraordinarily interesting conversations as we all expand our vocabularies!

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

Reducing Financial Risks for Associations

Some associations said it best. According to Hans H. Horsting, Secretary of the Foundation 25th International Congress of Vexillology in Rotterdam, “using the Pre-Financing & Guarantee Fund scheme gave us the much-needed financial backing for the organization of our international conference.” Lidwien Hollanders, M.A., organizer of the 21st Conference of the International Research Society for Children’s Literature in Maastricht said: “The VGF is a fantastic opportunity for a conference organizer to apply for a guarantee amount. Because of the VGF we do not have to worry as much about our income from registration fees.”

Interview Rémi Dévé

So at Boardroom, we wanted to know more about that Fund which can be so helpful for associations. Project leader Paul Gruijthuisen was happy to answer.

Can you explain what the Pre-Financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF) is about?

The Pre-Financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF) was set up in the late '80s by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC) and some 20 companies from the congress industry.

The idea behind the VGF is to create jobs and give an economic impulse to our national economy. The average spent of an international conference delegate is around €1.000- per conference (covering airfares, taxis, accommodation, gifts, drinks, food, etc.), so the VGF wants to stimulate as many conference organizers as possible to come to the Netherlands with their international conference.

It is my job to inform the different stakeholders (associations, PCOs, convention bureaux & sales departments in congress centres) on how the Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund can reduce financial risks for conference organisers coming to the Netherlands.

The VGF is actually a unique tool in Europe. As far as we know there is no similar fund that pre-finances conferences and gives

financial guarantees to planners, should they have a deficit at the end of the conference...

There are so many different topics on which conferences can be organized, but the academic playing field is enormously big and not always very transparent: we'd like to get our message across, but it's not always easy, even if we're only trying to help!

How does the VGF actually work?

As far as we know, conference organizers have 3 concerns: the first relates to the content, the second to logistics and the third to finances.

Regarding content, a conference organizer is usually a scientist or healthcare professional who has all the expertise and knowledge of the subject at hand. So, coming up with the right content is usually no problem.

Regarding logistics some associations have their own inhouse conference desk or organizing staff. If not, they can potentially hire the expertise and support of a PCO.

Regarding finances, there are a few uncertainties and challenges. Since the organization of a conference starts a few years in advance usually, the association might not have sufficient cash-flow to pre-pay any invoices they might receive for contracting a venue



or developing marketing tools. In order to help the association with that cash-flow we offer a free-of-charge and interest-free pre-financing scheme.

Also, the uncertainty every organizer can experience - especially during unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic - is the fact that the number of delegates might fluctuate, which makes it difficult to come up with a budget. Should you have fewer delegates than expected and therefore a loss on your conference budget, the VGF can make an agreement up front and take financial responsibility for that unforeseen loss. That's the Guarantee Scheme.

Both schemes can be combined.

Often we are asked why do you do this? Well, the answer to that question lies in the very *raison d'être* of our foundation. Reducing financial risks so organizers have fewer concerns when organizing a conference will hopefully contribute to their decision-making process and tilt the decision in favour of the Netherlands.

What are the criteria for applying to the VGF?

The conference needs to take place in the Netherlands obviously, and over multiple days. A majority of delegates must attend in person and not online, and there needs to be an exchange of knowledge. The organization and budget of the conference must

be set up by an association or person with verifiable experience in planning similar events. The application must be submitted eight months before the start of the conference. And the maximum amount of Pre-financing or Guarantee is €90,000.

The VGF works within the framework of an independent foundation and we work closely with the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, the various Dutch cities and regional convention bureaus and, of course, congress centres and hotels.

The good thing is that some Dutch cities can offer additional subsidies, even when you have applied for the VGF. We are happy to share any information about that when you get in touch with us!

The Netherlands is a relatively small country and we pride ourselves in a whole-of-country approach, where everybody works hand in hand. So not only can the VGF help you reduce financial risks, it can also put you in contact with the right knowledge partner or institution should you wish additional information on how to best organize your conference in the Netherlands.

[More information on the Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund \(VGF\)](https://www.vgfholland.nl/en)
www.vgfholland.nl/en



What skills should
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FEATURE

Leadership Skills in Unprecedented Circumstances

All association executives have varying experiences and perspectives on the approach and qualities necessary for effective leadership. And not all situations require the same type of leadership style. Great leaders adapt to their surrounding environments and empower the team to succeed together. But what kind of skill sets do association leaders need in these turbulent times? All of our contributors share their insights – sometimes candidly, sometimes firmly – in this special Boardroom feature.

Skill Sets to Draw From & Amplify

For AC Forum, **Nicole Kaijser**, Learning & Programme Manager, European Association for International Education, and **Oliver Wykes**, Chief Operating Officer, Wind Europe, reflect on the skills that leaders must have to make their organization not just survive but thrive.

COVID-19 and its massive global impact brought the world to its knees and called for abrupt changes and adaptation in our everyday lives. Many things that were considered as acquired, standard or given became inaccessible, exceptional, or restricted. How should one lead in such circumstances?

Such a dramatic shift forces us to face and examine the deepest depths of our skill sets: from finding best ways to cope with the situation to sometimes simply figuring out how to survive. Yet some are finding opportunities to thrive. Just because the circumstances are unprecedented, it doesn't mean that we don't have a pre-existing skill set to draw from and amplify. So, what skills should all leaders draw upon and 'dial up to 11' to ensure that they not only survive, but actually thrive?

Composure. Unless in a real fight or flight situation, relying on instinctive emotional reaction clouds judgement and often leads to hasty decisions. It is advisable to step back and take time to properly gage the situation at hand.

Understanding. It is critical to gather all relevant facts to properly understand the issue and associated risks. Identifying reliable sources of information in terms of quality, quantity and timing is essential. Only when all relevant elements remain it is possible to establish scenarios and corresponding contingency plans.

Curiosity. There are many similar people and organizations in the same predicament. They also have creative ideas or effective solutions. Getting to know what others are doing and drawing from their experiences can help save time and avoid mistakes made by those before you.

Communication. When information and situations change more quickly than usual, it is imperative to keep everyone in the loop and establish or reinforce clear communication flows. Ambiguity is the enemy as it can aggravate the existing sense of confusion and uncertainty. Every word and its timing count.

Agility. Unprecedented times call for pragmatic approaches and actions. There is no time to waste. It is imperative to focus on doing the 'right things first' rather than

'doing things right'. Regular touchpoints are important to manage moving targets.

Open-mindedness. To stay relevant, we all need to evolve and do things differently/ do new things. This requires the right support framework and reassurance through regular coaching for example but also through seeking out new tools and resources.

Empathy. Unprecedented circumstances can affect people in different ways and levels of intensity. It is key to be extra-conscious of this, to put yourself in their shoes. The measures you put in place will be all the more impactful and appropriate leading to more resilient teams.

Rather than the actual skills required during unprecedented circumstances, it is perhaps more a question of how we apply them that has the most impact on those who depend on us for leadership.

For organizations wanting to learn more about AC Forum and membership, visit www.acforum.net

What's Critical for Leaders of Today

Now it's the turn of **Natasha Hilliard**, Director, Client Solutions, MCI Group Canada Inc., to appreciate what makes a good leader. In the name of IAPCO, she argues that leadership does require a set of both soft and hard skills.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a series of changes to the way we work. Our workplaces, the way we do business and the way we manage the team have undergone a fundamental reset. From managing teams working remotely to employees experiencing mental health or financial hardship - the pandemic has led to many new leadership challenges.

While leaders of today still require the 'traditional' leadership skills, they will also require a greater degree of emotional intelligence (EQ) to build relationships and trust among their teams. We are in an era of flexible work, and while the concept of EQ is not new, a change of how leaders support and communicate with their teams needs to adapt to this new work culture.

WHAT IT TAKES

While honesty has always been important in effective leadership, in this moment of the pandemic, today's workforce requires

candor. Be real. By sharing your own vulnerabilities, challenges and fears within established boundaries, leaders will show employees that it is safe to feel and discuss emotions at work.

Now, of all times, if leaders conceal their concerns in an attempt to be kind or shelter team members from the challenges you as the leader and the organization overall are faced with, people will not understand expectations and things will not add up. Team members today really need to hear specific ways that their leaders are in all of this with them.

Consistent, transparent, and **fact-based communications** will remain key for leaders moving forward. Today's workplace is fueled with insecurity, anxiety and skepticism and people respond to the known (even if the news is not good), far better than the unknown.

It is important for team members to understand the current organizational position and a clear vision of what success looks like.



However be mindful to not overcommunicate during a crisis. Each team member is faced with daily challenges outside of the norm so evaluate your communication by considering what does your team *need* to know vs. what would they *like* to know.

Team members expect and desire honesty and transparency and avoiding difficult conversations can erode trust more than

it can preserve faith in both the leadership, and the organization.

The key to performance is human motivation, and a key component of motivation is **relatedness**. In today's world, where so many elements of everyone's lives have been impacted by this pandemic, and all very different, it is up to the leader to set the tone on ensuring relatedness.

It is no secret that employee engagement is key to a thriving workplace - essential for supporting productivity and increasing profitability. Feel safe to take risks and create a space where teams can speak their mind and you are all working towards shared, common goals, as a team.

Trust building helps teams navigate ambiguity and stay committed to managing the unknown with confidence and embrace this time of change as an opportunity to learn new skills and grow.

In a world where so much of our lives, in today's context, is uncertain and unpredictable, leaders need to encourage **autonomy**. Allowing employees to make their own decisions on how, when and where they work - effectively helping them become masters of their work will be integral across many industries.

LEADING THE CHANGE

The need for agility while leading this change will be of equal importance. Removing barriers and creating short

term wins will be critical in building momentum towards a positive change and a motivated team.

During times of crisis, leaders must reflect on their own emotions (self-awareness) and understand that a leader who demonstrates care, compassion, and concern for the health of their teams will have a team that will live those same values at work and the clients they work with.

There is no rule book for leading through a world changing global pandemic, but we know for sure that we cannot care for others without being healthy ourselves. At a basic level, take the time to do the things that bring you joy each day. Be sure to fill your own tank. We are all human.

There is no doubt that leadership will be one of the most heavily tested skills throughout this pandemic. Leaders are navigating a volatile, uncertain, and complex landscape and doing it amidst their own uncertainties and pandemic fueled challenges. Awareness, vulnerability, accountability, and compassion will be critical for leaders of today.

IAPCO represents today 137 companies comprised of over 9900 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



Climbing a Mountain

Over the last 19 months, a lot of members of AIPC did their own share of mountain climbing in uncharted territory. Now **Maurits van der Sluis**, COO RAI Amsterdam, and **Sven Bossu**, CEO of AIPC, share some lessons learned when it comes to convention centre management in times of crisis.

January 2020. The team of the RAI in Amsterdam is preparing for what is planned to be the best year ever. Two months later, on March 12th, 2020, everything comes to an abrupt stop. The HISWA Amsterdam Boat Show, which was meant to run for five days, closes one day after opening due to the spreading pandemic. The same happens across the world: organized events are no longer allowed to take place and convention centres close their doors.

What did this mean for the leadership at the RAI? Basically, they went through three phases, explains Maurits van der Sluis, COO at the RAI. The first one was about dealing with the immediate shock on three core fronts: customers, suppliers, and staff. All customers were contacted, and agreements were reached on cancellation, re-booking, etc. The same was done with all the suppliers and regular staff meetings were held to share the little information we had. At that moment, overall belief was that this situation would last for 1-2 months, and the decision was taken to send all staff home for a period of six weeks.

Once it became clear that the pandemic would last far longer, a second phase was entered. Like his colleagues around the world, van der Sluis and his teams needed to completely re-visit budgets and P&L projections. In the case of the RAI, a three-pillar policy was rolled out, focusing on cash management, cost cutting and revisiting the business model. In order to do so successfully, the staff was closely involved, both when it came to finding solutions and also by holding regular webinars to keep everybody up to date on what was going on.

At management level, daily crisis meetings were put in place, and decisions were centralized to allow for both control and agility. Just as an example: no expense was allowed unless there was a clear justification and approval from top management.

UNPRECEDENTED DEEP-LEARNING

The detailed review of the cost structure, forcing management to dive into an unprecedented deep-learning, allowed to identify a wide range of efficiency gains. However, these were not sufficient and some difficult staff decisions had to be taken, resulting into a considerable reduction of headcount - from 470 FTE to 315 FTE.

Next to cash management and cost cutting, an important effort was done on re-thinking the business model: can the 112,000 sqm of space be used in any different way to generate revenues? The teams proved to be an inexhaustible source of ideas: from installing the biggest covered terrace in Amsterdam to creating paddle-courts or becoming a storage facility.

In the end, none of the ideas were implemented. Next to continuously changing COVID-policies, the key reason was the uncertainty about the duration of the crisis. *"Looking back, we would have implemented several of these ideas if we would have known that the situation would last for months,"* says van der Sluis. *"This would have justified the investment and the alternative use of the halls. However, like all convention centre leaders we went through continuous cycles of hope, fear, and disappointment."*

The one area where giant steps were taken was everything related to digital. Technology thought to be in place in several years from now was implemented in several months and proved to be a valid alternative for face-to-face when it comes to knowledge dissemination, which was not the case when it came to networking and trade for which digital did not provide solutions.



SILENT LOBBY

Asked about the role of the government and local authorities, van der Sluis is very positive: *“The crisis was handled as good as possible, given the circumstances. It also allowed to have an even better relationship with these stakeholders, who now fully realized the impact of organized events and the benefits they bring, far beyond the purely economic ones.”* Similar like other convention centres, this was the result of a “silent lobby”. Instead of trying to make a point in media or other public forums, there was a continuous stream of information exchange with the authorities, resulting in public support from the government to re-open for organized events.

This triggered the third phase, preparing for re-opening, which started during the summer and targeted a formal “open for business” on September 8th. Several challenges had to be addressed. The new staff structure, designed as a result of the re-organization, had never been tested in practice. And on top of the planned headcount reduction, several other people left the organization, resulting in an understaffing at the moment of re-opening. This did put a level of stress on the entire organization.

Another challenge sat with the suppliers. Several of them – even some longstanding ones – did not survive the pandemic and new business partners needed to be found, resulting into steep learning curves when it came to delivering excellence.

And thirdly, there was a need for re-connecting with the organizers who were unsure on what to expect when going back to face-to-face after such a long period. Just as an anecdote: one of the first events taking place at the RAI was Money 2020. During the first day, one thing became very clear: the size of the networking and catering areas simply was too small, the conference space too big. Participants were less interested in content – which was easily available during lockdown – and far more in networking – which was addressed by an overnight adjustment of the areas.

Next to these three challenges, another one – perhaps more surprisingly – popped up: the 18-month inactivity had an unexpected impact on the facility. Lifts and escalators did not function properly anymore, computer systems needed a full re-boot, window screens did not work, etc. – resulting into a very busy period to get ready for start-up.

LESSONS LEARNED

So, what were the key lessons learned? First: crisis management is something you learn while doing. The RAI had a crisis management structure in place and discovered that a gradual crisis like COVID-19 is a very different thing to handle. Second: it is extremely important to keep all stakeholders – and especially staff – fully informed on what is happening in order to keep them engaged and to manage expectations. Third: never lose the bigger picture out of sight, both from a community and timing point of view. Convention centres are indeed embedded in a local community and – as Van Der Sluis puts it – the crisis made Amsterdam love the RAI again.

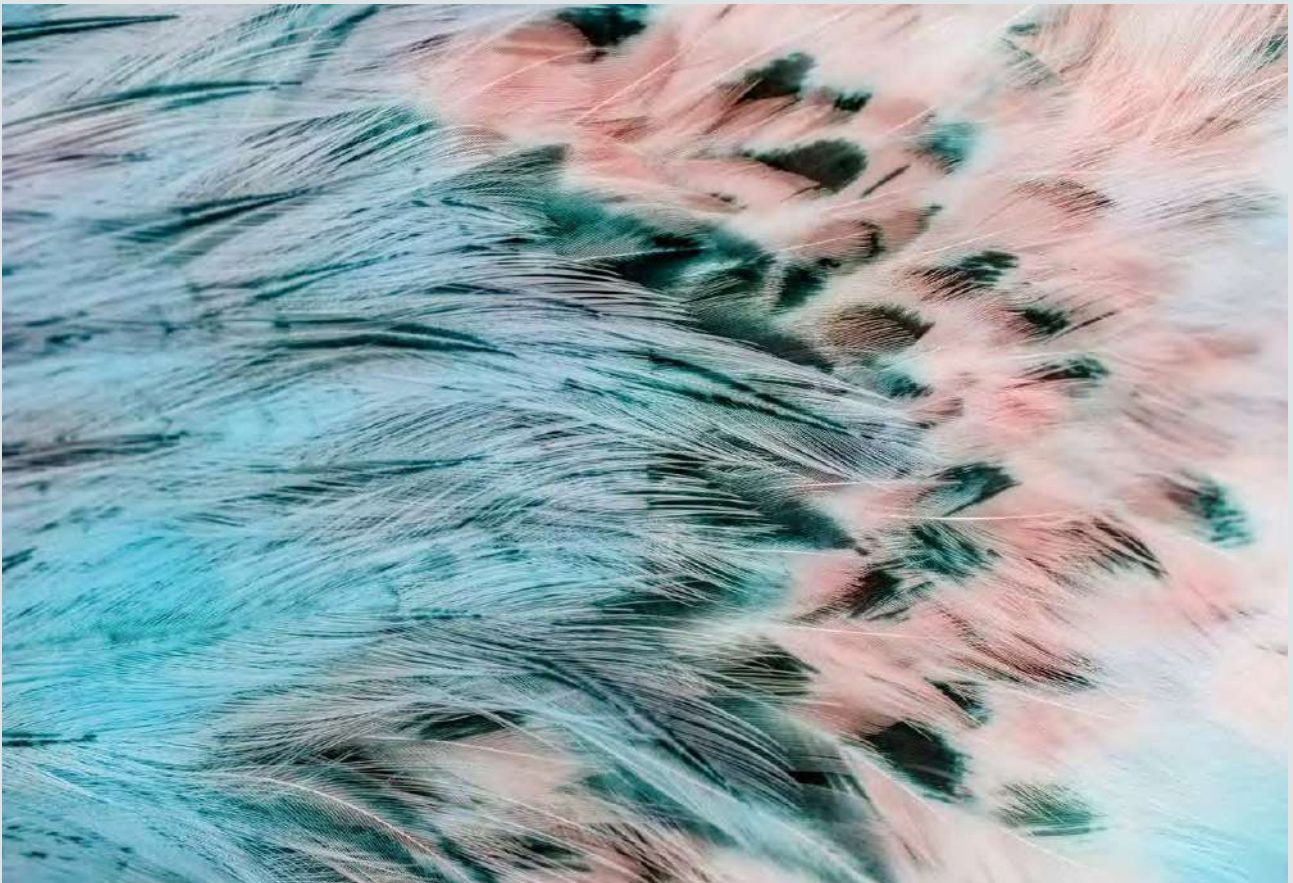
At the same time, the RAI and its stakeholders need to look ahead and, in that sense, it was great to hear that the 2030 masterplan – which involves some massive local redevelopments in order to better facilitate and organize events and integrate the RAI with the local community – is now being fully embraced

This article was contributed by Maurits van der Sluis 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



A New Journey for Association Leaders Begins Now

For ESAE, **Nicholas Hodac**, Director General UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe, reflects on the failures and the accomplishments that association leaders have experienced over the last months, that have created – in fact – the foundations for a stronger leadership skill set.



There is no guide, no business book to prepare a leader for management during a situation caused by such a disruptive pandemic as COVID-19. Traditionally, during change we rely on our experience to provide business continuity and ensure employee engagement. In this case, could we automatically count on our experience to find solutions and provide stability? I believe the answer to this question is not straightforward.

We have all been challenged on a personal and a professional level, as we had to deal with extremely demanding situations on a daily basis within our household and within our work environment. The honest truth is that our leadership skills have been tested like never before. We have combined failures with successes along the way and our boundaries have been pushed towards an unknown place. Now comes the time to look back at the last 19 months, reflect on our failures and our accomplishments and create the foundations for a stronger leadership skill set, which I believe to be a more balanced combination of traditional management/business skills with more humane approaches. The office-home divide has been diluted after 19 months of working from home, our 'new office'. Can the pendulum swing back the other way? Clearly not, but now is the moment to find the right equilibrium.

As I reflect on my personal experience, I have identified a number of key leadership characteristics that are an essential part of this new equilibrium.

LISTENING AND EMPATHY

Everybody has been impacted by this pandemic and each individual had to find their way to deal with it. Some of us have found their "escape valve" more easily, others have had more difficulty. As leaders, our first responsibility is to listen to our

team and find out how each individual is feeling, assess what their needs are and demonstrate empathy where required.

Usually, we are told to keep up some boundaries between ourselves and our employees, but in these unprecedented circumstances those boundaries have become blurred. You cannot expect people to leave their problems at the front door when (1) the front door is their home and (2) the world out there is in "chaos". So, should you just tell them to "focus on the job and be professional"? Impossible! If you are not already doing it, it is time to develop the humane side of your leadership skills.

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

You wake up and read the distressing news on how many new infections, hospitalized and deceased there have been in the past 24h. You watch the news at lunch time to hear about a new round of lockdown measures. You end the day with more news filled with heart-breaking stories from other countries. The world seems to be falling apart...

So what do you do as a leader? As a leader, you offer structure and purpose so that your team finds comfort and reassurance that at least their work environment is not also crumbling under their feet, that they can still be of added value and find a meaning to their day. I am not saying you work in ignorance of reality, but that you need to offer a "safe cocoon" within which there is stability and familiarity. You can argue that's part of your traditional business/management leadership skill set... Yes, it is! Nevertheless, this is the moment you need to reinforce it, instead of taking it for granted, and push it through in full respect and recognition of what you have learned under "listening and empathy".

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

This skill set touches on the previous skills I have discussed above, that's why I believe it is important to give it a special mention. A new journey has started, a new equilibrium in the pendulum. Implementation will not be easy and, as a leader, difficult decisions will also have to be taken. However, only through the full inclusion and participation of all colleagues in the reflection on how the new future looks like will it be possible to ensure consensus and be successful. Whether you lead a small or a big organization, there are always ways to allow people to express their opinion.

Some of you will read this and might think "easy", "that's what I always do", "he is naïve". This might all sound obvious to you. But be honest and admit that these last 19 months have really challenged you to such an extent that you have doubted on how to act several times and you have also failed in some cases...

My recommendation is to take a step back, reflect deeply on yourself and your attitude in relation to what I said. Frankly, I am confident we can all do better and do more in driving these skills forward for the benefit of our teams and the organisations we lead. Therefore, if I did not offer you anything new, I hope at least I convinced you to take a few minutes to practise self-reflection. This is the skill I did not mention, because, after all, it is the one that underpins every good leader's actions no matter what circumstances we might face.

For more information about ESAE, with which Boardroom has an exclusive partnership, visit www.esae.eu





Special health and
could be big difference
between destinations
that are making ex
should score extra

safety processes
differentiators
options, and those
extra effort
points for it.

Embracing Diversity to Ensure Future Stability

Trying to draw away from the pandemic, the world is now applying lessons learnt during the difficult period. Societies are gradually bouncing back with a special focus on sustainability, an idea that is put into practice not just through financial aid, but also with social solidarity. Located in the heart of Europe, Zurich lends itself as a case study of a pluralistic dynamic society which draws benefit from its diversity and serves as a role model of innovation, sustainability, and financial stability for many cities.

Words Vicky Koffa



Switzerland's largest city has been rising in population the last two decades, bringing the number up to 400,000. People of different nationalities, professions, ages, and lifestyles live peacefully together side by side in a safe and tolerant environment, working for the city's prosperity. The city's administration has put in place several programs to stabilize and even increase this economic and social growth.

As a matter of fact, Zurich's mayor Corinne Mauch, the first female and first openly lesbian person to be elected mayor of the city, has

followed up in the last few years on a past initiative now called "Strategies 2035", which includes guidelines for economic growth, sustainability, and inclusion among others. Attractive conditions for companies to operate in, a diversified industrial structure and a skilled workforce are goals set for a strong future economy. With sustainability in mind, local producers, resource-conserving use of energy, housing policy and green active mobility are also part of these strategies.

UNITY THROUGH VARIATION

Major role in the above-mentioned efforts, and one of the city's strongest points, is social solidarity. The diversity of the population – one out of three people living in Zurich are not Swiss – is, in fact, a driver for tolerance of different cultures, educational backgrounds and mindsets. The city remains open to dialogue when challenges arise, and all demographic and social developments are considered before changes are made.

The 171 different nationalities living in Zurich bring a variety of work experience and higher vocational education or a university degree, shaping innovation and progress. Tolerance becomes key ingredient to creating a safe living ecosystem, where mixed groups of people come together in an association, school, club, neighborhood activity or culture to produce a stronger unity and growth for their city.

Examples of the level of inclusion in the city include projects for the two extreme age groups: the elderly with the 'old-age policy' - which not only covers current needs but also takes anticipated changes into account, and the young adults and teenagers - offering early intervention and school education, as well as day programs and temporary solutions for young people who are outside the education system.

On the healthcare front, Zurich makes accessibility, quality, and suitable supply chain a priority. Community-based socio-medical services for all are part of the new inclusion strategy, along with sporting and cultural activities meant to boost exchange of ideas and perspectives for this multicultural crowd. To top it all off, the city has established the Office for Equality, a competence center and contact point for the legal and actual equality of women and men and of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in all areas of life.

INCLUSION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

As diversity expands outside the local administration's jurisdiction, private companies follow the same principles of inclusion. *"Switzerland stands for diversity, innovation, and quality. Google's Swiss center has maintained its international competitiveness for years - with key services such as Google Search, Google Maps, Google Assistant, or YouTube. Zurich is Google's largest research and development center outside the USA, employing almost 2,500 staff. For this to be successful, an in-depth knowledge of languages and cultures are essential. With some 85 different nationalities, our workforce in Zurich covers this diversity,"* says Patrick Wamking, Country Director Google Switzerland.

Innovative projects like the Hunziker site in Zurich-Leutschenbach are a role model for a new living style. Since 2014-2015, the Hunziker Areal has offered living space for 1,200 people and about 150 jobs, with apartments for old and new forms of living, rentable living and working rooms, a wide range of communal



spaces and leisure infrastructure. On this environmentally friendly site, a high level of diversity in terms of age, origin and economic and professional background is part of everyday life.

TOURISM WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS

Infrastructure in Zurich has not fallen behind. The Placid Hotel Zurich is just one example of hotels with a social conscience. The focus of the hotel is accessibility for all, ensuring that also people with a handicap enjoy design and lifestyle. With Martin Heyne, hotel director and supporter of the barrier-free pilot project by the Association for Accessible Tourism Switzerland, the building is designed to cover the needs of small or large groups, with disabilities or not, with various cultural differences, all in a beautifully decorated environment.

Zurich Tourism, the city's destination marketing organization, oversees quality and sustainable touristic activities and promotes inclusion through its administration (50% of the management team are women). «Welcome to Zurich» city tour for refugees – a special city tour to welcome refugees to the city and an offer to take language courses – is a forward-looking project in this direction. Partner of the OK.GO initiative, which helps the Swiss tourism industry address the travel requirements of senior citizens and people with disabilities appropriately, Zurich Tourism shows true social engagement for the present and the future.

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More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

myriam.winnepenninckx@switzerland.com | www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings



Setting the Urban Safety Standards

Copenhagen often tops the list in a variety of indexes – from innovation to sustainability – but there’s one that was recently published that particularly makes sense during these challenging times: safety. In The Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) ranking of safest cities in the world, the Danish capital proudly comes out on top. But what does that mean for Copenhagen as a conference destination, and how does this translate to meeting planners and attendees?

Words Remi Deve

In its 4th edition of the [Safe Cities Index \(SCI\)](#), the EIU ranked 60 cities worldwide across five continents, measuring urban safety according to five pillars: personal, health, infrastructure, digital, and environmental security.

The latter indicator is brand-new and reflects the growing importance of sustainability issues and climate adaptation measures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. [Copenhagen](#) performed noticeably better than any of the top-three cities from previous years, topping the overall charts with a score of 82.4 points out of 100. *“Urban safety is an important key to unlocking meeting again face-to-face post-pandemic, and so receiving an unbiased stamp of approval can be a huge benefit,”* explains Kit Lyketoft, Director of Conventions at [Wonderful Copenhagen CVB](#). *“It may help raise credibility and strengthen the confidence of not only the organizers, exhibitors, and sponsors, but also the delegates, in choosing Copenhagen.”*



SAFETY FIRST

WindEurope, whose Electric City conference will take place 23-25 November in Copenhagen, has helped build the credibility and trust Lykketoft is referring to. *"I think that special health and safety processes could be big differentiators between destinations, and those that are making extra effort should score extra points for it and proudly add it to their KPIs,"* echoes Malgosia Bartosik, Deputy CEO of WindEurope. *"We're very happy to go back with our event to Copenhagen this November. Especially in the current context, hosting an event in a place rated the safest city in the world does help us to convince our delegates and exhibitors to join us. Copenhagen has more than 85% of its adult population vaccinated, all restrictions are lifted, and every time we go there, we feel we're in safe hands."*



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Bartosik adds that the collaboration between different local entities has also been a selling factor for the city, and its values in relation to health, safety, and environment have always aligned with WindEurope's. *"We care that our events are safe, fun, comfortable, but also sustainable and secure for all the data that is exchanged - and we are achieving exactly that each time we are back in wonderful Copenhagen,"* Bartosik says.

The conference will take place at Bella Center Copenhagen, where attendees can rest assured that safety standards - including data and environmental standards - will be at the forefront of the planning process. *"Taking the past 18 months of pandemic into consideration, the focus on safety issues amongst planners has, of course, increased even further,"* says Rikke Lolk Fjeldsted, Director of Sales at BC Hospitality Group, which owns Bella Center Copenhagen. *"Yet, communicating safety measures has always been a natural part of our customer dialogue, and to support it, we share all our health and safety measures proactively on [our site], bchg.dk."*

THE WORLD'S SAFEST CITY

Bartosik points out that the health and safety environment is important in the decision-making process, but what she and Lolk Fjeldsted also mention - and what's aligned with Copenhagen's ranking in the EIU's [Safe Cities Index \(SCI\)](#) - is the importance of sustainable action and cybersecurity. Indeed, both delegates and planners alike need to feel they can gather in a place that knows how to manage events sustainably - and where cybersecurity is part of a smart city plan.

In those two areas, Copenhagen excels. Part of the reason why? Copenhagen aims to be the world's first carbon-neutral capital city by 2025. The city is putting extensive effort into reducing

energy consumption, investing in green energy, and encouraging green mobility in order to develop in a sustainable way. *"We have a responsibility both to mitigate the effects of climate change and to reduce carbon emissions while also adapting our city to future climate changes,"* explains Copenhagen's Lord Mayor, Lars Weiss. *"Copenhagen is taking climate adaptation measures that both improve environmental security and contribute to liveability in the capital."*

This liveability aspect correlates with, among others, strong digitalisation and a highly tech-savvy population. In this regard, the Danish government has made a commitment to go "digital by default" a while ago, with almost all interaction with the Danish authorities taking place online. So, there's definitely no need to worry about integrating hybrid and virtual components into your event here.

"Health and safety of our events' participants have always been our top priority, as I'm sure it is for all organizers," Bartosik says. *"It's made us realize how important the destinations' approach to safety issues is. In Copenhagen, we are definitely in very safe, knowledgeable hands."* In the city, indeed, the priority residents and officials assign to urban security - whether personal, health, infrastructure, digital and now environmental - has risen markedly to take a new dimension, perhaps giving it a competitive edge like never before.

"We will continue working with Copenhagen's holistic understanding of urban safety and to look across every pillar of security as a whole. Our approach has become even more topical in recent times," concludes Kit Lykketoft.

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Building Back Systematically

Taiwan can now claim a spot among countries with success stories about fighting the Covid-19 virus. This accomplishment illustrates its excellent public health infrastructure and health policy expertise, supported by extensive data and digital technology. With the situation under control, the country's meeting industry is almost back to normal, mainly thanks to action taken over these past two years by MEET TAIWAN and stakeholders of Taiwan's meeting industry.

Words Vicky Koffa



The road back to business events as usual has been long and challenging and is still an ongoing effort. MEET TAIWAN, Taiwan's MICE Promotion Program dedicated to improving Taiwan's MICE industry for many years, has been successfully facing

the difficulties the pandemic brought based on the theory of the Flywheel effect, meaning that it confronts one problem at a time with continuous hard work when planning the overall strategy of the meetings industry.

SAFETY & VALUE

Creating a safe environment for people to meet was the first item on the agenda. Early on, a dedicated team that included MEET TAIWAN released a set of guidelines for hosting safe meetings. The *Taiwan Safe*

Meetings & Exhibitions Guide pays special attention to personal hygiene and safe distancing. The guide is complemented by the *Safe Meetings & Exhibitions Evaluation System*; a website set up to elevate and harmonize the standards met by venues, event planners and all relevant stakeholders when organizing an event.

The Taiwanese team also deemed it necessary to add financial assistance to make their country more attractive and rebuild planners' trust in the system. With support from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, MEET TAIWAN started offering subsidies for business event organizers. By June 2021, MEET TAIWAN had received 1,761 applications, and the subsidies amounted to more than NTD700 million.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Despite the forced lack of in-person connectivity with the world due to drastic health restrictions, MEET TAIWAN realized the need to stay relevant through means of technology, using digital tools to interact with international buyers and explore more business opportunities. Cloud conference rooms for conference organizers were made available, meaning not only traditional multipoint conference room-type video connections, but also different types of mobile devices could be used for multipoint video conferences.

In this case, again, the government stepped up. The Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade provides an online interactive exhibition template for exhibition organizers to use. There are five virtual exhibition halls and six virtual booth designs. Exhibition organizers can mix the different templates to create diverse exhibition styles, plus hold webinars and product presentations. Virtual booth exhibitors can also choose different booth designs to suit their style and upload product information in text, PDF, 360-degree, and video formats.

STAYING IN TOUCH IS KEY

MEET TAIWAN was not idle during the pandemic. Promotion initiatives were part of the recovery strategy, keeping the country always present in the international meetings scene. The most recent project is Re-fresh Taiwan, representing a fresh start after the global pandemic to forge a fresh new ecosystem for Taiwan's business events industry. Taiwan's governmental and non-governmental resources joined forces to generate improved knowledge and facilities for the events industry, boosted by the country's advanced information technology and cultural vitality.

This initiative was reinforced by putting together a promotional Taiwan Incentive Talk series. Its most recent digital event, the Vibrant Harbor Cities edition, showcased southern Taiwan's attributes for conference organizers. Buyers could attend the presentation and choose to stay online for pre-scheduled 1-to-1 appointments with local suppliers, convention bureaus (CVBs) and destination management companies (DMCs).

STAY GREEN. GO SUSTAINABLE

Using this motto, MEET TAIWAN has been promoting the government's green MICE guidelines, with goals to balance energy conservation and environmental sustainability. Concrete action is taken to reduce greenhouse gases, trash, and the waste of resources, lessening the impact of business events on the environment and cooperatively moving Taiwan green meetings into post-pandemic times. Organizers, venue providers and participants are encouraged to follow guidelines on all levels and phases of event organization: transportation, accommodation, food, decoration, and promotional materials.

In addition to these local guidelines, MEET TAIWAN assists meeting organizers with complying with international green

sustainability certifications that involve sustainable event management, as well as offsetting the carbon footprint of events. To date, 17 MICE companies in Taiwan, including event organizers, exhibitions, and venues, have obtained the ISO 20121 standard for Sustainable Event Management.

EDUCATION IS POWER

All of the above projects would not mean much without the provision of continuous information and education. MEET TAIWAN organizes online courses regularly about digital transformation and green events so stakeholders can know exactly what standards to expect when organizing an event in Taiwan. The same principle is applied to the promotion of the Kaohsiung Protocol, a strategic recovery framework designed in Kaohsiung last year to guide the global meetings and events industry forward.

The quality of events in the country advances rapidly, as local organizers take advantage of international professional certification training courses, hosted by MEET TAIWAN. Back in 2012, MEET TAIWAN already sanctioned the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), which raises the level of professionalism and knowledge of Taiwan's meetings personnel, in addition to keeping Taiwan current with international industry trends.

More information
www.meettaiwan.com

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Turning the Tables of Sustainable Events

The last couple of years the pandemic and how to heal from it has been the talk of the town, or rather, the globe. Soon enough we all realized that this healing needed to include the planet as much as the people in order to make it sustainable. So, finding solutions for climate change came strongly in the spotlight, even more so with this year's crucial COP26 meeting, hosted at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow. With this event a unique opportunity arises to demonstrate to the world that the meetings industry can be part of the solution with sustainable events.

Words Vicky Koffa

For over 30 years, the Conference of the Parties (COP) has been shifting everyone's attention towards climate change. Organized by the UN and attended by almost every country in the world, COP's objective is to accelerate action towards a greener planet. This year's COP26 will gather - at the time of writing - around 130 world leaders, together with thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses, and citizens for twelve days of talks.

BUSINESS MEETINGS HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT

Conferences and in-person meetings have long been recognized as drivers of social, economic and environmental progress. Bringing

together very different minds, expertise businesses and innovators at face-to-face events has allowed people to collaborate and find solutions to modern day problems.

After nearly two long years of Zoom calls, Teams meetings and long hours spent communicating in pixelated boxes on flickering screens, the value of such meetings has never been more apparent.

And, at COP26 in Glasgow, the need to catalyze action and develop real solutions has never been more pressing.

Building on decisions made during the COP21 summit in Paris, this year's conference will put pressure on countries to take urgent



action to address climate change, namely to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees and aim for 1.5 degrees. The pandemic has amplified the enormity of the crisis facing the planet, bringing the threats we face into sharp perspective. The challenge facing delegates is to find ways to address them and make changes and decisions which inspire tangible results.

As a host, the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow recognizes the importance and the timing of an event of such magnitude not just for the UK and the entire world, but also for the business events industry, and has taken strides towards sustainability.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE VENUE

This is evident at the SEC as the venue develops a long-term sustainability which has been accelerated by the hosting of COP26 in the city.

The venue has introduced a range of innovative technologies. Electricity comes from 100% renewable sources and mechanisms are in place which reduce energy and water wastage. Energy efficiency is constantly monitored with the plant and machineries maintained and upgraded and recycling a key focus for the venue. In July the SEC launched its sustainable food strategy, an ambitious strategy that focuses on three key elements: what we eat, where it comes from, and how it is packaged. 80% of all produce comes from Scotland, 15% from the UK, and only 5% from overseas. Menus have a focus on high animal welfare, and plant forward, regenerative farming. All packaging will be recyclable or reusable by 2023.

What's become clear is that sustainability is now central to delivering events. Having hovered around the periphery, it now lies at the core. Organizers are now starting their venue selection and planning process through the lens of sustainability. In just a short space of time, attitudes have changed dramatically, fuelled partly

by the pandemic and mostly by the vivid images and real impact of climate change that we face daily. So delivering sustainable events is the way to making the event industry sustainable for the longer term. And that starts with people.

The SEC has a dedicated environment and waste manager who has the technical and scientific knowledge and expertise to drive and implement a sustainability strategy, planning and training, working with and supporting clients, promoters, and staff.

The aim is to create a healthy and sustainable venue and an environment where events are supported in every effort to become truly green.

A DEAR GREEN PLACE

COP26 will perfectly highlight the legacy benefits of conferences, showing how the arrival in a city of an event of this scale presents not only the host venue, but local businesses and people with the opportunity to raise its profile.

Not only will the event bring world leaders and tens of thousands of staff and delegates to Glasgow, but it has shed light on the many innovations and measures which have been introduced in the city to combat climate change.

'The Dear Green Place', as Glasgow is known, has never looked greener and COP26's green zone will also allow the public to learn about climate change, climate action and COP26 through cultural performances, exhibitions, talks and film screenings led by young people, indigenous leaders, businesses and grassroots organizations from across the globe.

The result is an all-encompassing event, the influence of which extends beyond the conference venue and builds a real legacy for the future.

The venue is ready to welcome a climate-change conference, establishing the new era of meetings, where big gatherings, game-changing decisions and sustainability go hand in hand.

Kathleen Warden, Director of Conference Sales at SEC said: *"Conferences are recognized enablers of change and, if anything, our experiences during the pandemic have shown the true value of events and the opportunities they bring. Over the course of November, Glasgow will become a global hub creating a sharp focus for real change and climate action. Importantly, COP26 is a catalyst for change in the event industry, with organizers, venues and professionals across the globe taking unprecedented strides towards greener events, ensuring a prosperous, focused, purposeful future for the industry."*

Contact

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Aligning for the Future

This year, the **Seoul MICE Alliance** celebrated its 10th anniversary, and over the past decade, the public-private MICE partnership has grown to be the largest alliance at a local government level in Korea, with more than 300 member companies in 10 categories across the industry. Working together to overcome a series of crises, from SARS to the more recent COVID-19, SMA has played a major role in boosting Seoul's position as a serious business events city—and there's plenty more on the horizon post-pandemic.

Words Lane Nieset

The SMA's member companies span across major sectors of the industry, from convention centres to hotels, international conference organizers (PCOs) and travel agencies. Together with the Seoul Metropolitan Government and **Seoul Tourism Organization**, SMA has helped attract events and offer support for associations in its effort to develop "Global MICE City Seoul." In 2019, the city was selected third-largest host of international conferences by the Union of International Associations (UIA) and has been consecutively rated Best MICE City by Global Travel.

"The strength of the Alliance is that it served as a focal point binding its members together to overcome difficulties together," explained Chief Director of the SMA and Head of MICE Unique Venue Division Lee, Kyungjin, CEO of Floating Island Convention. *"The Alliance is expected to play a bigger role in the future in laying the foundation for tourism in the New Normal era and to create a sustainable tourism ecosystem under shared values and goals."*

For Rosa M. Jeon, CEO of PCO People & Value, one of the core advantages of being a member of SMA is staying up-to-date on industry news, in addition to participating in training and education programmes hosted by **Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB)**. *"When the domestic MICE industry became unstable and rapidly declined in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SCB announced a plan to support hybrid events faster than any other institution/association in Korea, and they flexibly changed their direction to support the use of technologies that allow for the hosting of virtual conferences,"* Jeon says. *"Looking at the value that SMA has provided, it is regrettable that they only work for the industry in Seoul. They are growing rapidly in Seoul, expanding networks, and accepting new members every year. They quickly provide helpful information...which has enabled the industry in Seoul to expand to what it has and is recognized around the world as a premier location for everything MICE."*

SUPPORT SYSTEM

In addition to SMA, Seoul offers associations support like that of **PLUS SEOUL**, which aids with international conferences by offering assistance from bidding to promotion and hosting. The **PLUS CITIES Support Program**, meanwhile, assists groups visiting Seoul and second-tier Korean partner cities like Gangwon, Gwangju, Gyeonggi, Gyeongnam, Jeonbuk, and Chungbuk. Seoul was also the first Asian city to become a member of **Hybrid City Alliance**, a global network of 22 destinations from 15 countries that collaborate to provide meeting professions with the tools they need to produce hybrid and multicity events.

As Enn Young Lee, general office manager of the **Korean Psychological Association**, which worked with PLUS SEOUL, puts it: *"When you focus on research and academic projects for a long time, your field of view will inevitably narrow, and it is difficult to reflect the trends of the times. I knew that there were technologies such*



© BROCK TAIKYN

as metaverse, but the necessity to introduce them was deliberately overlooked. The program gave me time to seriously consider new technologies and trends.”

The Korean Psychological Association has a history of over 70 years and a membership of more than 20,000, but have focused, until recently, more on the research and academic activities domestically. Improved international networks and MICE industry knowledge will certainly open doors to more extensive international conferences like **ICP 2024** which will be held Seoul.

“The Seoul Tourism Organization informed me that there was a PCO/AMC fostering program around this time, so even though it was the closing period of the annual conference, which was the most important annual event of the society, I wanted to participate in the program,” Lee says. “It seems that the Seoul MICE industry can develop stably only when specialized contents for various industries/academics are developed. Seoul can become a MICE destination where

‘diverse and attractive’ contents are in which various industries such as oriental medicine, medical care, and ceramics grew into small powerhouses. I’d be more than delighted to see psychology grow into one in the future.”

CONGRESS HUB

In October, Seoul stepped up from “Hub City” to “Congress Hub” of Asia Pacific during the second multi-hub hybrid meeting, the four-day **2021 ICCA Congress**, which brought 1,500 participants from convention bureaus and PCOs from 90 different countries to host city Cartagena de Indias, in Colombia. Coinciding with the event, Seoul hosted the two-day Asia Pacific Hub Seoul at **COEX**, which featured online programmes from Cartagena, as well as local programs and offline sessions that were broadcast for the Asia Pacific region’s online participants.

As Seoul continues evolving as a global MICE City, its role as a regional hub and support from alliances like SMA will be one of the major factors in preparing

the industry for a post-pandemic world, according to **MICE Attraction Division, PCO Bae Deuk Sung, CEO of MICE & Company**. *“In the midst of the pandemic, changing the way how PCOs conducted their business was for survival. The used of latest meeting technologies and gradual digitalization cannot be achieved through the efforts of PCOs and member companies alone,” Sung said. “Information sharing, collaboration, and practical business development with other divisions such as MICE Service division and Exhibition division and its member companies were instrumental and will be essential in the future.”*

Contact
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South Africa's Doors Are Open

The meetings industry has enjoyed impressive growth in South Africa in the past few years and there's been efforts made by the government to take advantage of the growth by expanding the opportunities that the industry has to offer. Of course the global pandemic turned things upside down. Here is an update on South Africa as a conference destination, starting with its pioneering role in the life sciences field.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BUSINESS TRAVEL

The South African government effected measures on the 26th March 2020 to protect its citizens from Covid-19, including restricting local and international travel.

This introduced extensive challenges for tourism, and business travel was not spared. According to South African Tourism stats, of the 562 recorded business events scheduled between April - December 2020, 64% of conferences and 36% of tradeshows were postponed, cancelled or went hybrid.^[1]

The world is now trusting enough to open its borders largely due to vaccination programmes rolled out globally. South Africa's borders were opened to international travellers from 1 October 2020. South Africa is ready to welcome the world and rebuild chambers of industries. When you visit South Africa, it's more than its doors that will be open. Eyes and minds will be open and though one might arrive intrigued, you will leave inspired!

SOUTH AFRICA AS A BUSINESS EVENTS DESTINATION

South Africa is a top contender as a destination for any business event. If you're

looking to host a health conference, doesn't it make sense to host it in the home country of one of the world's most inspired thinkers in the fields of public health and infectious disease? But besides achievements, the country is much-loved for its cultural diversity, exceptional business events services, value-for-money, and rich unique experience offering. Added to that all business event venues adhere to strict health protocols to ensure delegates interact safely together with peace of mind.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LIFE SCIENCE SECTOR

South Africa has sectors that contribute to the gross domestic product. Of these, life sciences faced major challenges during the lockdown. However, the pandemic inadvertently showcased the country's ability to respond to a changing global landscape to address the challenges of the day.

By cultivating a spirit of optimism, whilst acknowledging collective social and economic challenges, South Africa punched above its weight and built on its incredible achievements - further stamping the country as one of the leaders

in medical innovation. South Africa conducted the most testing in Africa for Covid-19, alerted the world of the infectious nature of the Delta variant, thanks to incredible local genomics institutes, and ran its own National Ventilator programme to produce ventilators for local use and export.

South Africa is also the home of Dr Salim Abdool Karim, an instrumental advisory figure in the fight against Covid-19, jointly awarded the prestigious 2020 John Maddox Prize for standing up for sound science during the pandemic alongside Dr Anthony Fauci (United States).

If you are looking to shape and inspire forward-thinking with your next event to capitalize on opportunities across the globe, look no further than South Africa. Its doors are open, and the warmth of the people makes this a business events destination that moves you as it hosts you.

[1] Bartis, H., Hufkie, B & Moraladi, M. (2021). The Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Business Events Sub-sector in South Africa.



A Complete, Holistic Meeting Experience

In the canton of Bern, right in the heart of Switzerland, the Interlaken region is a tradition-rich congress destination beautifully nestled between Lakes Brienz and Thun. With an impressive mountain scenery including the world-famous Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau triumvirate as a backdrop, it's got quite a few assets up its sleeves Here – indeed - you can experience the whole of Switzerland in one place.

Words Remi Deve, with Made in Bern



Let's start with the meeting infrastructure. With the centrally located Congress Centre Kursaal Interlaken as well as numerous event locations and hotels - 6,000 beds in 70 establishments in total, many of which underwent a renovation or a modernization during the pandemic - Interlaken is an excellent venue for national and international congresses.

In Interlaken everything is centrally located, so everything is literally at walking distance. From the train station to the congress or event, from there to the hotel or the social program, you can even get everywhere on foot - and not waste valuable time commuting from one place to another.

STEEPED IN HISTORY

The Congress Centre Kursaal Interlaken impresses with its combination of rooms steeped in history, ultra-modern

auditorium and beautiful parkland offering a view of the Jungfrau mountain.

The 19 different rooms - all with daylight - can be used both for the conference program and for an exhibition/fair. A total of over 5,000 sqm of event space is available.

The strengths of the Kursaal Interlaken also include in-house catering, its own event technology, which also allows for virtual or hybrid events easily and professionally, and a restaurant, which can be rented exclusively.

All in all, the teams working at the Kursaal are greatly appreciated by meeting planners, who have praised the support and advice they bring to the table, their know-how at all stages of event design and organization and, above all, their great flexibility, which is key to success.

MEDICAL CONGRESSES AT THEIR BEST

With all these aspects in mind, no wonder medical congresses regularly choose Interlaken as their host destination. Case in point: the annual congress of the Swiss Society of Gastroenterology (SGG/SGVC/SASL&SVEP), the largest national event in the field of gastroenterology, hepatology and abdominal surgery which gathers under one roof hospital doctors, doctors in private practice, specialist registrars in training, and hospital and non-hospital endoscopy nursing staff.

Gabriela Kaufmann, who has been in charge of the event for some years, explains: *"We have been coming to Interlaken for years. Even though the journey to get there is a bit longer, everyone likes it. The location, the accommodation, the beautiful surroundings, the possibilities... everything is just right from A-Z."*

"For me as an organizer, the cooperation couldn't be better! The onsite team is always very reactive and prepared to organize a lot at the last minute. At the same time, they never give us the feeling that we are completely out of the loop. We appreciated this flexibility and great cooperation once again this year, when we had to make last-minute decisions due to the measures around the Corona pandemic. Any congress venue would be lucky to have such a team. We are always completely satisfied!" she says.

In addition to the conference, the large industry exhibition is an important part of the congress. Here the Kursaal Interlaken seems to be the ideal venue with its rooms suitable for both the scientific program and the exhibition of industry partners.

Kaufmann emphasizes: *"I really appreciate the support, especially with the organization of the exhibition, but also with the technology. I don't have to worry about it, it just runs very smoothly."*

A particularly important point at any event are the networking opportunities. This must be given enough "space". Here, too, Kaufmann appreciates the different possibilities. *"The implementation of our get-together party is super. It creates a real club atmosphere in the prestigious rooms of the Kursaal."* she says, adding that she's very happy with *"the know-how of the team [she] could fall back on at any time, given their knowledge of event organization, whether virtual or hybrid."*

Damaris Nyffeler, Director of Operation & Stv. Managing Director, adds: *"I am sure that the Congress Centre Kursaal Interlaken, with its long tradition and great experience, will continue to play a more important role in the field of medical congresses."*



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ON AN ADVENTURE

But it's not all. When it comes to pre- or post-event possibilities, the Interlaken region boasts a wide range of options, being Europe's #1 adventure destination. Such a wealth of professionally organized adventure activities in such a small area, framed by perfect landscapes, glaciers and lakes, is actually quite unique.

For example, Interlaken's local mountain, the Harder Kulm, is a stone's throw from the Congress Centre Kursaal Interlaken. The cogwheel railway takes you up to the Top of Interlaken in 10 minutes at an altitude of over 1,300 metres. From the viewing platform you have an unbelievably impressive view of the lakes of Brienz and Thun and the Bernese Alps. The Panorama Restaurant with its large sun terrace is the perfect place to round off an event.

ONE-STOP SHOP

And if you need help, the Convention Bureau Interlaken Congress & Events will look after you, from helping you put together a great program to organizing a transfer, from finding hotel rooms to suit every taste and budget to running your convention secretariat.

Contact

interlaken-congress.ch \ info@interlaken-congress.ch

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

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Leveraging Cleantech for Purposeful Meetings

With an abundance of renewable resources, cleantech innovators and world-class research and training centers, Calgary's reputation as a cleantech capital is attracting global attention and luring international events and conferences within the natural resources sector.

Ranked in the top 15 worldwide for cleantech ecosystems, Calgary is poised to lead Alberta, Canada - and the world - towards a greener future, led by pioneering technology set to revolutionize clean energy solutions.

"Every layer of Calgary's cleantech ecosystem is dedicated to the transition to a low carbon economy," says Chris Brown, Business Development Manager, Energy & Environment at Calgary Economic Development. *"Investments provided by our thriving energy industry and supportive government are enabling cleantech innovators to develop new solutions that will pave the way for Canada to thrive and flourish under the new economy."*

HARNESSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Calgary's energy sector is one of the fastest adopters of cleantech, with the industry forecast to spend \$2.3 billion on digital transformation from 2022 to 2024.

As the city's major energy companies enthusiastically embrace this digital evolution, Calgary maintains its competitive advantage in an industry that increasingly relies on new technology to provide clean energy solutions.

"As we convert to new forms of energy, we require new forms of technology," says Brown. *"This presents a wonderful opportunity for Calgary's talented researchers, entrepreneurs and technicians to create cutting-edge digital solutions that address the challenges we face in the shift towards a lower-carbon economy."*

The cleantech industry could represent a \$3.8 trillion global economic opportunity by 2030 for businesses that can meet the growing needs for energy and food with less waste and fewer emissions. With more

than 70 percent of Alberta's cleantech head offices located in Calgary, the city is poised to own a significant chunk of this market share.

The [Alberta Clean Technology Industry Alliance \(ACTia\)](#) is strengthening the cleantech ecosystem by supporting cleantech innovators, and fostering local and global connections between technology developers, entrepreneurs, investors and customers.

"ACTia is a powerful tool to accelerate industry development and has become the first point of contact for Alberta's cleantech community as a center of expertise," says Brown. In fact, ACTia has already supported more than 700 cleantech ventures.

"The organization provides a cleantech ecosystem guide to help entrepreneurs navigate programs and services that could add to their ventures, as well as networking events, to encourage the sharing of ideas and inventions designed to tackle climate change challenges."

INDUSTRY-LED INNOVATION

Passionate Calgary-based thought-leaders, cleantech companies, research centres and investors are working together to make a difference in the creation of a sustainable future.

Organizations like the [Clean Resource Innovation Network \(CRIN\)](#) are helping industry members achieve their commercialization goals faster by facilitating a team approach towards transforming energy systems and developing cleantech solutions to global environmental issues.

With a vision to produce clean hydrocarbons from source to end-use, CRIN provides a platform for connecting entrepreneurs, investors, universities, government and research institutions to forge partnerships and achieve shared objectives in the cleantech sphere.



“The revolutionary cleantech solutions being developed often have application to sectors outside of energy, including agriculture, manufacturing, mining and food processing, and many have the potential for global export,” says Brown.

Similarly, **Canada’s Oil Sands Innovation Alliance (COSIA)** is an alliance of oil sands producers focused on collaborative action to accelerate the pace of improvement in environmental performance in domestic oil sands.

“COSIA aims to move the yardstick on the environmental impacts of producing oil, using the brightest minds across its member companies to develop innovations in the four key areas of greenhouse gases, land, water and tailings,” says Brown.

ELEVATING BUSINESS EVENTS

As the city’s talent pool of cleantech thought leaders rapidly expands, international organizations and corporations are choosing Calgary as the ideal base for their business events and conferences, as they leverage passionate innovators and technical facilities to augment their programs.

“Local cleantech professionals who are passionate about sharing their visions for a greener future can inspire business event delegates with immersive workshops and speakers’ series,” says David Woodward, Executive Director of Meetings & Conventions, Tourism Calgary.

“By working closely with the Meetings & Conventions team at Tourism Calgary, event organizers can create programs that attract higher numbers of attendees, generate team bonding and ultimately provide an unforgettable meeting experience.”

Calgary is equipped to host large-scale events, especially with \$1 billion (CAD) of infrastructure investment focused on expanding the **BMO Centre on Stampede Park**, among other projects, making it the largest convention centre in Western Canada by 2024.

Visitors to Calgary are greeted by an **enticing mix of big-city energy and community spirit**, alongside outdoor adventures galore, with Banff National Park on the city’s doorstep offering hiking, horse riding, biking and canoeing adventures among jaw-dropping mountain vistas.

“Calgary serves up an abundance of cultural and outdoor team bonding exercises, from microbrewery tours, to surfing on the Bow River or experiencing North America’s fastest zipline!” says Woodward.

MEETINGS WITH PURPOSE

By enriching speakers’ series with Calgary’s cleantech experts, or enriching programming with tours throughout the city and beyond, business event organizers can attract delegates, increase revenues, and inspire future generations.

“We call that ‘meeting with purpose,’” says Woodward. *“Calgary is poised to show off its natural resources ecosystems and the industry leaders who are trailblazing a greener future.”*

To learn more about Calgary’s role as a leader in the global energy transition, visit www.yycenergyenvironment.ca

To learn more about bringing your meeting or event to Calgary, visit www.visitcalgary.com/meetings or email info@meetingscalgary.com



How to Spread One's Sustainable Wings

Jeju, the largest island off the coast of the Korean Peninsula, is taking sustainability very seriously. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this Korean province is dominated by the 1950m Hallasan Mountain and the idyllic backdrop of spectacular waterfalls, protected forests, caves and lava tubes. With such an awe-inspiring environment, it's only normal that the island wants to lead the way when it comes to green initiatives.

Words Remi Deve



Jeju has long been the country's favorite domestic holiday destination thanks to its beautiful beaches, lush countryside and seaside hotels designed for rest and relaxation. If it is well-known nationally, the island is making giant steps towards the international market with a not-so-secret card now: its commitment to sustainability, which is translated into many reforms that are currently taking place.

This includes measures to replace fossil fuels with power generated by wind via land and sea turbines; plus that from solar energy, small hydropower and electrical storage facilities. The island is also installing smart grid technologies that collect data on energy use and demand to improve efficiency in energy production and consumption.

The key drivers of this transformation are new partnerships by which government agencies and private sector companies collaborate to turn Jeju into a carbon free island. Beyond this, both the public and private sectors are working hard to make the island as a sustainable business event destination. Case in point: it recently joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) as a Destination Member.

GREEN MICE CAMPAIGN

To stay competitive in the ever-growing MICE market, Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau (JejuCVB) is also carrying out a large-scale Green MICE campaign. Making Jeju a true Green MICE destination and leading the global Green New Deal that South Korea as a whole has embraced is a reality that cuts across the bureau's goals. This includes initiatives like the "Green MICE Slogan and Idea Contest" which was held back in March 2021.

The Green MICE campaign, called 'WE GREEN JEJU', came to fruition and secured a certification mark based on that same slogan. Jeju CVB is promoting the campaign through SNS Instagram events highlighting the island's natural wonders, local attractions and diverse certifications in the environment field. It also presents calls for recycling and informs about the need for sustainability at all stages of event design.

In addition, JejuCVB and the Jeju International Convention Center (ICC JEJU), along with other stakeholders across Jeju's whole supply chain, are seeking to obtain ISO 20121 international certification, which will provide guidance and best practices to

help you manage your event and control its social, economic and environmental impact.

In July, the Green MICE Forum was held with the goal of "minimizing the use of disposable goods, using fair trade products, and using tumblers." Organized by JejuCVB, it featured keynote presentations and special lectures on sustainability.

On this occasion, the Jeju Green MICE Manual was introduced, designed to help MICE professionals operate in the most sustainable way. The manual is a customized guidebook for sustainable event operation targeting conference organizers, participants, participating companies, and facilities, in each sector of the MICE industry.

GRAND HYATT JEJU

Grand Hyatt Jeju, which opened in December 2020, might well be a good example of what Jeju is becoming. Translating a new vision of the Grand Hyatt brand that places sustainability in the foreground, it's reflective of its unique environment, and providing its guests with a first-class integrated resort service and hospitality.

The hotel is committed to minimizing its environmental impact. In that regard, it's encouraging the reuse of bed and bath linen; all hotel menus and programme books are operated electronically in order to reduce paper waste; all amenity packaging containers are made from eco-friendly plastic, and the toothbrushes are wood-based, not plastic!

Grand Hyatt Jeju is also making an effort to protect the environment by effectively saving energy: it's installed LED bulbs all across the hotel and solar panels on its roof, and boasts eco-friendly air filters and many charging stations for electric vehicles.

Jeju, as a World's Green MICE City, will be officially introduced at the Jeju Green MICE City Declaration Ceremony, scheduled in November. As such, the island is looking forward to growing beyond its image as one of Asia's cherished Resort MICE Destinations and to becoming a truly global sustainable MICE city.

For more information on Jeju as a Green MICE Destination, please visit
www.jejuvcb.or.kr | www.jejugreenmice.org

Never at a Standstill

With a future-oriented outlook that focuses on the next few years and the development of various urban areas, Brussels is leading the way among major cities that create long-term value for its residents and visitors – proving it's a destination of choice for European and international associations.

Words Jan Lichota

Uniquely positioned on the European and global tourism map and allowing a genuine balance between business and leisure activities, Brussels cements its position as an international capital and a comfortable place to live and work to experience all year round.

What a more beautiful place to celebrate the end of your university studies than Brussels' Grand-Place? A photograph with fellow students and the Town Hall as the background is an incredible souvenir. The ceremony organised by the ULB & VUB is proof of the importance given to all aspects of academic life, from student exchange, to research and scientific congresses.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The city has been deeply involved in being an attractive place for pursuing academic research, freedom of opinion and debate across all disciplines. The Palais d'Académies, seat of the Belgian Royal Academy of Science, was the meeting place at the beginning of the 20th century, which later led to the constitution of the Union of International Associations and still today hosts various events of foundations, scientific associations and think tanks.

Music is ever-present in the city, thanks to local and internationally renowned events. The city brings together a vibrant cultural life with a wide variety of styles

for all audiences. 2022 will be a year dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Toots Thielemans, highlighting Brussels' impact on jazz. The Queen Elisabeth Competition in May will be dedicated to the cello for the second time, bringing new classical music talent into the spotlight.

Music is also celebrated through specific events, such as the 75th anniversary of Jeunesses Musicales Internationales (JMI). Over 40 nationalities gathered in September 2021 at the Maison de la Poste at Tour & Taxis for a special concert that challenged composers to create pieces that captured the spirit of JMI's central vision of bringing the youth of the world together through music.

ONGOING RENEWAL

Meanwhile, the renewal of the city continues. While the opening of Belgian Beer World in the former stock exchange building is set for 2023, the pedestrian neighbourhood and its surrounding area already allow people to enjoy the lively atmosphere of an area filled with theatres, bars and restaurants.

The city centre is seeing the appearance of a new generation of offices and co-working spaces, going from the Central station towards place De Brouckère, which also awaits a new tenant of the iconic former Hotel Continental building.

The former Sheraton Hotel and others in the city centre will be reopening soon, and in 2021 the new Hilton Double Tree and five-star newcomer the Juliana Hotel were inaugurated.



Sustainability is at heart of the Brussels-Capital Region's activities and those of all its stakeholders. With clusters dedicated to circular economy, the region is looking forwards and aims to provide the best possible value and a breeding ground for cooperation and the re-use, recycle principles. Workshops are organized regularly, like those of the Good Food program, which involve local producers and distributors and the hospitality sector. All actors are dedicated to eliminating food waste, offering healthy food and satisfying the demanding quality requirements

of consumers. The hospitality cluster now organizes tours around the city to introduce people to this ever-evolving ecosystem.

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS UPRISE

In October 2021, after a break forced by the pandemic, visit.brussels relaunched its quarterly tour of the city's various districts aimed at international associations. For its comeback edition, it focused on event venues with the latest digital innovations for conference organization. Conscious of the requirements of online and hybrid meetings, the Brussels-Capital Region provided in the last two years an incentive fund for investments in digital technologies, which several event venues and companies embraced to adapt to the circumstances.

In 2021, Brussels hosted - virtually, face-to-face or hybrid format - the congress of the European Calcified Tissue Society in May; the International Geoscience & Remote Sensing Symposium (IGARSS) in July; the International Symposium on Intensive Care & Emergency Medicine (ISICEM) at the end of August/beginning of September and Nanobodies in September. The final quarter of the year is also busy, with the IMCoS International Symposium and the International Congress of International Living Donor Liver Transplantation Group being held in October and the MOVE Congress, the Global Humanitarian Aid Event (AidEx), the European Cancer Summit, the Brussels International Spine Symposium and the euroPLX 77 Brussels in November.

As mentioned by ISICEM President, Professor Jean-Louis Vincent, *"We are coming back to life, a more normal life.*



© VISIT BRUSSELS - JEAN-PAUL REWY

In the medical field, it is particularly important to have face-to-face discussions rather than through screens. Exchanges, round tables, meetings with experts are essential to the development of science. All our participants were particularly happy to be together again, in Brussels."

Meetings were able to be held thanks to the various safety measures introduced by the organizers and venues, which were based on Belgian regulations and the protocol of the Brussels Health and Safety Label. From the autumn, these measures were supported by the introduction of the Covid Safe Ticket (CST), a health pass which is scanned at event sites and is equivalent to similar measures introduced in other countries.

After a year that has seen a slow but progressive relaunch of activities, 2022 will welcome the return of major trade fairs, such as Labelexpo, or the celebration of the 10th edition of the European Association Summit.

Contact

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www.visit.brussels/meetings



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A Principality's Spotlight on Sustainability

Monaco is continuing to accelerate its green vision with a bevy of initiatives and conferences geared around sustainability. In September 2020, for example, the first conference held since the start of the pandemic was *Ever Monaco 2020*, which brought together 40 exhibitors, speakers and attendees for three days dedicated to green vehicles and renewable energy — and returned the following year at the Chapiteau de l'Espace Fontvieille — showing how Monaco is serving as a pioneer in the field of sustainable electro-mobility.

Words Lane Nieset

Monaco is the second-smallest country—and most densely populated—in the world, measuring just over 2 sqm. Despite its size, Monaco packs major power when it comes to leading a global effort for a more sustainable and healthy planet. HSH Prince Albert II has developed a proactive sustainability development policy that touches on biodiversity, resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction, pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. *The Mission for Energy Transition* will help with these goals by limiting greenhouse gas emissions and developing renewable energy by carrying out some of the large-scale projects the Principality has put in place.

More than 20 years ago, the Principality set up an automated network of five standard stations to sample and survey pollutants like carbon monoxide and sulphur to provide air quality forecasts. Moreover, coastal waters are monitored for physical and chemical qualities to create awareness of factors likely to affect the marine environment. In order to protect the surrounding sea environment, the Principality set up two marine reserves—50 hectares in Larvotto, home to a Posidonia Mediterranean sea grass bed and pearl oysters, and one on the Spélugues seabed, known for its red coral population. On land, the Principality is home to 880 plant species, including 18 heritage species. It has been host to various studies as researchers inventory the flora and fauna to discover rare species of insects and invertebrates.

#REEVENT GREEN

As part of its post-COVID plan to welcome associations back into the Principality, the Monaco Convention Bureau has also

launched the #REEVENT campaign that is “*far more than a call to reinvent the business events sector*,” explains Guy Antognelli, General Manager of the *Tourist and Convention Authority*. “*Monaco has all the advantages to establish itself as a pioneer of this transformation: its expertise, its acknowledged excellence in event organization and*



SOLAR PANELS ON THE ROOFTOP OF THE GRIMALDI FORUM

its bespoke approach, not to mention its historical commitment to environmental conservation and ongoing search for sustainable innovation.”

By the end of 2021, Monaco will launch the **White Paper on Sustainable Tourism** to help lay the foundations of tourism in the future and make the Principality more sustainable according to the United Nations’ SDGs, as well as Monaco’s own Energy Transition targets. Now, more than 88 % of the Principality’s hotel rooms are certified with titles like **Green Globe** (the only certification that covers social issues) and **ÉcoLeaders**, a TripAdvisor programme.

As a way to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Monegasque government also created a “Monaco Safe” label, which certifies that venues have incorporated the necessary healthy and safety standards and ensures that protocols are being followed properly. As Sylvie Biancheri, General Director of the Grimaldi Forum, explains: *“The safety of the public has always been one of the Principality’s top priorities. The Grimaldi Forum is proud to be one of the first establishments in the Principality to receive the ‘Monaco Safe’ label from the Government, recognizing the sanitary measures we have put in place to ensure our guests have a safe experience from the start of the event to the end.”*

With the assurance of these measures like “Monaco Safe,” face-to-face meetings are quickly returning in the Principality, as conferences like, Anti-Aging Conference, Sportel, Les Assises

de la Sécurité, E-Commerce or IM|Power, which was held at the Grimaldi Forum in October 2021.

Conferences like these are definitely aligning with the Principality’s sustainability goals, with a focus on conducting the event in an environmentally responsible way by reducing carbon emissions; creating less waste and discouraging giveaways from stands and media partners; and considering sustainability credentials for items sourced. At **Grimaldi Forum Monaco**—one of Europe’s first congress and culture centres to hold the ISO 14001:2015 environmental management certification—the conference focused on waste sorting, the recycling of carpeting, and the use of eco-certified products.

It comes hardly as a surprise, then, that Monaco hosted several Intergovernmental Panels on Climate Change (IPCC), whose report from last September 2019 highlighted the urgency of prioritizing timely, ambitious and coordinated action to address unprecedented and enduring changes in the ocean and cryosphere - issues that are debated this very moment at COP26.

FUTURE FOCUS

Thanks to awareness-building initiatives underway in the Principality, Monaco continues to attract events focused on sustainability, like the return of **EVER Monaco 2021**, which facilitated dialogue between researchers, academics, and industry members by bringing together roundtables with experts in the field for sessions to share knowledge and debate on mobility and the energies of the future. The event put Monaco’s homegrown initiatives on display for attendees to experience 20 eco-friendly vehicles from a variety of brands for free rides and showcasing electric boats. The optimization of transport and increased use of digital technologies are part of the Principality’s plan to create a safe, innovative and accessible destination for delegates, both during and post-pandemic.

As Ariane Favalaro, the event commissioner for **EVER Monaco 2021** due to the COVID-19 situation. *We have been pleasantly surprised by the help we had locally and the way everything was promptly and safely organized. We had a lot of meetings prior, but everything happened organically and without any problems. It was such a pleasure to meet again and to feel that the event was running as normal as possible despite the exceptional circumstances.”*

In this regard, Monaco is the place to be for association planners wishing to organize eco-friendly events in eco-certified venues and hotels. A destination both responsible and accessible, easy to navigate thanks to smart mobility, the Principality showcases excellence at every stage of event design.

Contact

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The Power of Connectivity - Digitally & Physically

The last few years the world has witnessed – and experienced – major changes in all industries and the evolution of global economy. When examining more closely, the driving force and determining factor behind most changes is the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector. A country with a solid ICT sector cannot but thrive in today's knowledge digital economy and Luxembourg is proof that this is the case, bringing to the table many opportunities both for businesses of all sizes and association conferences alike.

Words Vicky Koffa

Luxembourg is, in fact, synonymous to connectivity. The small country's geographical position offers great accessibility and security for many European countries, which is the partly the reason why it has been selected to house many EU institutions, NATO facilities, international company headquarters and major banks. The data collected daily raised the need for a strong digital landscape with extensive bandwidth and an advanced national cyber security strategy.

The Grand Duchy was already a leader in the field, but as of last year the government has adopted a national strategy to prioritize ICT, investing in infrastructure, research, and the creation of opportunities for companies of all sizes. Extensive broadband networks, public data centers such as the Interdisciplinary Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust (SnT), as well as the Luxembourg Digital Innovation Hub (L-DIH) - which aims to increase the digital transformation of businesses - are major projects launched as part of this strategy.

CYBER SECURITY & BLOCKCHAIN

Luxembourg is staying ahead of the game keeping all data secure within its borders. The government is seeking to grow trust both in the private and the public sector by proactively bracing for possible threats and breaches. In 2018, they released the National Cybersecurity Strategy III, engaging members of governmental ministries, intelligence and security services, judicial authorities, and the police, in actions enhancing cyber security. Research and education institutions such as Bee Secure, SnT, and Restena; sectorial PPPs like the Luxembourg Commercial Internet Exchange (Lu-Cix); regulatory bodies such as the Financial Sector Supervisory Commission (CSSF); private companies and start-ups all work hard to keep the encryption bar high.

Extending its digital capabilities to the financial sector, the country has also made possible the extensive use of distributed ledger technology (DLT) and blockchain. Cryptocoin exchange Bitstamp, ancillary organization InfraChain and Lëtzbloc

all create and promote the adoption of DLT and Blockchain technologies in Luxembourg. The law passed by Luxembourg's Chamber of Deputies in 2019 permitting the use of DLT for the circulation of securities has given businesses extra entrepreneurial vigor to compete in the European and international markets.

MELUXINA: LUXEMBOURG'S NEW SUPERCOMPUTER

The rising demand of big data usage in most of Luxembourg's key sectors - space, automotive industries, logistics, fintech, and life sciences to name but a few - has generated the necessity for a superpower. This came in June 2021 in the form of a supercomputer called Meluxina and is one of the most powerful computers in Europe, reaching the top 50 of the world ranking of the 500 most performant supercomputers. The new hardware will have a calculating power of 10 petaflops - that is ten million billion operations per second, it will be housed at the new LuxConnect high performance



computing (HPC) center in Bissen and powered exclusively by green energy.

The supercomputer will benefit businesses with accurate design of complex parts, reduced time-to-market for products and reduced material costs. Sectors like life sciences will be assisted with personalized medicine and eHealth projects, whereas the financial sector will find a partner in the sustainable transition to a digital economy, offering all in all personalized professional support and technical expertise, research and innovation opportunities across all verticals.

FIT 4 START

Creating a competitive edge in this digital economy, Luxembourg is also fostering collaboration, fast access to competences and exchanges of best practices among start-ups as well as small to large companies. Initiated in 2015 by the Ministry of the Economy and managed by Luxinnovation with the support of Technoport and the Luxembourg-City

Incubator, Fit 4 Start is now launching its 12th edition.

The acceleration program will last six months, from January to June 2022, and will offer 20 selected start-ups coaching, pre-seed funding and access to key networks. For the first time this year, five of these companies will also gain access to supercomputer Meluxina in the hope it triggers innovative products and ideas across all industries. The main goal of the initiative is to combine actual physical collaboration and knowledge within a strong digital ecosystem in an attempt to bring Luxembourg to the top of the ICT sector in Europe.

AN EVER-PRESENT CONVENTION BUREAU

Business Events Luxembourg lies at the heart of connectivity. Not only do they pave the way for associations who wish to connect by having a congress or conference in the country, they also are highly active in putting associations in touch with local stakeholders and experts. Such gatherings are bolstered by the proximity

of knowledgeable and influential people, ensuring the event makes a lasting impact.

Luxembourg's ICT sector is clearly very attractive for like-minded associations. In fact, September started in a very promising way with the successful organization of the global tech conference ICT Spring Europe 2021. More than 5,000 attendees from over 72 countries gathered at the European Convention Center Luxembourg (ECCL) to deepen their digital knowledge and capture the value of the fast-growing FinTech. A series of conferences with renowned speakers, exhibitions and demonstrations of the latest tech trends and innovations come together as part of the Digital ICT Week, organized by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and Farvest. Next year's edition is set to take place between 7 and 8 June 2022.

Contact :
www.business-events.lu \ info@lcb.lu

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.
D'Uva** FASAE, CAE

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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STRATEGIC BUSINESS
EVENTS ADVISORS

LUXEMBOURG: LET US CONNECT YOU

The moment you choose Luxembourg for your meeting, we do everything we can to put you in touch with the right people, including local experts and key players from your sector.

Not only that, we work hard to find you the best event organisers, service providers and everyone you need to ensure your congress or conference makes an impact.

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AUSTRALIA INNOVATES

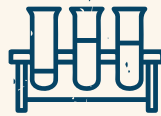
REDESIGNING WATER SOLUTIONS FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES



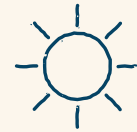
Process engineer Sachini De Silva has co-created a sustainable, off-grid solution to provide access to clean water in remote locations.



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



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



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



Water is fed in from various sources, including bores, and stored in an inlet tank before passing through three stages of filtration treatment.



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



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



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