



BOARDROOM
THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

The Art of Association Membership

2024 VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | VOLUME 3 | VOLUME 4



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THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

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LETTER TO OUR READERS

Why Cybersecurity Should Be Every Association's Top Priority

In March 2023, the American Bar Association (ABA) experienced a cybersecurity incident where hackers gained access to older credentials affecting approximately 1.46 million members. This breach involved unauthorised access to members' login information for a legacy member system that had been decommissioned in 2018.

This is not an isolated event. In fact, we hear more and more about associations getting breached, their data compromised and the trust of their members shaken. This is a phenomenon that has been observed with increasing frequency, revealing a shift from viewing cybersecurity as merely a technical issue to recognising it as a core component of association management.

Associations, rich with extensive networks and sensitive information, are becoming targets. The data managed—ranging from personal contact details to professional histories and financial information—is highly valuable to cybercriminals.

The consequences of an attack extend beyond immediate financial loss to long-term reputational damage, which can be particularly devastating for organisations built on trust.

Acknowledging these risks is the first step. Associations need to adopt proactive measures to safeguard themselves. Conducting regular risk assessments to spot and address vulnerabilities, establishing updated and comprehensive cybersecurity policies, and educating staff about potential cyber threats are crucial. With cyber threats like phishing, ransomware, and data breaches growing in sophistication, an informed team is a vital defense line.

Investing in robust cybersecurity technologies is also crucial. Tools like advanced anti-virus software, firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and secure, encrypted backups can significantly reduce the impact of cyber incidents. However, technology alone is insufficient. Cultivating a culture of cybersecurity awareness is equally important. Creating environments where cybersecurity is everyone's concern and where updates on the latest threats are shared openly can empower every individual within the organisation to act defensively against potential threats.

Yet, perhaps the most effective tool you have against cyber threats is collaboration.

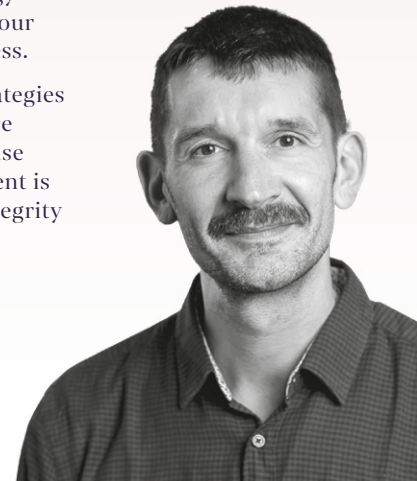
By sharing knowledge and strategies with other associations, consulting cybersecurity experts, and engaging in ongoing dialogues with technology providers, you can strengthen your defenses and tailor solutions to meet your unique needs... and make the most of your vision and mission in the process.

Ultimately, integrating stringent cybersecurity measures into operational strategies is not merely advisable; it's essential. It defines an association's resilience and capacity to maintain the trust of its members. Leaders should prioritise cybersecurity today to protect their communities tomorrow. This commitment is not just a technical necessity but a fundamental component to uphold the integrity and trust upon which all associations are built.



Cécile Vohle

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Work Less, Achieve More?

The Four-Day Workweek Debate

Special Boardroom contributor **Dr Ole Petter Anfinssen**, explores the sustainability of the four-day work week.

1 - The organisation

From an organisational perspective, if employees were to suddenly flag that they could bring down the work they had been doing for years from five days to four days, one could argue – fine, but then their role should be reduced to 80%. To regain 100%, they would need to prove an increase in both output and performance. This would also imply that the same employee has been overpaid for years – being paid for five days' work – while the work was merely worth four days.

2 - The human

Human behaviour is somewhat predictable, and by exploring behavioural patterns two distinct themes emerge.

Number one: Most people tend to prefer the path of least resistance, often seeking shortcuts to achieve their goals, regardless of the associated risks. Number two: Behavioural patterns rarely change, and even though they are full of good intentions,

people most often bring bad habits forward.

Reflecting on history, there was a period when a six-day workweek was the norm, and it was believed that the same amount of work could be accomplished in five days by enhancing effectiveness. Years later, we find ourselves making a similar argument for the adoption of a four-day workweek. While this approach may demonstrate benefits in the short term, long-term behavioural patterns are likely to prevail, leading to the reemergence of the same inefficiencies observed in the past. After all, we are humans, not machines, and our productivity and work habits are subject to our inherent human nature.

3 - Lack of connection

With hybrid working, we've seen an increasing lack of connection, engagement, and psychological well-being. Should our work presence be further reduced, this trend could likely exacerbate existing challenges, moving

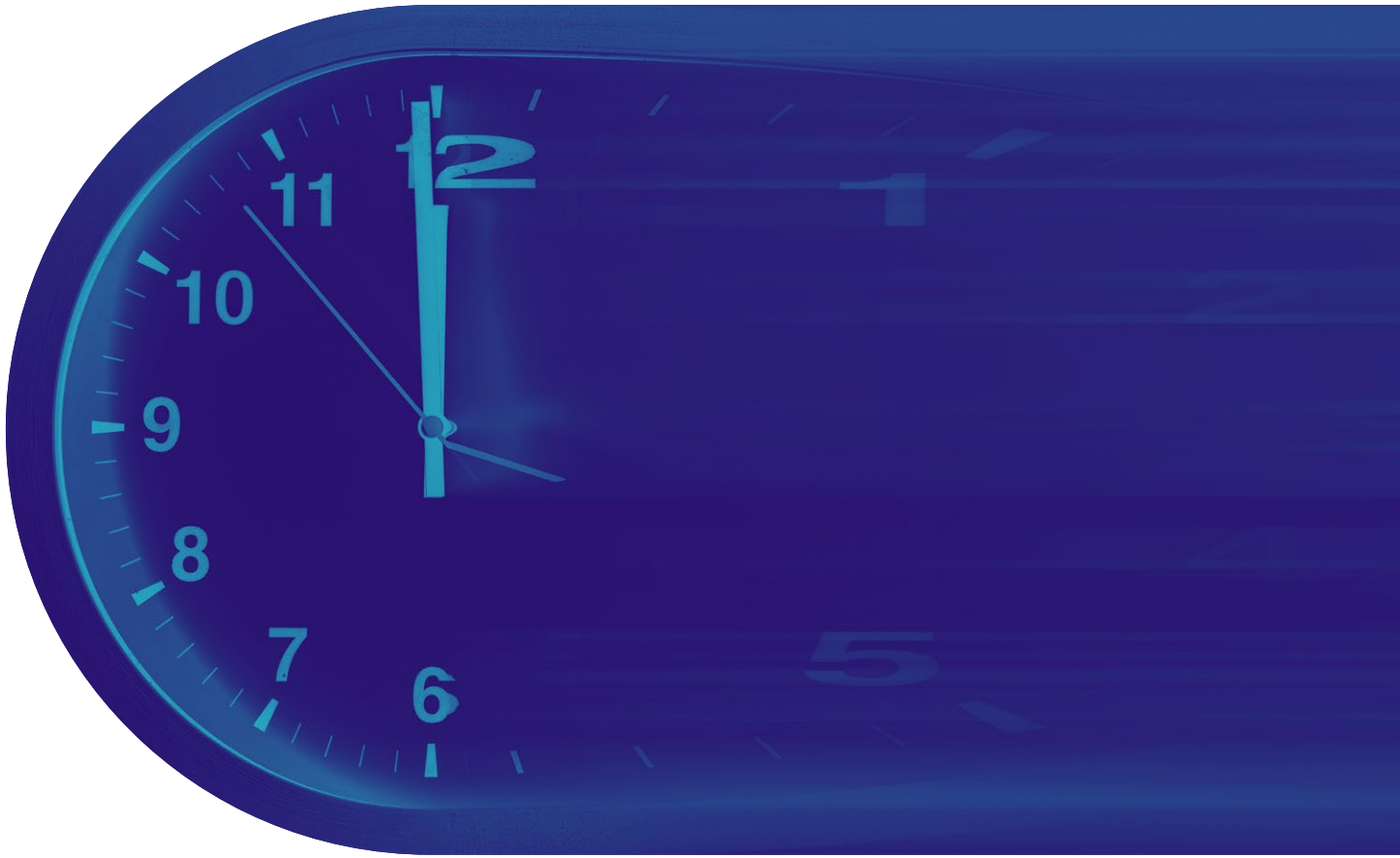
us from a bad situation to an even worse one.

Ultimately this will jeopardise more than productivity and create situations some of us won't be able to bounce back from. It will put new pressure on our economy and healthcare system, where more and more people will end up on social benefits, unable to provide for themselves.

4 - Sliced bread for everyone

The four-day workweek is being sold as the best thing since sliced bread, for everyone, but it can't be applied to everyone. Some professions will have to maintain a five-day workweek, which means we are in danger of creating a new class system within the workforce: those who can, and those who cannot.

However, the notion of the four-day workweek has taken root in society and seems to be something many people would like to push forward. So, what should we do?



How to make it work?

It is not merely doom and gloom, but we need to create a foundation for change.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge the complexity of human behaviour and the mechanisms and tools required to cope and develop with change – and acquire the skills to thrive with such a transformation. Just as with a car, we cannot simply remove a wheel and expect it to function with three, nor can we change the wheels and anticipate the car maintaining racing speed. Instead, improvements must be made to the engine to ensure it is suited for a new purpose and can adapt to environmental changes.

The same goes for us as humans, and if we would like to change, routines, patterns, or cognitive behaviour, we need to work on our capabilities, skills, and mindset. We can't just make external changes and expect us to continue with increased speed – without the tools to sustain this new pace. Hence, we need to look at our ability to adapt, and how we can make this work for us by developing resilience, self-discipline, and self-management, as discussed in my previous articles.

This means we can train ourselves to become more effective, increase productivity and – at some point – potentially reduce the number of working days. But we can't do this

overnight. We need to create a solid foundation to cope – otherwise bad habits are bound to repeat themselves.

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By Belinda & Julian Moore

Associations: Navigating an AI-Powered World

The emergence of AI poses an exciting opportunity and a potential existential threat to associations globally. Associations who successfully embrace emerging AI tools to advance their purpose will emerge more powerful than ever before. Those who don't will be replaced by other entities that are better positioned to capitalise on the opportunities. However, adaptation is easier said than done. In practice, what does it look like?

Individual Adaptation

Associations are about people and AI adaptation requires change. Our challenge is that people – whether they are staff, volunteers, or members – don't change easily. So, the first step is to demystify AI for your staff by providing them with practical AI training to give them the skills to apply AI to immediately increase their productivity.

Associations are increasingly leveraging AI to enhance member engagement and operational efficiency. They're, for instance, personalising written communications, drafting emails tailored to prospective members and their companies, making complex research accessible through concise, format-diverse summaries, and creating targeted newsletters and blogs. Tools like Lusha and Invideo facilitate the rapid creation of contact lists and personalised video messages, respectively, while also helping to engage younger demographics through social media content suited for platforms like TikTok. AI is streamlining administrative tasks, from filling out grant applications to automating board reports, saving time and increasing success rates.

The above are just a few of the many ways associations are already using AI tools. Once staff are empowered with these tools, they are coming up with new and creative ways to use AI to streamline their daily work, deliver a better member experience, and create a more powerful impact.

Operational Adaptation

Shifting to operational adaptation is all about expanding the role of AI from enhancing individual productivity to transforming the very workings of the association. This stage involves integrating AI into the heart of what the association does – such as events, education, and policy. It's a transition from the personal benefit

of "AI makes my work easier" to the collective advantage of "AI elevates our association to new heights."

This operational shift embraces AI and technology to transform association functions significantly, focusing on creativity, teamwork, and exploring AI's potential. Key initiatives include tailoring educational content with Course, AI for personalised learning, utilising AI for data analysis to inform decisions, automating personalised member communication via AI calling systems, predicting member needs for better engagement, matching members with opportunities through intelligent platforms, and employing deep learning for behavioral insights... and way more.

Diving into operational adaptation, shouldn't just be about tweaking what we do. It's about reimagining how we could deliver a bigger positive impact on our purpose. It's about dreaming big and then bringing those dreams to life.

Strategic Adaptation

When associations pivot towards strategic adaptation in an AI-powered world, they're essentially charting a course for the future that's both bold and visionary. It's about lifting the gaze from the day-to-day and asking, "Where can AI take us next?" This phase is about embracing AI not just as a tool for improvement but as a catalyst for transformation, influencing not just how we operate but who we are as associations.

Strategic adaptation means weaving AI into the very DNA of our purpose, vision, and values. It's about foreseeing the potential shifts in our industry and society at large, driven by AI, and preparing to not just navigate but lead these changes. We start by asking deeper questions: How can AI redefine our relationships with members? Can AI help us tackle the grand challenges our members and their sectors face?



How do we ensure that our use of AI aligns with our ethical standards and amplifies our commitment to inclusivity and diversity?

This journey requires us to innovate boldly, to experiment with AI-driven initiatives that may redefine our value proposition. Imagine leveraging AI to facilitate global collaborations among members that tackle pressing industry issues, or using AI to predict and shape future trends rather than just respond to them. It's about deploying AI to not only predict member needs but to anticipate the future challenges of the industries we serve, positioning our association as a leader in the AI transformation journey.

Strategic adaptation is also about resilience and readiness. As AI evolves, so too will the challenges and opportunities it presents. This means staying agile, continuously learning, and being prepared to pivot strategies as new AI technologies emerge. It's about building an association that doesn't just use AI but is ready for whatever AI brings next.

In essence, strategic adaptation is our commitment to future-proofing our association. It's a bold reimagining of what our association can be in an AI-driven future, ensuring we remain indispensable to our members and continue to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Here, AI is not just a tool but a transformative force that propels us towards a future where our association is more relevant, impactful, and innovative than ever before.

In this world, the role of associations is more critical than ever. We're not merely passengers on this journey; we are the navigators, charting the course for our members and the sectors we represent. The path forward is rich with potential, offering unprecedented opportunities for growth, innovation, and collaboration. Yet, it requires us to embrace change, to learn, adapt, and innovate.

Visit www.smsonline.net.au to learn more about associations embracing AI.

Belinda Moore (belinda@smsonline.net.au), with over three decades of experience, specializes in navigating associations through strategic and membership hurdles, leveraging her profound understanding of both technology's transformative potential and the unique needs of the not-for-profit sector. Julian Moore (Julian@smsonline.net.au), focuses on enhancing revenue for associations and nonprofits through valuable partnerships and sponsorships. As a passionate technology enthusiast, he possesses an in-depth knowledge of AI.

Read the extended version of this article, featuring numerous examples of AI tools available for associations, online now:



By Remi Deve

Celebrating Diversity with Women Who Advance

In recent years, the conversation around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has transcended mere discussion to become a cornerstone of organisational strategy across the globe. European and international associations have not been exempt from this shift. They've recognised the indispensable value of DEI as a strategic pillar essential for member growth, talent retention, innovative capabilities, and impactful advocacy. Among the voices championing this transformation is the collaborative campaign 'Women Who Advance', which Boardroom is a big supporter of.

The importance of DEI within associations cannot be overstated, as it stands at the heart of fostering a more creative, innovative, and resilient organisational structure and environment. Diverse associations benefit from a multiplicity of perspectives, experiences, and skills, leading to enhanced problem-solving capabilities, member engagement and greater productivity.

According to a report by McKinsey & Company, organisations in the top quartile for ethnic and cultural diversity outperform their peers by 36% in profitability, highlighting the direct correlation between diversity and organisational performance. Similarly, research published in the Harvard Business Review supports the notion that diverse teams are more innovative, as they are more likely to consider a wider range of options and solutions

Inspire Inclusion

An initiative launched by Dentons Global Advisors Association Management, and supported by visit.brussels, The Brussels Binder, Global Association Hubs Partnership (GAHP), ASSOCIATIONWORLD, ZN, Kadrant, and of course Boardroom Magazine, 'Women Who Advance' celebrates – to simply put it – the great talent, innovation and diversity of the European and international association community.

Over the past five years, it has even become a movement, emerging as a celebratory platform for female leaders, pioneers, and influencers at the vanguard of embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into the fabric of associations.

This period has seen the platform share the expertise, aspirations, and stories of over 100 inspiring association experts through interviews. Associations, inherently positioned as sector thought

leaders and innovation catalysts, have thus found in 'Women Who Advance' a compelling advocate for a leadership culture steeped in inclusivity.

The 2024 Campaign & Winners

Marking International Women's Day 2024, 'Women Who Advance' adopted the theme #InspireInclusion. This thematic exploration aimed to underscore how associations can reap benefits from the active involvement of a diverse array of stakeholders across their operational spectrum.

This year's theme showcased 27 new success stories, highlighting how embracing inclusivity can serve as a transformative force within associations, driving progress and sparking substantive transformation.

Held on 15 March, the global online event of the 2024 Women Who Advance Associations Awards was a testament to five years of advocacy and celebration of diversity within association leadership.



The ceremony started with Opening Remarks, followed by 4 Global Impact Awards across four regions, a Partner Award, along with 3 commendations. The awards spotlighted women who have redefined association leadership through their dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The winners of the 2024 awards were individuals who had made significant contributions to advancing inclusivity within their associations:

- **Advancing European Associations:** *Stefanie Duchac, recognised for her role as Head of Education at the European Society for Swallowing Disorders (ESSD)*
- **Advancing Global Associations:** *Sandra Ramdial, celebrated as the President-Elect of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO)*
- **Advancing Middle-Eastern Associations:** *Hoda Barakat, honored for her leadership as President of the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property - UAE (UAE AIPPI)*
- **Advancing North-American Associations:** *Amy Lestition Burke, acknowledged for her impactful work as CEO of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)*

- **Trusted Partners Award:** *Beth Surmont, lauded for her innovative contributions as VP Event Strategy and Design at 360 Live Media*

Commendations were also presented to Ana Mingo, Lorenza Romanese, and Tori Liu for their efforts in championing inclusivity within their respective associations.

What is Next

As 'Women Who Advance Associations' continues to honor exceptional female leaders, the call to broaden the scope of promotion of DEI as a strategic driver of success in associations grows louder. It is, in fact, a mission that extends beyond the capacities of women alone and seeks to encompass all aspects of diversity.

The launch of 'LIA - Leading Inclusive Associations' signifies a collective move towards more inclusive association strategies, aiming for greater engagement and impact. This worldwide community is designed as a platform for connection, idea exchange, and mutual support in the pursuit of more engaging, innovative, and impactful associations.

A work in progress at the time of writing these lines, we will make sure to share the news of its birth and

growth in due time. Watch this space, or google 'LIA - Leading Inclusive Associations' in a few days!

Boardroom's Support for DEI Initiatives

As part of our ongoing 'Building Back Better' series, Boardroom Magazine is proud to support the 'Women Who Advance' initiative and the broader DEI movement within the association community. These efforts align with our commitment to highlighting the challenges and triumphs of DEI, providing our readers with insightful narratives on the evolution of inclusion within the professional and association spheres.

Through this support, we continue to encourage and showcase the transformative power of diversity, equity, and inclusion in shaping the future of associations worldwide.

More information on Women Who Advance on womenwhoadvance.eu
Register and network on LIA at liacommunity.wylo.space

FEATURE

The Art of Association Membership

Let's explore the art and strategy behind crafting targeted marketing campaigns, curating personalised member experiences, and offering value-added services.

Our focus? To unveil the secrets of not only attracting new members to an association but also enhancing engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty among the current membership. What exactly – indeed – makes for creating a sustainable and thriving community that stands the test of time?



Engage to Retain: Building a Sustainable Membership Base

Lydia Pernal-Stoddart, Co-Chair of ESAE's Communications & Membership Community and Senior Advisor at the European Petrochemical Association, questions whether associations are fully leveraging their potential to build a sustainable, thriving membership base, offering insights into how adapting to changing work habits and professional aspirations is crucial.

As we navigate through a period of change, many associations are facing a crucial challenge: attracting new members while keeping the existing ones engaged. It raises the question: are we doing everything possible to build a sustainable and thriving community? Further exploration prompts us to ask if we're truly providing our members with the services and value they need and desire.

With changes in work habits and professional aspirations, it is key to adapt our strategies to our evolving membership base. But what steps can you take as an association leader to guarantee you are implementing the most effective strategies for member attraction and retention?

What's in it for me?

The question I have heard most often in the last three months from existing or prospective members is: *'what can I get out of your association?'* or *'what do you do besides x?'* At the heart of every thriving association lies a strong value proposition that resonates with its members. Since membership typically involves voluntary participation, it is crucial to motivate individuals to dedicate their valuable time to support your efforts. In the same way, you will not attract new members unless you can demonstrate that your association will benefit them personally, and not just to their organisation.

It is therefore essential that you start out by drafting a compelling

value proposition, explicitly stating what your unique benefits are. Define the exclusive access you offer to resources, networking opportunities, professional development, advocacy efforts, you name it, all those benefits that differentiate your association from your competitors or other organisations vying for their time.

At the same time, continuously assess and improve the range of resources, services and benefits you provide to members. Maintain constant and direct communication with your members to understand their needs and ensure they feel heard and valued for their contributions. By soliciting their feedback and clearly outlining how they can participate, you foster a sense of engagement without leading to unmet expectations or disappointment.

In his 2022 article for Boardroom, Sébastien Desmet made a convincing case for how to craft a good membership experience, simply by being a member-led association and putting *"the members at the centre of each activity"*. This is something we as association leaders should all take inspiration from, putting our members' needs at the centre of our work.

Research in 2022 as well as anecdotal evidence seems to imply that there is a growing misalignment between what association decision-makers prioritise and what members actually want. Not meeting members' expectations can result in them questioning the value of their investment in the association. As we navigate through changes in the workforce

landscape that have influenced membership demands —such as the expectation for round-the-clock access to resources and a more tailored experience—it is essential to innovate and collaboratively design a membership experience that truly resonates with our members' evolving needs.

Navigating the noise

How many conversations have you had with long-standing members who are unaware of the other working groups in your association beyond the one they joined? Or those who missed key information because they do not read newsletters or emails (properly)?

In a world where we are inundated with information, associations must refine their communications to ensure they are as effective and impactful as possible. It is important to remember that engaging with an association is not members' day job, many of whom volunteer their spare time to the association. This means that they do not have the time to read through emails in detail, to remember every process or to know which team members to contact.

Associations must tailor their communication strategies to cut through the noise and connect with their diverse member base. Engaging members through different channels is crucial, as well as ensuring that all communications is short, to the point and contains relevant context to counter the assumption that members have retained all previously communicated information.

Building on my earlier point of crafting a compelling value proposition, it is important to encourage two-way communication. This can be achieved by soliciting feedback, providing opportunities for member input, and actively engaging with their inquiries and suggestions. By doing so, you can make your members feel heard and valued, and thus improve their engagement within the association.

Scaling the personalised experiences

While personalised interactions may seem more manageable in smaller associations, they are equally important for larger organisations with hundreds or thousands of members. By clearly defining and promoting their value proposition, even larger associations can foster meaningful member engagement and encourage member loyalty.

Furthermore, they can go further and set up an ambassador programme to increase their reach. The most effective marketing tool available to us of remains word of mouth. It is a proven fact that word of mouth is extremely effective in attracting new customers, or in this case, members.

Thus, leveraging the natural network of your current members to serve as ambassadors can help recruit new ones or provide support to recently joined members, enhancing the overall community experience.

If you have been successful in involving your members and providing them with the services they want, they will be more than willing to go further and promote the association to their peers.

Have something to offer, then communicate about it

To quote Sarah Sladek, "*membership matters. Nothing else*". The survival and growth of an association depends solely on its members, and it is our role as association leaders to evolve in tandem with our members' needs, desires and current realities rather than expecting them to adjust to ours.

We must leverage this invaluable asset – our members – to build a community that thrives on collaboration, innovation and growth.

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



By Hannah Carvalho

How Student-Focused Initiatives Can Inspire the Next Generation of Members

Want to develop a strong pipeline for the next generation of members and industry leaders? Giving a little inspiration to young students can go a long way. Learn how this strategy worked for the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Laurie Mutdosch, CAE, director of membership and volunteer relations at the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), has found that the first thing people think of when they hear “industrial hygiene” is either dentistry or cleaning warehouses.

“It’s so much more than that,” she said. “It’s about mitigating the risk to exposure and keeping the workforce around the world safe.”

Like many associations, AIHA has an important mission but also faces hurdles in getting the public to understand the industry. Because of that, AIHA knew it needed get the word out to develop a pipeline of future leaders.

With that goal, the association launched the “I Am IH” challenge, asking members to speak to local schools and communities to spread awareness about the industry. As part of it, AIHA developed learning materials, including age-appropriate comic books, hero avatars, and games designed to inspire the next generation.

“We need to get more students involved in STEM, more young women, more minorities,” Mutdosch said. “We want to get young students excited about the industry.”

She shared how tailoring learning resources to your audience and supporting members through the process can make for a successful initiative that reaches students and benefits the industry and association.

Tailor Your Learning

To plan a successful challenge, associations should first decide the age levels they want to reach and create activities, lessons, and presentations geared toward those audiences.

“We’re in a visual world, and kids have more access to the internet and social media, so you need to figure out what your audience is interested in,” Mutdosch said. “For example, we’ve had members’ kids create TikTok videos about the industry. Kids are more likely to follow someone their own age on a platform they know.”

In addition, if members are speaking to kids about the industry, encourage them to bring tools and other equipment with them. For instance, AIHA members have brought personal protection equipment and showed students how it works and why it’s important.

“You want to incorporate information with something interactive,” Mutdosch said. “That makes a lasting impact. Our profession isn’t something students are going to learn from a school counselor or science teacher, so that’s where our members come in.”

Support Members

While members supply knowledge and local connections, organizations can provide materials, strategies, and other relevant information.



“When we first rolled this out, we had thumb drives with the resource materials and cards with a QR code that took members to our website, so it was easy to participate,” Mutdosch said.

Making participation simple is key. AIHA provides materials slated to students in different age groups for presentations. If members let AIHA know how many students are expected to attend their presentation, AIHA will send materials to the classroom ahead of time.

Mutdosch recommends guiding members through presentation logistics. Once members identify a school or youth group, AIHA does some research and lets members know who they need to contact, where they should park, whether the teacher will be in the classroom, and appropriate materials to bring with them.

“Make sure that members are engaged through this process,” she said. *“Our members can earn points and prizes like gift cards, so it encourages them and rewards them to get awareness out there.”*

Inspire Toward a Career

Associations can also create activities and content that help students see themselves in the industry. AIHA launched

a series of IH heroes that correspond to people in different career stages. These heroes represent people from diverse backgrounds who found different ways into the industry.

AIHA also launched comic books featuring IH professionals who work through problems using their skillsets. The association created digital cards, designed like baseball cards, with the hero’s background, how they came to the field, and their interests and hobbies.

For older students in high school and college, AIHA produces a salary survey where students can see starting salaries in their area for roles that they’re interested in.

“We want to bring more awareness to the profession and show students how the industry benefits the community and benefits them,” Mutdosch said.

This article originally appeared on [ASAEcenter.org](https://www.asae.org/). Reprinted with permission. Copyright ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership (October 2023). Washington, DC.



It's Not You, It's ~~Me~~...Us!

International Advisor to Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** argues that “individual motivation” is the wrong framework to understand recruitment and retention.

Why do individuals (and the always small number of individuals making decisions on behalf of organisations) decide to join associations? Why do they stay, and more importantly, why do they leave? The generally accepted analysis focuses on the range of services offered by the association, the cost of access, and the degree to which these services can be tailored to the individual needs and priorities of the member. The framework is primarily top-down, transactional, and atomised: individual members, “me”, judge their relationship with the association, “you”, based on the ROI of their overall cost of access to your services.

But is this really a true picture of what's going on? Obviously, any association with inadequate or declining ROI and

no attempt to personalise its services is going to fail, but a strong transactional offering should be viewed as entry-level “table stakes” in the recruitment and retention game, not an adequate strategy for long-term success.

To really understand the attractive principles of member magnetism, a “communal motivation” framework is required.

Emotional engagement & institutional unlovability

How often do we hear that members “love” their associations? Emotional engagement is an extremely common phenomenon across the whole vast range of associations, expressed in surveys and social media posts, and observed in behaviour whenever members gather together. But I

would argue, it isn't actually the abstract institutional entity that is “loved”, it is other members, and the sense of belonging to a community

of similarly-minded people, usually in practice a small sub-set of the association's membership. In fact, loving an association is probably grounds for failing a mental competency test!

Group dynamics and networking effects live at the heart of every association's recruitment and retention performance, but few systematically incorporate these concepts into their R&R programmes and practices, not least because there are no academic networking theories nor anthropological models of the association to which we can turn for guidance. But this is no excuse for inaction: there are many intuitive, practical steps we can take to recognise, shape and exploit communal motivation.

Thinking in “circles”

The first step is to stop thinking about members (and prospective members) as isolated individuals that the association needs to directly transact with or persuade. Instead, imagine them at the centre of unique circles of trust and/or friendship – their association family – with an outer (extremely important) layer of shared-interest acquaintances: their association tribe. These circles vary enormously in size and make-up; they change over

time; but they are almost inevitably what comes first to mind when members think about the association and why it is important to them.

Recruitment then becomes an exercise of understanding which prospects are connected to existing members, and leveraging those relationships by providing the ammunition to help members persuade prospects to join. Few members have professional circles of trust that are exclusive to the association membership – there will always be people they do business with or who they regard as intellectual peers who are currently non-members. No-one wants a sales pitch; they desire to know “what it’s like” from a trusted source.

And what drives conference attendance? With information available via so many alternative channels, the opportunity to interact face-to-face with “the right people” is the primary driver, with the majority of desired contacts from that person’s association tribe (think about who you most look forward to reconnecting with before your own events take place!), plus the kind of people who they’d love to invite into that tribe. Promoting who will attend and strongly encouraging self-promotion immediately on sign-up, facilitating ways to reconnect with acquaintances, encouraging

exploratory networking and getting-to-know-you activities, all of these are ways to reinforce communal motivation.

When it comes to retention, these circles become absolutely critical. Members care enormously what their families and tribes think about the association; they discuss and form collective views on issues, initiatives and proposed changes within these circles; they often believe that their tribe’s interests are synonymous with the interests of the association as a whole! Understanding these tribal differences is vital when tailoring communication and spotting potential problems well in advance. Because if one member is unhappy, the odds are that you have a much, much bigger retention challenge.

Nurturing strong circles, so that the association is, and is clearly perceived to be the essential connector and facilitator, is a powerful retention methodology: move beyond traditional geographical and sectoral groupings to encourage all shapes and flavours

of shared-interest group, both long-term and project-specific, top-down and bottom up; set up advisory committees and social activity task forces, and turn every webinar into a networking opportunity.

In fact, use every excuse to reinforce the natural relationship-building communal instincts that humans have evolved. The transactional objectives of any group activity should be seen as simply a starting point: the emotional attachment that can be created by the participants with each other is potentially of far more long-term value, and should be proactively encouraged.

...but some are more equal than others

One of the reasons most of us use association-to-individual-member models is because it's "easy". Unique, overlapping, dynamic-over-time circles of interest and trust are far more complex to understand and to design programmes for, even if this is a far more accurate portrayal of reality! Luckily, in every association there will inevitably be some archetypes (Expert, Innovator, Connector, Ambassador, Mentor, etc.) whose roles within this networking complexity are disproportionately important, both for recruitment and retention. Focusing attention on their happiness and success is a great way to cut through the complexity.

Ensure that your most expert and innovative members are fiercely loyal and as active as possible (using as many different incentives as you can come up with – use whatever works!), because they are like planets that generate a huge gravitational

attraction for members and prospects alike. And beware when they are not visible and engaged; where they go, others will follow.

Identify your natural connectors, the extrovert around whom crowds gather in the conference bar, the youngster with her own blog, and use their voices to amplify your messaging; put your natural facilitators to work, offer training and frequent opportunities to exercise and expand their group- and relationship-nurturing skills.

Integrators are the bridges between your association's different tribes, the people who straddle different circles of interest and cultures, and help to break down undesirable barriers: they can be some of your biggest problem-solvers. Ambassadors build the bridges from your association to other organisations that share your values or mission, and can be some of your most powerful recruitment cheerleaders.

Recognise and celebrate your mentors, and make an early start to the process of identifying and encouraging future mentors. Their role in "onboarding" new members or first-time conference attendees is absolutely critical, setting the scene for successful emotional engagement and helping avoid the always dangerous new member early-resignation problem.

It's us, too!

Communal motivation is a concept that can also be beneficially applied within the association's staff. Recruitment and retention targets shouldn't be incentivised for individuals working in sales, marketing or member development, they should ideally be the responsibility of everyone in every division and regional office, from Events to Finance, from Education to Board Governance, and from CEO to office junior.

The most powerful incentives are those that everyone can contribute towards and feels they have a stake in, and if engagement and retention are not front-of-mind for every member of the team in all their activities, then that association will be certain one day to face a retention crisis!

This article is written under a partnership between Boardroom and Global Association Hubs – Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC – which are committed to building innovative partnerships with international associations, and to creating opportunities for the discussion of key strategic association issues such as this.

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Creating Genuine Value for Members

Senthil Gopinath, ICCA CEO, reflects on how the industry has evolved, the significant shifts it has faced, and the innovative strategies ICCA has implemented to support its members.

The last few years have been a period of incredible change in our industry. We've seen the meetings and events space shift in ways no one could have predicted, and each of us has had to adapt to challenges that caused so much upheaval in our community. We've weathered the storm, but in the wake of it all, we're faced with new issues to tackle and new mountains to climb.

The heart of what ICCA does is facilitate connections that help organisations grow, thrive, and succeed — whether they're scale-ups or global giants. Across sectors and across the world, our members are what make ICCA what it is: a means of connection; a knowledge hub dedicated to lifting up members; and a resource with valuable information.

Periods of upheaval always lead to periods of uncertainty, but we emerged from the tumult with a sharp vision: to give our members unparalleled value; to earn their loyalty, build mutual trust; and grow together.

Over the last few years, ICCA's mission has coalesced around a theme: to adapt to the changes in our industry and adjust to serve our members. In the wake of unprecedented turbulence, we took stock of our organisation; took into account how the world shifted; and took action to strengthen and solidify our methodology, our values, and our systems.

We knew we needed to address our members' needs on a personal level and deliver value tailor-made to their needs. We listened to the specific requirements of members across the five sectors of our base, across the diverse regions of the world, and across business models. Our business model underwent strategic changes aimed at refreshing our tone, messaging, and value proposition. We shifted our perspective to

a circular model with three tenets: attract, engage, and delight.

Our members in different regions have different requirements. We understood we needed to create specific roadmaps for each sector and customise our communications. We went to the source to find out what our members needed. Through focus groups and surveys, we homed in on member pain points so we could strategise best practices. Our goal is member satisfaction and loyalty, and we are attuned to serving member needs on a personal level.

Our offerings continue to evolve. ICCA's Business Intelligence has undergone upgrades to offer members the ability to research and make the connections they need to succeed. We recognised the need for certification in key industry skills, and developed ICCASkills in response. We boosted our educational programmes with ICCAUni, which aims to reach out to the next generation of leaders and help them put down roots in the industry.

We also focused on creating content that appealed to non-members with the goal of providing enough value to get their attention. Programmes like the ICCA roadshow in the Latin America and the Caribbean region are designed to appeal to organisations who haven't made the leap to join ICCA. Our webinars, online content, and educational programmes offer benefits to members and non-members alike, developed with one goal in mind: provide value that organisations won't find anywhere else.

It's our mission to attract, engage, and delight our members. We understand member attraction, development, and retention is a process — one we take to heart. Our strategy is to attract and retain through true value generation, which sets ICCA apart from other organisations.



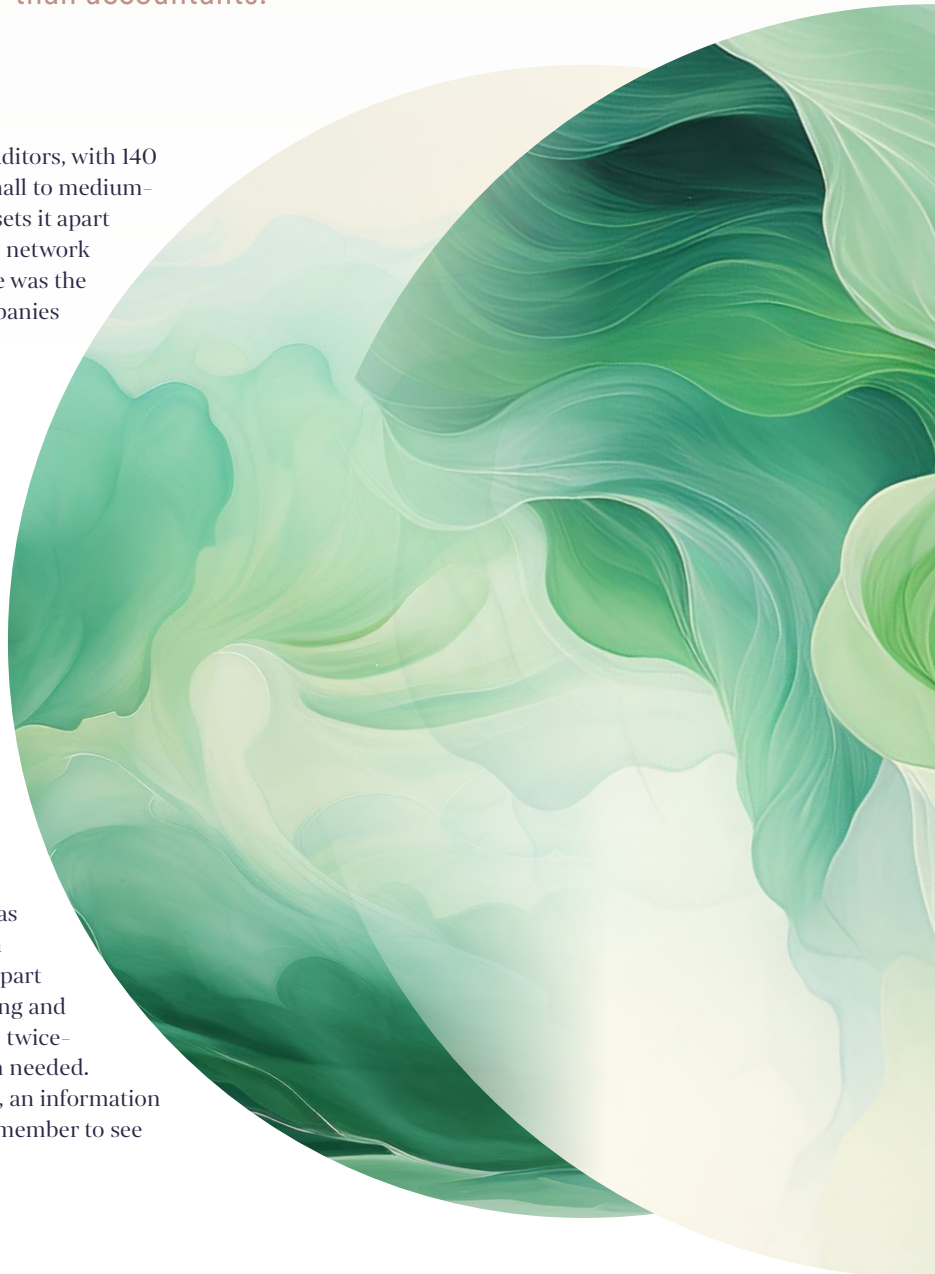
Accounting is About Value

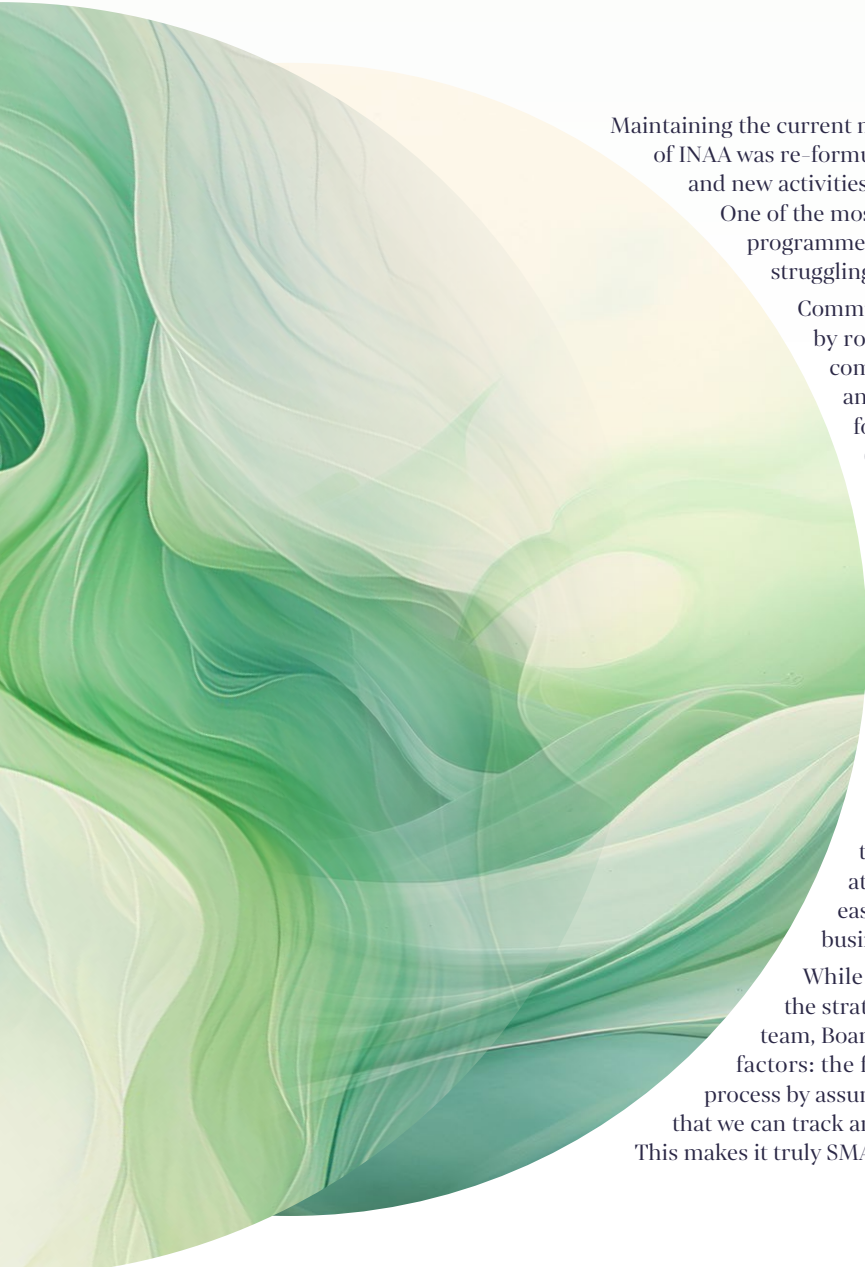
Nadège Mullier, Executive Manager of INAA, the global association of accountants and auditors, explains all about the organisation's three-pillar strategy, focusing on attracting new members, retaining the existing ones and increasing business opportunities. At the end, nobody understands the notion of value better than accountants.

INAA is a global association of accountants and auditors, with 140 members in 50 countries. The members are all small to medium-sized firms, which work fully independently. This sets it apart from the big accounting firms, working as a global network under one brand. The original reason for existence was the ability to offer to the underlying clients – the companies the firms do the accounting for – access to trusted accountants in other countries when they wanted to expand their business internationally. Since then, the focus has shifted towards networking, education and sharing of best practices.

Since a couple of years, INAA is facing a similar challenge as many other associations: with the arrival of a new generation of leadership, the value of the association is questioned, resulting in a decrease of membership. This triggered the Board to act and come up with a plan to address the retention of existing members, attracting new members and developing business opportunities.

The new INAA leadership, in place since mid-last year, insisted that the plan should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and that they should have an active role in rolling out this plan. As a result, the plan was further detailed in a three-pillar strategy and each member of the Board was made accountable for a part of the plan. This is underpinned by detailed tracking and an overall scorecard, which is reviewed during the twice-monthly Board meeting, allowing for agility when needed. And in order to create transparency at Board level, an information sharing platform was put in place, allowing every member to see progress made at a glance.





Maintaining the current membership was the starting point. The value proposal of INAA was re-formulated, a value framework was developed and published, and new activities were developed to increase the overall value offered. One of the most visible actions was the implementation of a talent programme, which was warmly welcomed by a community struggling to attract and retain talent.

Communication with the community was also intensified, by rolling out an association app, which is used for communication between the association and the members and between the members themselves. The creation of focus groups, sharing best practices on specific topics (e.g., e-commerce) further stimulates the use of this app and collaboration between the members.

The “attracting new members” plan has a double focus: increasing the geographical footprint of INAA in line with the shift of economies (e.g., the rise of South Asia) and maintaining the existing footprint by giving priority to countries “at risk” (e.g., where a member is expected to stop its activities for some reason). The recruiting process was reviewed, which – combined with the concentrated efforts of the team – will result in faster onboarding.

Finally, a strategy was defined to stimulate business development. It focuses on creating more visibility for the INAA community by publications in trade magazines, attending and speaking at trade shows and making it easy for entrepreneurs to find information on how to do business in other countries on the INAA website.

While it is still “early days”, we are seeing the first result of the strategy, which is of course highly stimulating for the entire team, Board members included. For me, there are two key success factors: the fact that the members of the Board are driving the process by assuming responsibility for a part of the plan and the fact that we can track and share results by optimizing the use of digital tools. This makes it truly SMART.

A Strategic Blueprint for Member Engagement

In the evolving landscape of professional congress organisation, the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) stands out for its dedication to enhancing the meetings industry and the event experience. At the heart of IAPCO's success is its commitment to building a thriving community of engaged members. Here is what **Jimema Ruiz**, IAPCO's new council member and Chief of Staff at BTC Americas, recommends.

By offering educational events, networking opportunities, a wealth of educational resources, and congresses, IAPCO aims to not only enrich its members' professional lives but also to ensure the association's growth and ongoing relevance. Achieving this requires innovative strategies for attracting new members and retaining existing ones. Incorporating real-life examples, this article explores effective approaches to elevate membership engagement within professional associations.

Community-centric environment

At the core of successful member engagement strategies is the creation of a community-centric environment. Members are drawn to networks where they feel genuinely valued and understood, a sentiment that fosters loyalty and encourages active participation.

Organisations like the American Marketing Association have excelled in creating specialised interest groups, allowing members to forge meaningful connections with peers

sharing similar challenges and issues... an solutions. This strategy not only strengthens community bonds but also demonstrates the power of understanding and addressing the diverse needs of your membership.

Embracing these needs is fundamental to effective communication. Tailoring messages and resources to meet the distinct preferences of various member segments significantly boosts engagement. The Project Management Institute, known for its personalised learning resources, serves as an exemplary model in this regard. By focusing on the specific challenges, opportunities, and interests of their membership, associations can craft communications that resonate deeply, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and engagement.

Unique benefits

Adding to this, the competitive landscape of professional associations today demands that unique benefits and value-added services be a part of the membership package. Offering exclusive industry insights, discounts

on educational programs, and access to networking events with key industry figures can greatly enhance the attractiveness of membership.

In this context, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) provides its members with access to a vast digital library, exclusive webinars, and reduced rates for conferences, effectively demonstrating how offering specialised resources can significantly enhance the membership experience. This approach not only enriches members' professional development but also reinforces the association's commitment to providing tangible value, thereby reinforcing the membership proposition.

And then there is the role of technology in redefining member engagement, which cannot be overstated and which has been accelerating over the past few years.

The integration of AI into association membership strategies specifically offers unparalleled opportunities for personalisation, significantly enhancing member engagement and satisfaction. AI can analyse member

data, preferences, and engagement history to tailor communications, event recommendations, and professional development opportunities to individual needs. For example, the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) utilises AI to customise its members' experience on its digital platforms. Based on members' interactions, publication downloads, and event participation, IEEE's AI system can recommend highly relevant articles, upcoming webinars, and networking opportunities that align with each member's specific interests and career goals. This level of personalisation ensures that members receive information and opportunities that are most beneficial to them, thereby increasing engagement and perceived value of the membership.

Experiences elevated

Elevating the event experience itself is another critical component. Incorporating dynamic agendas, securing engaging speakers, and integrating interactive elements enhance the value of events. The move towards Hybrid Event Models by organisations, including TED Conferences, illustrates the potential of combining in-person and virtual participation to expand reach and engagement, offering tailored experiences that cater to the varied preferences of a diverse membership.

Lastly, valuing and acting upon member feedback is essential for continuous improvement and adaptation. Regularly soliciting insights through surveys and evaluations offers a clear picture of member preferences, satisfaction levels, and areas for improvement. This feedback loop not only signals an association's commitment to its members but also paves the way for innovations that can further enrich the membership experience. The approach taken by the Consumer Technology Association in using attendee feedback to shape future CES® events is a prime example of how listening to your community can drive positive change.

In the long run, associations that are continuously striving to meet and exceed the expectations of their members will forge stronger relationships, ensuring their relevance and success in the fast-evolving landscape of business events.

IAPCO is a not-for-profit membership association, registered in Switzerland. IAPCO members are Professional Congress Organisers (companies, not individuals) who have qualified for membership under the detailed application process by demonstrating that they consistently deliver PCO services to their clients and partners at high-quality standards.



By Vicky Koffa

Sarawak Creates Legacy Across Borders

Business Events Sarawak (BESarawak)'s reputation as a leader for launching and advocating for legacy projects is long-standing. In 2018, the destination's convention bureau added another notch on its belt when hosting the 10th Better Air Quality 2018 (BAQ 2018) conference in Kuching. For three days, the gathering laid the groundwork for initiatives combating air pollution, leading to major environmental breakthroughs in the Malaysian region and well beyond.

Collaboration and unity was the overarching concept at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching, venue of the event. Organised by Clean Air Asia (CAA), the Clean Air Forum Society of Malaysia (MyCAS), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Malaysia and the Natural Resources and Environment Board of Sarawak, the conference set out to develop 'new solutions, designs and approaches that will help chart more sustainable future horizons'.

Under the theme 'Regional Action, Global Impact', it addressed the issue of Asia's role in the world's environmental health, especially in regards to decarbonising economies and lifestyles. The event was

ultimately presented with the Sarawak Legacy Award by BESarawak during the 10th Anak Sarawak Awards in 2023.

The Partnership for Cleaner Air

BESarawak's collaboration with the stakeholders involved was instrumental for the success of the conference. "BESarawak provided both Clean Air Asia and The Clean Air Forum Society of Malaysia financial support, ensuring the conference's logistical needs were met, thereby enhancing its feasibility and attractiveness to participants," says Dr. Noor Zaitun Yahaya, Senior Lecturer at the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu and Chairwoman of BAQ 2018.

From the very beginning, BESarawak actively sought (through its extensive network) potential organisers, recognising the shared vision of promoting clean air and addressing air quality challenges between CAA and MyCAS. "By aligning mission and vision, BESarawak facilitated synergy between these organisations, maximising the conference's impact and relevance. This collaboration was crucial in orchestrating a successful event that not only addressed pressing environmental concerns but

also fostered knowledge exchange and innovation," continues Yahaya.

Placing the right people in the same room, the conference ignited discussions which raised awareness about the detrimental effects of air pollution and the urgent need for action and significantly influenced post-pandemic development policies.

"Strategies like advocating against open burning, inspired by successful initiatives from other regions like China's "Clean Air, Blue Skies" campaign, have been discussed and implemented, contributing to tangible improvements in air quality and environmental sustainability in Sarawak. MyCAS has played a vital role as the main consultant for the National Clean Air Master Plan for 2040 for Malaysia, which is a project initiated by the Department of Environment (DOE)," Yahaya informed Boardroom.

According to the professor, some of the MyCAS members have been appointed as expert panel or advisory at a national and international level, such as the National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP) for the Ministry of Health in Indonesia or participating as panel assessors for the Qatar and Kuwait National Research Grant on air quality.



Dr Noor Zaitun receiving her Sarawak Legacy Award in 2023's Anak Sarawak Awards.



Measurable Impacts & Outcomes

Five years on from the conference, the legacy results are evident, positioning Sarawak as a forerunner in environmentally conscious economic development. The awareness raised back in 2018 led the region to participate in key international forums such as the International Theory and Technical International Aerosol Conference and Malaysia Air Quality Annual Symposium (T&T IAC and MAQAS) in 2019, and the Malaysian Clean Air International Forum (MACIF I.O) in 2023, triggering new health impact assessments.

Yahaya says: *“One notable outcome has been the revision of air quality standards at the federal level and the formulation of the Clean Air Master Plan (2020 – 2040), guided by the active involvement of MyCAS members. This comprehensive plan sets the trajectory for policy frameworks over the next two decades. Their active engagement with industries, green technology, and international organisations has elevated MyCAS’s profile in air quality management and sustainability, leading to collaborations, advisory roles, and hosting of prestigious conferences such as the Asian Aerosol Conference (AAC) 2024.”*

Moreover, Sarawak has seen advancements in green transport, including the implementation of Hydrogen-powered Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) – a zero-emission and trackless tram – and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses, contributing to the government’s National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR).

Building Upon Success for Future Environmental Action

Leveraging the successes and learnings from BAQ 2018, BESarawak has continued to champion environmental awareness and action in subsequent events.

“BESarawak has continued its support for environmental initiatives, such as funding for AAC 2024, ensuring that sustainability remains a core focus. Additionally, the convention bureau has embraced technology to enhance the environmental impact of its events, incorporating eco-friendly practices in event management such as digital registration and paperless communication,” explains Yahaya.

The region is now, more than ever, either initiating or involved in expert panels featuring leading figures in environmental science and policy,

providing attendees with valuable insights and meaningful discussions on air quality and sustainability.

On a social level, BESarawak has prioritised the development of women leaders in the environmental sector, empowering them to take on leadership roles in organising events and driving environmental initiatives. Prominent example of such diverse voices is the Sarawak Energy Leading Women Network (SELWN), a professional networking group developing leadership competencies and capabilities of women in the energy sector.

The success of the Better Air Quality 2018 Conference at the time of the event and years later highlights Sarawak’s commitment to organising conferences that make a difference. Fully supported by the government, BESarawak is not just a mediator between the organiser and the local stakeholders but also an active participant in creating impactful opportunities.

More info on Sarawak as a conference destination: businesseventssarawak.com

By Vicky Koffa

Carving Norway's Path to Architectural Innovation and Sustainability

A synonym to all things sustainability, Norway excels in the last decades in the use of renewable energy, green technologies, and sustainable resource handling. The country's abundance in trees has allowed it to focus on becoming a leader in wood processes, architecture and engineering, creating not only higher sustainable quality of living for its citizens but also a fertile business ecosystem for the wood-based sector.

In the early 2000s, Norway embarked on an ambitious programme that would not only redefine its landscape but also position it as a leader in the global architecture and construction industry, the Norwegian Wood-based Innovation Scheme. The primary goals of the scheme were to increase the profitability of these industries and encourage the use of wood through the development of innovative products and processes. Administered by Innovation Norway, this government initiative aimed to transform the nation's rich forestry resources into a hub of innovation and economic growth while adhering to principles of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

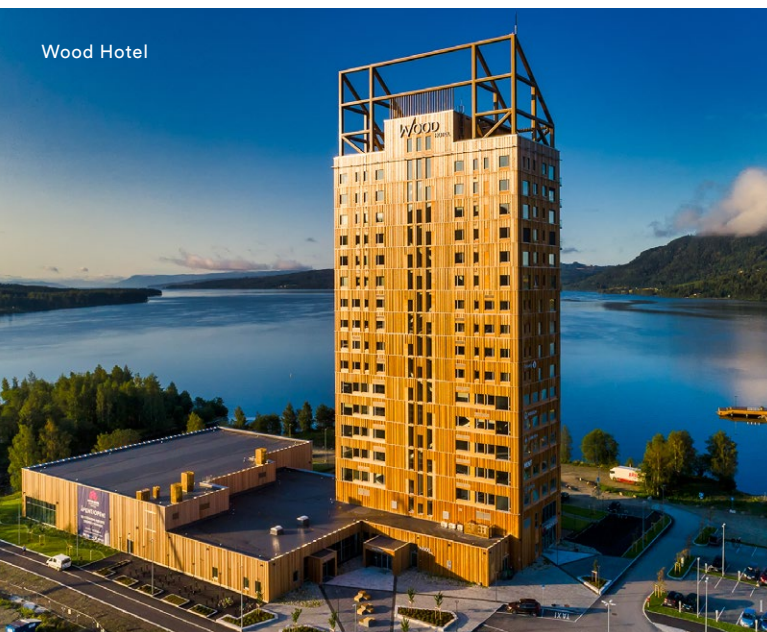
Pioneering the Future of Wood in Construction

The country's vision was clear and required a significant emphasis on research, development, and innovation, which Norway addressed successfully with important support by the state and the EU. As a result, projects from long-span bridges (world's longest), high-rise buildings, and airports to sports halls, residential and office buildings, and student housing, decorated the country using innovative techniques for sustainable construction.

Some representative examples are the Mjøstårnet (Mjø Tower), a 85,4-metre-high building, the tallest in the world, made mainly by locally-sourced wood (using minimal amounts of the less sustainable steel and concrete); the Bjergsted Financial Park in Stavanger (the new head office for SR-Bank and one of Europe's largest office buildings in timber); and Valle Wood in Oslo (Norway's largest commercial building in cross laminated timber).

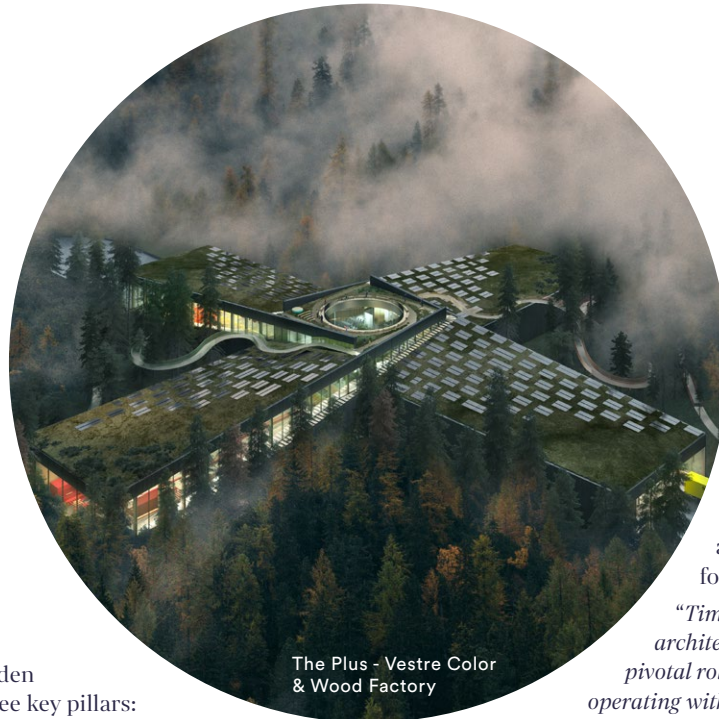
Arriving in Oslo, the first thing one encounters is a spacious sustainable airport built from wood and recycled materials mainly. Any delegate entering the country is immediately immersed in Norway's eco-friendly values, which extend to organising sustainable business events for their entire duration, already from entering the country.

These structures serve as a testament to the country's commitment to combining traditional materials with modern technology and design principles, showcasing the versatility and environmental benefits of wood as a construction material. *"We think that timber is the right material for the green transition in the building industry. It's beautiful, and it's a very sustainable and environmentally friendly solution,"* says Siv Helene Stangeland, partner and creative director at Helen&Hard architects, to VisitNorway. *"Timber is also an organic material that connects us to nature and has a tactile quality. It smells good, it provides very good*



Wood Hotel

© Sven Erik Hoff



The Plus - Vestre Color & Wood Factory

acoustics in the room, and it has a certain effect on us – it calms us down. Wooden architecture therefore has the potential to give us a better life,” she adds.

Competence, Sustainability, & Export

At the heart of Norway’s wooden architecture program are three key pillars: competence, sustainability, and export. The initiative has fostered a culture of continuous learning and expertise in timber engineering, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and best practices within the international community. Sustainability, which is a pillar of Norwegian values, is reflected in every aspect of the programme, from the responsible management of forestry resources to the energy efficiency of the final structures. Bright example is the circWOOD project which investigates aspects of wood use in the Norwegian economy, with particular emphasis on the reuse of wood in construction projects.

The export potential of Norwegian wood and architectural innovation has also been a significant focus, with the country looking to share its advancements with the world. This promotes green building practices globally and opens new markets for Norwegian wood, contributing to the nation’s economic prosperity. No wonder Norway occupies two spots in the latest Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) with Oslo in the 2nd position and Bergen in the 5th.

The World Conference on Timber Engineering in Oslo

Norway’s efforts in promoting timber engineering and sustainable construction resulted in the World Conference on Timber Engineering (WCTE 2023) held in Oslo in June 2023. Attracting 850 delegates from around the globe, the congress served as a melting pot of ideas, innovations, and discussions on the future of wood in construction.

It was a testament to Norway’s leading position in the field and its commitment to fostering a sustainable and innovative future for the industry.

“Timber Engineering and architectural practice play a pivotal role in shaping our future, operating within a broader context that encompasses various aspects of the value chain, from land management and legislation to resource utilisation and building material production. Norway is at the forefront of this sector. When considering the sustainable use of wood in construction, climate change underscores the urgency for environmentally conscious practices,” says Knut Werner Lindeberg Alsén, Co-Chair, Executive Secretary and lead organiser of the conference.

“Oslo was an obvious choice for the conference. Its proximity to Norway’s largest suppliers of building materials, conveniently located near Oslo City Center, was a key factor. Furthermore, Oslo’s central location provided access to some of the leading Norwegian R&D institutions engaged in research relevant to the sector, facilitating pre- and post-conference tours,” he adds.

While Oslo has been a focal point for showcasing Norway’s achievements, the initiative spans across the country, reflecting a national commitment to this cause. Trondheim is one of seven Early Adopter Cities of the Build-in-Wood project, while Stavanger has been called Wooden City with over 1000 timber buildings. Each region contributes its unique strengths and resources to the programme, enriching the nation’s collective expertise and capabilities in wood-based construction.

More information on Norway as a conference destination :
Elisabeth.Alethe.Bugge@innovasjon norge.no /
business.visitnorway.com/en/meetings

By Vicky Koffa

Geneva's Model for Sustainable Urban Innovation

Renowned for its diplomatic significance and natural beauty, Geneva in Switzerland is also leading by example when it comes to sustainable practices. Armed with governmental support, event venues, social and environmental projects, local institutions and international organisations demonstrate how urban spaces can embrace sustainable development goals at every level.

The Canton and City of Geneva, along with the Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation, are dedicated to developing sustainable tourism. The State Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 and the adoption of a revised Cantonal Climate Plan in 2021 reflect a citywide commitment to sustainability. This is further evidenced by the promotion of the "Ambassadeur du Terroir Genevois" and "Genève Région – Terre Avenir (GRTA)" labels, which emphasise the importance of local products and sustainable agriculture.

The Genilac project in Geneva is a pioneering initiative harnessing Lake Geneva's hydrothermal energy to provide

a sustainable heating and cooling solution for buildings. Launched by Services Industriels de Genève in April 2016, Genilac is dedicated to reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption by leveraging the constant temperature of lake water to meet the heating and cooling demands of the urban infrastructure. Its implementation aims to connect to over 350 buildings by 2035 and drastically cut CO² emissions.

In the realm of transparency, Geneva has launched the 'Cercle Indicateurs', a system for assessing the municipality's efforts in the field of sustainability, which allows it to compare itself with other Swiss cities.



Parc La Grange

International Reach

On top of the local authorities, many international organisations based in Geneva are active in the field. Initiatives like 2050Today and the SDG Lab at the UN showcase the city's strategic role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 2050Today exemplifies a collaborative commitment among local and international entities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, encouraging a transparent, action-oriented approach to climate action. Simultaneously, the SDG Lab acts as a catalyst for innovative solutions towards the 2030 Agenda, facilitating a multi-stakeholder platform that bridges governments, NGOs, the private sector, and academia. Its focus on inclusivity and innovation promotes a cross-pollination of ideas by leveraging Geneva's unique ecosystem of global expertise.

Business Events Venues & Hotels Take Centrestage

At the heart of these endeavors is PALEXPO (capacity over 9,000), Geneva's premier exhibition and convention centre, committed to sustainability since 1993. In its comprehensive strategy with the principles of 'avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle', the venue is focused on sourcing 95% of its products locally and reducing water and electricity consumption.

In fact, it boasts 30,000-sqm photovoltaic panels, making it the second-largest solar power plant in Switzerland. PALEXPO has set ambitious goals, including becoming an energy-neutral building by 2030 and joining the SIG GeniLac network.

The International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG) can accommodate up to 2,200 people in its 22 meeting rooms, always in a sustainable manner. Solar panels, beehives, GeniLac thermal solution and recycling are some of the venue's green efforts. Modernising infrastructures, adapting to clients' needs, choosing quality partners and acting in a responsible manner are ongoing commitments for the centre's sustainable contribution.

Alongside these venues, the Geneva Convention Bureau's website provides a detailed list of hotels, restaurants and activities which promote low carbon impact practices among delegates.

Geneva Sustainability Centre

Complementing these infrastructural advancements, the Geneva Sustainability Centre (GSC) – functioning in the framework of the International Hospital Federation – reinforces the city's sustainable transformation in the healthcare sector. Its mission is 'to equip hospital leaders with the information, tools, and skills to deliver a net positive impact for a healthy and resilient future.'

Under the leadership of Executive Director Sonia Roschnik, the Centre takes a holistic approach to sustainability, focusing on the environmental, social, and economic pillars. *"The GSC takes a holistic approach to sustainability," Roschnik explains, "recognising that hospitals and health systems can harness the synergies of working across these pillars to create multiple wins for the environment, society, and the economy."*

The Centre's establishment in Geneva is no coincidence. Its location capitalises on the city's vibrant ecosystem of international organisations, NGOs, and academic institutions, fostering collaborations that drive forward global sustainability goals. Roschnik says: *"Being based in Geneva allows us to leverage the wealth of knowledge, partnerships, and international influence concentrated here, enabling us to shine a light on innovative solutions and share best practices in sustainable healthcare."*

Roschnik envisions the GSC playing an increasing role in the global shift towards sustainable healthcare. *"Our aim is to accelerate the transition to low carbon, resilient, and sustainable health systems through more partnerships, trainings and our Sustainability Accelerator Tool,"* she concludes.

Building Sustainability Bridges

Geneva's sustainability commitment is indisputable also around business events. From October 2-5, 2023, at the CICG, a Swiss-based initiative known as Building Bridges came in the spotlight. Inaugurated in 2019, the event seeks to fast-track the shift towards a global economic framework that not only aligns with but actively supports the SDGs.

The 2023 edition offered a comprehensive programme, starting with a summit on October 2 that encouraged high-level dialogues on the future of finance, followed by three Action Days filled with over 60 crowd-sourced events. With a diverse community ranging from the financial sector to NGOs, corporate companies, international communities, governmental authorities, and media, Building Bridges is creating a sustainable and inclusive economic system.

Geneva's innovative model of sustainable urban development showcases how a city can integrate environmental, social, and economic sustainability into every operation, from local initiatives to international collaboration.

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:
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By Remi Deve

Taking the Collaborative Pulse of Zurich

Zurich has long been recognised as a hub of innovation, economic dynamism, and intellectual exchange. This city, where great minds have historically gathered to share knowledge and foster collaboration, continues to be a fertile ground for generating groundbreaking innovations and forming powerful networks. The essence of Zurich lies in its ability to connect individuals not just geographically but intellectually, turning individual ideas into collective visions that shape the future.



Zurich's allure stems from its remarkable blend of natural beauty and urban vibrancy. The city's landscape, characterised by the serene Lake Zurich, flowing rivers, dense forests, and nearby mountains, stands in stark contrast to its bustling economic and innovative activities. This juxtaposition is what makes Zurich unique and acts as a magnet for creative and forward-looking thinkers. It's a place where diverse talents, skills, and companies converge, many of them global leaders in their sectors, creating a rich soil for successful collaborations. In this context, Zurich's collaborative spirit is a driving force

behind its success in maintaining Switzerland's top rank in the Global Innovation Index since 2011.

For participants of business events Zurich offers unparalleled opportunities for engagement with some of Europe's leading universities, companies, and thought leaders across various fields such as Life Sciences, FinTech, FoodTech, ICT, and advanced manufacturing. This close-knit dialogue and proximity are crucial for successful conferences but also for spurring innovative ideas that will have an impact on the world at large.

Life sciences at their best

Zurich's life science community – specifically – boasts a formidable blend of academic excellence and practical application, anchored by three prestigious academic institutions: the University of Zurich, ETH Zurich, and ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences. “These institutions, along with four university hospitals, foster a rich environment for both basic and applied research. It attracts top-tier researchers worldwide and nurtures a vast talent pool and numerous innovative spin-offs, says

Danielle Spichiger, Project Manager Life Sciences for the Business & Economic Development of the Canton of Zurich. *Major pharmaceutical companies and innovative SMEs collaborate closely with these academic powerhouses, ensuring that novel products swiftly move from research to market, benefiting people globally.”*

Zurich's life science ecosystem excels in diversity, spanning pharmaceuticals, biotech, health tech, and digital health, enhanced by strong ICT, financial, and insurance sectors. Central to its success is the emphasis on interdisciplinary cooperation and communication, facilitated by initiatives such as Life Science Zurich—a strategic alliance between the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich which is led by Dr. Silvie Cuperus.

Dr. Silvie Cuperus, Head of Life Science Zurich, underscores the essence of this collaboration: “Zurich thrives on collaboration, where pioneers in technology, creative minds, and thought leaders come together to shape the future. Our initiatives, like the Open Innovation Life Sciences, Life Science Zurich and the Life Science Zurich Business Network, aim to build a vibrant ecosystem for open life

science, fostering networking, knowledge sharing, and collaboration.”

Collaborative ethos

More generally, Zurich’s status as a major innovation hub is attributed to its collaborative ethos, where the pioneering spirit meets cutting-edge technology and a vibrant creative scene. “With our activities at Life Science Zurich” Dr. Cuperus notes, “we create opportunities for a dialog in the society about topics and findings in life sciences. We share knowledge and contribute to promoting Zurich as a centre for cutting-edge research, first-class education and economic innovation in the field.”

Through a variety of activities including lecture series, exhibitions, panel talks, and educational workshops, Life Science Zurich provides platforms for knowledge exchange and networking. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in supporting science communication and the organisation of conferences.

Case in point: the Open Innovation in Life Sciences Conference, organised by early career researchers every year. Dr. Cuperus explains: “This event fosters interactions among early career researchers in all life science fields as well as explores career development in the context of open science. It brings together all relevant stakeholder groups to discuss topics pertaining to open science and innovation.”

Ultimately, Dr. Cuperus highlights the success of collaborations within the city’s life sciences sector, stating, “The strength of the life science community in Zurich lies in its academic and research excellence, support for startups, and an international environment conducive to open exchange.” These collaborations enhance research and development and builds a sense of community among

local and international scientists, researchers, and companies.

These strengths can definitely help organising conferences that will leave a lasting legacy. “Conferences held in Zurich offer a multifaceted platform for professionals to not only maintain existing contacts but significantly expand their network. They stand as gateways to accessing a wide array of interesting individuals, potential customers, and collaborative partners, especially when they facilitate targeted networking opportunities. Content-wise, these gatherings are invaluable for learning about new industry trends, engaging in discussions with key stakeholders, and finding both inspiration and potential partners for new projects.” Danielle Spichiger concludes. “In essence, conferences in Zurich are a cornerstone for professional development and industry advancement – here we are particularly well placed to facilitate just that.”



ICCA FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE MEETINGS 2024 IN ZURICH

The ICCA Future of Healthcare Meetings, slated for September 2-4, 2024, promises to be a pivotal convergence of healthcare professionals, event planners, and thought leaders. This event aims to explore the evolving landscape of healthcare, with a particular focus on how planners can design medical events that are both impactful and sustainable. Set against the backdrop of Zurich’s innovative spirit, participants will engage in a rich exchange of ideas, best practices, and collaborative opportunities.

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:
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BUSINESS EVENTS AUSTRALIA



By Remi Deve

Exploring Australia's Edge

Traveling to Australia is always a delight, especially during AIME in Melbourne, the premier trade event for the meetings and events industry in the Asia Pacific. On this occasion, Boardroom received an update on why Australia has confirmed its status as a top conference destination. The country's latest initiatives and advancements indeed underscore its dynamic progress, with leaders focusing on environmental responsibility and forefront innovation.

Australia's concerted effort to position itself as a top-tier destination for business events is supported by its strategic approach to sustainability, innovation, and industry collaboration. Through hosting events that not only showcase its natural and cultural assets but also its leadership in critical global discussions, Australia has been setting a new standard for business events worldwide.

Sustainability at the Core

In an interview with Boardroom, Robin Mack, Executive General Manager Commercial & Business Events Australia, articulates the significance of sustainability in the industry. *"Sustainability is a key priority for us as an organisation,"* Mack states, emphasising the integration of sustainability with indigenous culture and accessibility. Australia's sustainability framework, showcasing initiatives like the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's green rating and ICC Sydney's many initiatives in the area (including the recent RESPECT event), aims to inspire the entire industry towards more sustainable practices.

Echoing this sentiment, Julia Swanson, Chief Executive of the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), highlights the strategic alignment with Victorian priority sectors to drive policy outcomes and progression. Swanson notes, *"MCB works strategically with the State Government of Victoria to bid for events that are going to drive policy outcomes and progression for them."* The Asia Pacific Offshore Wind and Green Hydrogen Summit in August 2023 serves as a prime example of this approach, attracting close to 800 delegates and marking Victoria's leadership in the energy transition.

Fostering Innovation Across Sectors

Australia's commitment to innovation spans multiple sectors, showcasing its role as a global leader in pioneering developments.

The recent introduction of Qantas' Perth to Paris and Rome direct route signifies a leap forward in travel accessibility, making Australia more connected to the global community. Vanessa Hudson, Qantas Group CEO, heralds this development as a testament to Australia's innovative spirit.



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Southbank Melbourne

BUSINESS EVENTS BID FUND PROGRAM: HOW ASSOCIATIONS CAN BENEFIT FROM IT

The Business Events Bid Fund Program (BFP), managed by Tourism Australia's Business Events Australia, aims to enhance Australia's competitiveness in securing new international business events. It offers financial assistance at the crucial bidding stage, supporting bids where Australia competes against international destinations. This program targets business events that bring significant international visitors and economic value to the country, with applications open until June 30, 2024, for events up to December 31, 2029. The BFP's goal is to make a material difference to event costs in Australia, excluding administrative, logistics, or marketing expenses for international bids.

Likewise, the unveiling of Westmead, Sydney's premier health innovation hub, further positions Australia at the forefront of medical research and healthcare innovation. With four major hospitals, five globally acclaimed medical research institutes, two top universities, and the largest research-intensive pathology service in New South Wales, this hub is attracting global attention, underlining Australia's capacity to host significant business events in health and medical sectors.

Similarly, Brisbane is known for its vibrant innovation ecosystem, focusing on sectors like technology, health, and clean energy. *"The city's approach to fostering innovation includes support for startups, research collaborations, and major events that bring together industry leaders to drive forward-thinking solutions"*, says Lorelle Chittick, General Manager of Tourism, Business and Major Events with BEDA, Brisbane Economic Development Agency.

Strategic Vision for Business Events

In fact, Australia as a whole employs a strategic approach to attract international conferences by leveraging its innovative

sectors, world-class facilities, and strong government support, ensuring a compelling destination for global events.

Melbourne's approach, for instance, is characterised by a deliberate strategy that aligns with Victorian priority sectors. Swanson elaborates, *"Our strategy is deliberate with a focus on Victorian priority sectors, and so MCB is helping international business events create their own inaugural events or new events, which align with those priorities."* This strategy is not only about hosting events but also about creating a legacy that can benefit both the associations that choose Melbourne as their host destination and the local communities.

Meanwhile, Sydney's strategic vision for business events, as articulated by Lyn Lewis-Smith, CEO of Business Events Sydney (BESydney), emphasises a transformative approach. Under the "Change Starts Here" agenda, BESydney aims to redefine the impact of business events beyond tourism expenditure, focusing on social impacts and the legacy of these gatherings. Lewis-Smith explains, *"We want our business events delegates to meet the people, enjoy the place and discover a shared purpose, in Sydney."* This vision is supported by extensive research into the broader value of business events, including their potential for environmental improvement, legislative change, and health advancements among delegates.

Lyn Lewis-Smith emphasizes the role of Sydney as a catalyst for global change, highlighting the city's unique qualities: *"Business events are a powerful platform for tackling and solving the difficult problems in our world through the exchange of knowledge and ideas... BESydney wants to be part of the solution and we know that Sydney offers a unique environment that is welcoming, inclusive, safe, sustainably focused and delivers solutions through innovation."* This approach positions Sydney not just as a venue for business events, but as a partner in driving forward global solutions across various sectors, including Health & Life Science, Technology & Innovation, and Finance & Professional Services, with plans to expand into Science & Engineering and Defence & Aerospace.

This diversity spans the entirety of Australia, which Tourism Australia aims to highlight and promote. *"We strive to showcase Australia's rich diversity, from its natural wonders and cultural heritage to the vibrancy of our cities and the knowledge in them,"* says Mack. *"Our marketing campaigns, such as "There's Nothing Like Australia," aim to highlight this diversity, complemented by targeted promotions that spotlight Australia's strengths in key sectors. Additionally, we leverage significant events, like the upcoming Olympics in Brisbane, as opportunities to demonstrate our capabilities and reinforce our commitment to inclusivity and excellence in the global business events sector."*

But Australia's diversity extends far beyond its stunning landscapes, embodying a profound commitment to Diversity,



Sydney Harbour

© Tourism Australia

Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across all facets of society. This commitment is vividly showcased in the business events hosted within the nation, notably at the Sydney WorldPride Human Rights Conference held at the ICC Sydney in 2023. This event, the largest LGBTQIA+ conference of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, highlighted Australia's role as a DEI champion, bringing together diverse voices from around the world to discuss, learn, and celebrate inclusivity. The conference not only served as a platform for critical conversations on human rights but also exemplified how Australia integrates DEI into the very fabric of its professional gatherings, setting a precedent for how business events can promote a richer, more inclusive world dialogue.

The Future Landscape of Business Events in Australia

Looking ahead, Australia's business events sector is set for significant growth. The country's dedication to sustainability, combined with its innovative spirit and strategic vision, positions it as a desirable destination for business events on

the global stage. "We are proud of Melbourne's status as the number one sustainable destination in Australia for the annual GDS Index," Swanson adds, highlighting the importance of sustainability in Melbourne's events strategy.

As Robin Mack concludes, "The future is bright, with significant wins contributing to the visitor economy. Our bid funnel strategy has proven successful, attracting a diverse range of events. We continue to support associations and incentives, with applications open for events up to 2029. Our collaborative mindset, combined with Australia's appeal and our commitment to sustainability and innovation, positions us strongly in the global business events industry."



Robin Mack

More information on how Australia caters to associations on businessevents.australia.com

Brisbane's Sustainable Legacy Shapes Meetings Landscape

Host city of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the bustling Queensland capital with an enviable sub-tropical lifestyle recently claimed a spot in *TIME* Magazine's World's Greatest Places 2023 and in *The New York Times*' prestigious 52 Places to Go in 2024.



Brisbane's natural beauty and cultural offerings attract leisure travellers worldwide, but it's its robust economic and sustainability credentials and proximity to bucket list Australian experiences that make it an enticing choice for planners.

As an emerging global leader in sustainability, Brisbane is poised to redefine business events as the host city for the world's first 'climate positive' 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Its commitment to enduring advancements across various industries aligns seamlessly with its trajectory toward a sustainable future, inviting the

global business community to join in this experience.

Situated in the heart of the Asia Pacific region, Brisbane is a vibrant hub of investment, development, and innovation, particularly in technology, agriculture, healthcare, and resources. This makes it an ideal destination for global conferences and events, as evidenced by its successful hosting of major international business events in the past year, including the International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Science, FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and the World Mining Congress.

Building on business appeal

Fuelling this momentum is a sweeping city transformation that includes \$25B in infrastructure development to support a predicted \$275B economy by 2041, further positioning Brisbane as a destination to visit, meet and do business.

A linchpin in this transformation is the AUD \$3.6B Queen's Wharf Brisbane precinct and, at its heart, The Star Brisbane's state-of-the-art event centre complete with Brisbane's largest hotel ballroom, serviced by four future luxury hotels.

Queen's Wharf Brisbane is the first development in Brisbane to be awarded the coveted 6-Star Green Star Communities rating in recognition of its social, environmental and economic sustainability designs.

The Star Brisbane Chief Operating Officer Hospitality Kelvin Dodt said *"From prioritising renewable energy, harvesting rainwater, recycling grey water and composting organic food waste, to our carbon abatement project, Corymbia, we are proud to contribute to a sustainable future"*.

Sustainability the key to success

Queen's Wharf Brisbane's innovation exemplifies a city-wide commitment to grow Brisbane into one of the world's most sustainable destinations.

Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) is Brisbane's convention bureau and champions the adoption of sustainable practices to meet the rapidly changing needs and expectations of visitors and delegates alike.

This includes supporting the broader visitor economy to participate in the Eco-Certified Tourism Destination Program facilitated by EarthCheck, the world's leading scientific benchmarking certification and advisory group for sustainable travel and tourism.

"Brisbane's sustainability commitment hinges on a whole-of-city approach encompassing accessibility, inclusion, diversity, business practices, transport integration and First Nations engagement," Lorelle Chittick, BEDA's General Manager Tourism, Business & Major Events said.

"Brisbane stands as the only Australian city to achieve the prestigious gold-level accreditation under the United Nations' SDGs Cities Global Initiative, making it the second city globally to attain this recognition. This achievement highlights Brisbane's dedication to key benchmarks such as empowering women and girls, ensuring affordable and clean energy

access, and promoting responsible consumption and production".

Leading the way in sustainable event spaces

Globally acclaimed Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC), a leader in Brisbane's business community, has been committed to sustainability since it first opened in 1985 and embeds its business strategy and priorities through the lens of the UN's Sustainability Goals.

BCEC has achieved Earthcheck Platinum Accreditation, reflecting twelve years of rigorous recertification audits and ensuring compliance with the highest international environmental standards.

This globally recognized certification encompasses various sustainability initiatives. Daylight harvesting via LED lighting and a daylight harvesting system reduce the Centre's energy demand by 50%. Solar panels on the roof contribute significantly to base-load power requirements.

Recycling efforts result in 51% of waste being recycled. Rainwater harvesting, storing 1,000,000 liters in subterranean tanks, supports sanitation and irrigation needs throughout the facility. 'Herbie,' the organic dehydrator, reduces organic food waste by up to 80%, transforming it into high-concentrate soil fertilizer for community use across Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Additionally, the Centre's Containers for Change program has raised over \$50,000 for local charities, and its partnership with the EcoMarines Foundation fosters community education, awareness, and participation in local conservation efforts.

"Best practice sustainability and environmental governance is at the heart of our work here at BCEC and a key reason why our staff are so committed and proud to work at BCEC, welcoming guests from around the world and across Australia every day and knowing that we are playing our part in making a better world for future generations", said BCEC General Manager Kym Guesdon.

A future-focused world view

Brisbane's aim to host the world's inaugural 'climate positive' Olympics in 2032 has thrust the city into the global spotlight, highlighting a legacy of environmental, business, social, and cultural sustainability, with a focus on advancing the circular economy.

BEDA's First Nations Relationship Building Program celebrates the rich cultural heritage and contributions of Indigenous communities. By empowering delegates to engage directly with these communities, the program fosters cultural understanding, collaboration, and paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

Accessibility is a cornerstone of social sustainability, with BEDA leading efforts to ensure local businesses and venues address accessibility challenges. This fosters an inclusive environment where everyone can actively participate in events.

"The city-wide \$25B infrastructure project will catapult Brisbane into a new realm with new venues, a seamlessly integrated transport network and a beautiful, walkable city that exceeds delegates' expectations," Ms Chittick said.

Sponsored by BEDA in partnership with Business Events Australia

For more information, email businessevents@brisbane-eda.com.au or visit choose.brisbane.qld.au for more details.



By Vicky Koffa

Brisbane Powers Green Energy with Critical Minerals

As Brisbane gears up for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is also taking a lead role in a sustainable energy transition, a journey that is part of a broader shift towards a decarbonised, electrified future. The capital city of Queensland, Australia, is ready to deal with the challenges of this shift, balancing the immediate demand for traditional resources with the urgent need for critical minerals essential for renewable energy technologies. The Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre's (BCEC) role in this effort is crucial since business events are used as progress accelerators.

Brisbane's Sustainable Energy Landscape

Queensland boasts a rich variety of mineral resources, including cobalt, vanadium, titanium, graphite, and rare earth elements (REE's). This natural wealth brings Brisbane at the forefront of supplying the raw materials necessary for the global energy transition. Such critical minerals are essential for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, aerospace alloys, steel production, energy storage solutions, and a host of high-tech applications, underscoring the strategic importance of Brisbane and its surrounding regions in the global supply chain in various economic sectors.

The transition to a sustainable economy also involves innovative strategies to maximise waste from abandoned mine sites, extracting key minerals needed for the electrification of the global market and reinforcing the concept of circular economy. It also offers the perfect platform for local and foreign investment and business exchange as the mining and mineral processing sector is growing fast in the region.

Such purposeful actions are part of the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy - building on the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan (QRIDP), which *"provides a 30-year roadmap to ensure Queensland's resources industry continues to create jobs and prosperity for generations to come, and brings clear focus to the development of a critical minerals sector,"* (according to the government's website). This holistic approach ensures that no stone is left unturned in the quest for sustainability, reflecting the ethos of Queensland's State Government and its commitment to this transformative journey.

However, while the world moves towards renewable energy sources, the path is filled with challenges, for instance the coexistence of traditional coal industries with the growing demand for critical minerals necessary for renewable technologies.

Coal, especially metallurgical coal, remains a vital component in steel production, indispensable for building infrastructure and manufacturing renewable energy equipment like wind turbines and solar panels. At the same time, the anticipated global shortage of critical minerals - necessary for batteries, energy storage, and electrification - adds another layer of urgency to Brisbane's role: the state's abundant natural reserves position it as a key player in the global supply chain. This dual role of coal and critical minerals in Brisbane's energy landscape highlights a critical balance: supporting the existing needs of traditional industries while aggressively pursuing the extraction and processing of critical minerals.

Conferences as Catalysts for Change

In an ambitious journey towards a sustainable future, conferences bridge the gap between traditional energy sources and the critical minerals sector. The spotlight on Brisbane, particularly in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, offers unparalleled opportunities to showcase the city's advancements and to inspire global action towards sustainable practices.

The Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) has long been ahead of the game, being actively conscious of the positive impact a meeting can have when organised in a collaborative spirit. In partnership with governmental key stakeholders such as the Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) and global leaders in research and development, it harnesses the power of international conferences to foster dialogue, innovation, and collaboration.

On a scientific and academic level, the BCEC Convention Advocates Partnership offers the city the right platform to attract international scientific conventions. Populated by world leaders across various sectors and Queensland's elite scientific and industry leaders for over a decade already, the partnership amplifies the impact of business events, delivering benefits and creating legacies of new opportunities for research and business for Brisbane.

BCEC is actively targeting conferences that support the global conversations and the commercialisation of R&D into industry to accelerate the transition in technology, investment and policy needed to achieve Queensland and Australia's goals in a low carbon economy. These gatherings are not only forums for sharing knowledge and advancing research but also platforms for showcasing Brisbane's contributions to technological, social, and environmental innovations on a global scale.

In order to effectively achieve the expected progress, Brisbane and the BCEC are working closely with the national research organisation CSIRO, as well as Brisbane's universities - for example, The University of Queensland (UQ) and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) - and Australia's peak bodies, like AusIMM who advocates for a global community from 100 countries involved in all aspects of the mining industry. The comprehensive collaboration is met with the city's state-of-the-art infrastructure, international access, sub-tropical lifestyle to create unique conference experiences with a lasting impact.

Advancing Critical Minerals Research & Development

The critical minerals research and development ecosystem in Brisbane is clearly a bright example of innovation and collaboration. Its power derives from the significant support of the city's academic and professional champions, such as BCEC Advocate Adjunct Professor Dr. Neville Flint.

"When you consider our research centres, industry leaders, universities, and tech companies around Brisbane, and you put all of these together, you have probably within a 20 kilometres radius the most productive mining research in the world."



**BCEC Advocate Adjunct
Professor Dr. Neville Plint.**



BCEC on Grey Street.

His work has been pivotal in enhancing mining operations through technological advancements and fostering a global network of research professionals.

As the former Director of the University of Queensland's Sustainable Mining Institute and the current CEO of Mining3 (a research organisation), Dr. Plint brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table. He emphasises Brisbane's global research and development efforts in addressing global sustainability challenges, stating: "*Brisbane is a world-leading research hub in the sector and is contributing significantly to solutions. As a region traditionally dependent on coal exports, Queensland's transition to technology metal extraction and beneficiation is critical in transitioning to a low carbon future.*"

Dr. Plint further highlights the competitive yet collaborative nature of Brisbane's critical minerals sector: "*Whilst it is an increasingly competitive landscape, when you consider our research centres, industry leaders, universities, and tech companies around Brisbane, and you put all of these together, you have probably within a 20 kilometres radius the most productive mining research in the world.*" He is a strong believer in the synergistic potential of Brisbane's innovation ecosystem, which gives the city a competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

The collaborative spirit extends beyond research to include a comprehensive approach to social and environmental sustainability. "*One of the big issues as you transition out of one sector and into another is how you can take people with you, because you don't want to be closing down mine operations and then creating ghost towns. Communities should not be penalised because of the transition to renewables,*" Dr. Plint asserts.

This concern led to the establishment of the collaborative research centre called Transition in Mining Economies (TIME), a venture developed by the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia. The initiative focuses on managing transitions from social and environmental perspectives, embodying a holistic approach to sustainability.

Through years of experience and research, Dr. Plint is in a position to recognise Brisbane's success and further potential. He says: "*If you look at our track record, the universities and CSIRO in Brisbane are the most successful in the world in terms of taking research through to commercialisation in this sector.*" Brisbane proves to be not just a leader in the field but also a strategic enabler for conferences which contribute to development, innovation, and global collaboration in the mission towards a sustainable energy future.

To know more about what BCEC can offer you,
contact alisong@bcec.com.au

THE CRITICAL MINERALS CONFERENCE AT BCEC

With rich mineral endowments across the state and a history of mining excellence, Queensland and Brisbane play a vital role in delivering the critical minerals and technologies needed for the global energy transition. Conferences have the power to transmit this knowledge globally and accelerate the transition process in a smooth way. Recognising this, in 2023 AusIMM, Australasia's peak body representing people in the resources sector, took the strategic step to establish a brand-new influential Critical Minerals Conference.

Building on the knowledge accumulated during the event's first edition, the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) is now getting ready to host the second Critical Minerals Conference from 26-28 August 2024, reinforcing Brisbane's role as a leader in the global energy transition. Spearheaded by AusIMM, the event promises to unite a vast community of leaders and technical experts dedicated to the critical minerals sector and drive discussions on the significant role of mining in a more sustainable future.

Stephen Durkin, CEO of AusIMM, underscores the conference's vision: "AusIMM wants to bring the largest community of critical minerals professionals ever assembled in Australia to Brisbane, the hub of



Queensland's world-class mining and future energy industry. This will be a forum to share knowledge on a topic of state and national importance that also has global significance." The aim of the three-day event is to foster dialogue, collaboration, and innovation across the board, addressing vital topics from mining sustainability to the integration of renewable technologies in critical minerals production.

The conference focuses on showcasing expertise and insights into how regions like Queensland can contribute to a decarbonising world, emphasising the significance of metals such as lithium, nickel, and zinc in renewable energy technologies. Mr Durkin says: "Our goal is to share knowledge that bolsters the safe supply of metals and minerals critical for a low carbon future."

Through relaxed conversations among delegates, important keynote speakers and post-conference tours and workshops, the Critical Minerals Conference is set to be a keystone event positioning Brisbane as a hub of innovation and sustainable development.

Kym Guesdon, General Manager of BCEC, concludes the future in critical minerals is incredibly exciting: "At BCEC we are invested in supporting our Advocates and Australian peak bodies who are bringing these solutions to the world and sharing these successful outcomes at conferences. Brisbane is very much a collaborative destination where our sectors generously share their innovation 'smarts' with us, it's undoubtedly elevating our profile while at the same time bringing solutions well beyond our city to the world."

Hear stories



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By Anna Stewart

Australia's Northern Territory showcases sustainability strengths

The peak tourism body for Australia's Northern Territory (NT), Tourism NT, has developed a 'Sustainable Tourism Action Plan' which furthers the NT's reputation as a compelling destination. Northern Territory Business Events, a business unit within Tourism NT, supports the aims to protect and restore the NT's natural environment, hold its Aboriginal cultures sacred and learn from them, whilst also enriching local communities.



In 2023, sustainability content was a key focus for several international conferences staged in the NT.

Aquaculture addresses sustainability

The World Aquaculture Conference (WA2023) held at the Darwin Convention Centre in 2023, not only showcased the NT's capacity and capability as a host for a large international business event but also highlighted local sustainability initiatives for the 1394 conference attendees.

Topics such as global sustainability, diversity and inclusivity in the aquaculture industry were featured in the program. With aquaculture an NT industry strength, speakers included some of the region's aquaculture specialists such as Dan Richards, CEO of Humpty Doo Barramundi, an award-winning NT company globally-recognised for its pioneering work in sustainable barramundi farming.

The conference technical tour program included off-site facilities such as the Darwin Aquaculture Centre and Barramundi Adventures Darwin, both of which undertake sustainable aquaculture research and development.

Ecological restoration at the forefront

The 10th World Conference on Ecological Restoration (SER2023)

staged in Darwin discussed latest trends in restoration science, practice and policy, as well as strategies for restoring damaged and degraded ecosystems on all continents.

The program featured cultural engagement with the Larrakia People, traditional owners of the Darwin region. This included the 'Welcome to Country' delivered by a Larrakia Elder and Yarning Circles, traditional discussion groups which enable collective learning, the building of respectful relationships and sustaining cultural knowledge.

Twelve conference field trips were arranged to some of the innovative restoration projects being undertaken in the NT, such as a former uranium mine site at Rum Jungle, 105 kilometres south of Darwin, where the NT Government is restoring hydrology, soils and landforms as part of 'healing Country'. Other areas such as Kakadu National Park, Litchfield National Park, the town of Katherine and the iconic locations of Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon were also visited.

The conference program included a 'Make a Difference Day' that enabled a hands-on restoration activity experience at McMinns Lagoon Reserve, approximately 35 kilometres south-east of Darwin, where delegates assisted with plantings and other ecological restoration activities.

Rebecca McCaig, Director of Northern Territory Business Events, concludes: "We were pleased to host several significant international conferences in 2023 that highlighted the innovative ways in which meaningful cultural, environmental and social sustainability elements can be incorporated into an NT business event."

For further information on business events in the NT, visit www.ntbusinessevents.com.au

By Vicky Koffa

Luxembourg's Strategic Edge in Hosting World-Class Business Events

Luxembourg stands as a testament to transformation and strategic positioning in the heart of Europe, making its mark as an emerging leader in the global business events arena. This ascent is fueled by its advantageous geographical location, combined with a multilingual and highly skilled workforce. From a progressive economy to seamless services provided by the Luxembourg Convention Bureau (LCB) and modern infrastructures, associations (like Meeting Professionals International) have every reason to choose Luxembourg as their next conference destination.

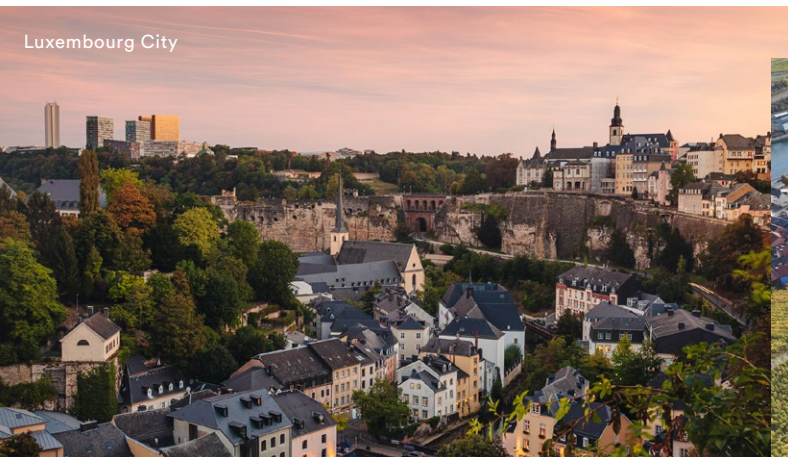
Luxembourg's narrative is one of stability, innovation, heritage and culture as well as exceptional living standards. In his opening statements during the European Meetings and Events Conference (EMEC), organised by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) in Luxembourg, Eric Thill, Minister for Culture and Minister Delegate for Tourism, recounted the country's evolution from an industrial

stronghold to a diversified economy. He emphasised its roles as a European hub for finance, ICT, and legal arbitration.

"Luxembourg does not owe its economic dynamism to trends. The forward-looking approach and can-do attitude of its people have allowed the country to transform itself several times during the last century. We have always been open to new ideas while innovating and reinventing our economy."

Luxembourg's Unique Positioning

Indeed, the country's economic history spans from agriculture in the past century, to steel industry excellence, to global financial hub and, more recently, to a successful 4.0 economy, with innovation at its core. The ease of such development is not random. The Grand Duchy's central location in Europe, for one, has been instrumental. Easy access to most European capitals by train, car



Luxembourg City

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Moselle region

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or plane and the presence of major EU political institutions, such as the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Investment Bank, have attracted policy makers with the power to make decisions swiftly based on the country's needs at any given time. The proximity to the government and to the wider tourism ecosystem is also beneficial to associations looking to advocate for their cause or provide their members with the right connections.

On the other hand, Luxembourg's location at a crossroads with three other countries in combination with high quality of life are of great appeal to skilled expat talent. The small country boasts more than 190 nationalities representing half of its population. Such diversity in the workforce (both in terms of language and educational background) has helped advance the economy rapidly and in a stable and sustainable manner. As a consequence, Luxembourg tells numerous success stories of global companies headquartered in the country, including giants like Amazon.

Minister Thill depicted Luxembourg's blend of modern infrastructure with natural beauty and cultural richness as key differentiators. *"The country's economic power is not just limited to its economic development. Due to our openness, the effects of cultural mixture are extremely significant. The combination of unspoiled landscapes and safe surroundings make for a great place to live and do business in."*

Key Economic Sectors & Synergies

Luxembourg's economic strengths are in finance and banking, its dynamic ICT sector, and its innovative approaches to biotech and sustainable logistics among

others. These sectors not only fuel Luxembourg's growth, but also offer fertile ground for associations to engage with cutting-edge themes and local expertise.

"We created the Luxembourg Convention Bureau in 2018 with a key focus on associations on one side and corporate on the other side. Our goal is to attract business events, congresses, conferences in our key economic sectors, such as ICT, space, healthtech, logistics, which are not only innovative but also relatively new areas for us. The support from the Luxembourg government for the business events sector ranks really high on the political agenda," said Rachel Negri, President of LCB.

Looking beyond its established financial sector (which accounts for 25% of the country's GDP), now it ranks high also in the ICT sector. The Digital Economy & Society Index of the European Commission, which assesses the evolution of EU member states towards a digital economy and society, ranked Luxembourg in 8th position in 2022. Luxembourg was the first European country that established a public-private partnership on AI, for instance, with the company NVIDIA (employing some of the best computer scientists in the world) in order to become a pioneer in the digital field.

As the home of the number one satellite operator in the world – the European Society of Satellites – the Grand Duchy has imposed itself as the main actor in aerospace. In 2018, Luxembourg created its own space agency – the Luxembourg Space Agency – to provide support to the space industry and support academic learning and research.



©Paul Schanen

Boasting the Luxembourg HealthTech Cluster and more than 30 digital health start-ups, Luxembourg is a forerunner in the field focusing on four key pillars, i.e. diagnostics, digital health, health data analytics and health wearables. *"Last year, we hosted the first Healthcare Week in Luxembourg. This was a collaborative effort with the entire health sector ecosystem in Luxembourg and neighbouring countries. It's now a legacy event that takes place annually,"* said Rachel Negri.

Capitalising on its geographical location and its expertise in digitalisation, the Grand Duchy has made a name for itself in effective logistics. Using the powerful formula of multimodal transport, freight can move from plane to truck to river seamlessly. Home base of Cargolux (Europe's leading all-cargo carrier) and Lorry-Rail (a rail motorway service for standard unaccompanied semi-trailers), the country is a leader in cargo connectivity.



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Sustainable Events by the Luxembourg Convention Bureau

At the helm of promoting Luxembourg as a prime conference destination is the LCB. The bureau extends comprehensive support to associations, encompassing logistical aid, venue scouting, and fostering local partnerships. Rachel Negri explains their mission: *"We try to tie up how associations can tap into the local community and the local economy and benefit each other."*

LCB is supported by both the city of Luxembourg and the government, acting as a mutual public institution representing the country for the entire business events sector. *"We have more than 200 partners from the events industry, hotels, venues, agencies, transportation companies and service providers. Our role is to put associations in touch with these local stakeholders in order to spark the right initiatives for an impactful and sustainable event or conference,"* said Rachel Negri.

The Luxembourg business events industry is clearly committed to developing the circularity of resources mobilised for and during events and is more than ever concerned by the issues of sustainability and resource conservation. As part of its national mobility strategy, Luxembourg became the first country in the world to offer free public transportation in 2020.

Launched on February 1, 2023, the "Green Business Events" initiative aims to bolster eco-responsibility and inclusiveness within the business events sector, covering congresses, conferences, exhibitions, and trade shows.

With this, organisers can receive individual support from the Oekozynter Pafendall, including advice on adhering to criteria spanning seven themes, such as sustainable catering,

waste management, and accessibility. Successful events are awarded the "Green Business Events" logo, symbolising their commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

Luxembourg boasts a variety of sustainable venues ideal for eco-friendly conferences. Some can be dedicated to wellness, providing a distinctive combination of health and sustainability; others exemplify operational efficiency with large-scale event spaces and capacities ranging from 10 to 800 people. Additionally, Luxembourg boasts several hotels that prioritise sustainability through energy-efficient practices, waste reduction, and sourcing local produce, ensuring that event attendees can enjoy comfortable accommodations while contributing to a greener planet.

For more information on Luxembourg as a conference destination:
www.business-events.lu / info@lcb.lu

CASE STUDY:

THE EMEC MPI CONFERENCE IN LUXEMBOURG

The European conference of MPI (which took place 3-5 March 2024) not only highlighted Luxembourg's logistical and thematic compatibilities but also underscored the depth of its commitment to hosting. The association came prepared to hold a sustainable event and Luxembourg was ready to oblige: "MPI loved the idea of the 'Green Business Events' logo. We prepared a long list of suggestions for them, like reusable materials, digital signage, encourage the use of the free public transportation, prefer local catering and ecofriendly gifts, and suggested we maximise all the region has to offer. This way the attendees lived an immersive experience into our culture thus creating a unique stay," said Savéria Eyer, Director of Events for the MPI Belgium-Luxembourg Chapter and staff member of the LCB team.

As President of the MPI Belgium-Luxembourg Chapter and the local host, Attila Laszlo was satisfied with the collaboration. "It was a very nice journey of about two years. LCB became an annual (preferential) partner of our chapter. Leveraging local partnerships and infrastructure, we were able to highlight the destination's accessibility and capabilities."

The over 260 participants enjoyed everything Luxembourg: from food rallies with local delicacies to evening receptions at unique venues. L'Orangerie at the Mondorf Domaine Thermal and Mudam, The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg, Big Beer Company in the centre and Abtei Neimenster (a repurposed abbey for events and cultural activities) helped attendees envision how they could have an experience for their own clients.

Berangere Dubuc's experience of the conference confirms Luxembourg's skill: "I was very motivated to come to

Luxembourg because I didn't know it. Easy accessibility and sustainability were key factors. After seeing first-hand the historical yet modern ECCL, the variety of smaller venues and experiences offered as well as the assistance of the LCB, I can safely say that it is an exceptional place to organise any event."

The Learning Journeys were a great hit, showcasing not only unique venues and how to use them in different ways but also social projects active in the city. Popular among the participants were Luxembourg Air Rescue (LAR), a private and humanitarian organisation and the sole provider of air rescue services in Luxembourg, and a visit to Novotel Luxembourg Kirchberg for a sensory culinary experience in the dark promoting inclusivity. Both projects are also part of LCB's Green Business Events initiative.

Other unique ideas offered to attendees as part of their Luxembourgish immersion were a visit to cinema complex Kinopolis (which can be used for business events, private 4D screenings and backstage tours) as well as a trip to All You Can Eat: Humans & Their Food exhibition at the Lëtzebuerg City Museum, a sensory experience aiming to unleash the participants' creative future thinking.

"Luxembourg offered a unique, appealing component to its brand. The Learning Journeys that the LCB helped us put together were a smart pairing of locations with actionable education. The destination offers unique experiences which attendees find unforgettable," noted Drew Holmgreen, Vice President of Brand Engagement at MPI, emphasising the thoughtful coordination behind the scenes.



By Remi Deve

Exhibition World Bahrain: Sustainable Management at its Best

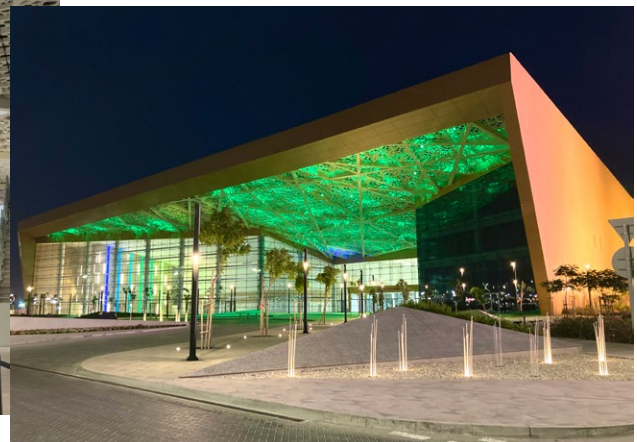
Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) stands as a pioneering venue in sustainability, setting a new standard for the meetings industry. Owned by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) and managed by the globally renowned ASM Global, EWB has not only been recognised as the World's Leading New Exhibition and Convention Centre for 2023 by the prestigious World Travel Awards, but also stands as a testament to the Kingdom's commitment to sustainability.

Situated strategically between the East and West, Bahrain stands at the pivotal junction of its history. Boasting a heritage that stretches back to the Dilmun Age, coupled with a focus on genuine hospitality, the Kingdom offers a holistic experience for its guests and conference delegates alike.

The legacy of Bahrain as a premier event destination began in 1991 with the inception of its first exhibition and convention centre. From that point, it has grown to become one of the leading venues for events in the Gulf and beyond. Throughout the last thirty years, Bahrain has hosted a diverse range of

events, from trade shows and conferences to concerts and major sports events. With the launch of Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) in November 2022, the Kingdom has marked its latest milestone as a key player on the global MICE scene.

At its core, EWB embodies a forward-thinking approach to event management, integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices into every facet of its operations. This dedication is evident in its extraordinary design, management practices, and the array of initiatives aimed at minimising environmental impact while promoting social



responsibility. The drive towards becoming a sustainable organisation involves every department, working in concert to weave sustainability into the very fabric of EWB's operations.

Reducing, Conserving, Recycling

EWB leads by example and exemplifies Bahrain's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality through the three tracks of its National Action Plan, "Blueprint Bahrain": low-carbon economy, climate change adaptation, and creating sustainable opportunities in the new green economy.

EWB has taken significant strides in reducing its carbon footprint through the incorporation of energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources. From thermally insulated construction materials that combat natural elements to state-of-the-art HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) systems and building management systems designed to optimise energy use. The venue's innovative use of LED lighting, natural daylighting, and motion sensor lights further underscores its commitment to energy efficiency.

Understanding the precious nature of water resources, EWB has implemented robust water conservation measures aligned with Bahrain's water resource management strategy. The reuse of air conditioning condensation for irrigation, alongside the deployment of low-flow faucets and dual-flush toilets, exemplifies the venue's approach to sustainable water use. Additionally, the presence of an indoor vertical garden not only beautifies the space but plays a crucial role in air purification and temperature regulation.

In its quest to minimise event waste, EWB has established comprehensive waste management and recycling programs. Clearly labeled recycling bins encourage visitors to segregate waste, while partnerships with local recycling facilities ensure that materials are processed responsibly. These efforts are complemented by initiatives to use eco-friendly construction materials and promote the digitalisation of event materials, reducing the reliance on paper and enhancing overall sustainability.

Culinary Sustainability at Its Best

EWB's commitment to sustainability extends to its culinary services. Boasting the largest commercial kitchen in the Kingdom, capable of catering to 10,000 guests, EWB prioritises sustainable practices in its food and beverage offerings.

From farm-to-table experiences utilizing local organic produce to eco-friendly dining options that reduce waste, EWB's culinary team is dedicated to providing sustainable – yet exceptional – experiences.

Customers will, for example, be provided with reusable dinnerware and cutlery, along with lids designed without

the need for straws, while menus will feature customisable options that include local and organic products, accommodating a diverse range of preferences. For those instances where disposable utensils are necessary, choices made from biodegradable materials and designed for recyclability will be prioritised.

Similarly, the EWB team ensures access to on-site filtered and purified water, circumventing the reliance on plastic bottles that may be compromised by sunlight, dust, and pollution during transportation. This approach not only eliminates the requirement for storing bulky water bottles but also frees up valuable storage space for alternative uses.

Meanwhile, collaboration with the Bahrain Food Bank to donate excess food underscores EWB's commitment to community welfare and waste reduction. The venue's efforts to minimise waste during food preparation and the use of smart packaging technologies further demonstrate its commitment to environmental stewardship.

Embracing Renewable Energy & Technological Innovation

As part of Bahrain's broader renewable energy goals, EWB is actively participating in the Sakhir area solar energy project. This initiative, aimed to increase the share of clean energy in Bahrain's electricity mix, will see EWB play a significant role in the country's sustainability objectives. Moreover, the deployment of an HR automation system exemplifies EWB's approach to streamlining operations, reducing paper usage, and enhancing efficiency.

By embracing sustainability initiatives, Exhibition World Bahrain is not just contributing to environmental preservation; it is redefining what it means to be a leader in the meetings industry. The venue's holistic approach to sustainability demonstrates that environmental responsibility and business success are not mutually exclusive but can be integrated to achieve remarkable outcomes.

As the world continues to grapple with environmental challenges, EWB's leadership in sustainable event management serves as an inspiring model for others to follow, proving that with commitment and innovation, the meetings industry can indeed contribute to a greener, more sustainable planet.



Contact

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By Remi Deve

Guadalajara: A Tale of Two Conferences

Nestled in the heart of Jalisco, Mexico, Guadalajara emerges as a destination of choice for associations, blending rich cultural heritage with modern innovation. While a journalist, particularly one who visited the city last year, can easily describe this, it's even more impactful to hear it directly from the clients themselves.

Drawing on firsthand insights from two distinct conferences – the 19th World Congress of the International Society

for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) and the upcoming North American Society for Bat Research Symposium – this

article explores Guadalajara's ascent as a favored destination for business events.

The economic powerhouse of western Mexico, Guadalajara thrives due to its ideal climate, stunning mountains, and forests at 1,500 meters elevation, coupled with a strategic location. While Jalisco's 51 industrial parks fuel the area's economic growth, the city's economic landscape blends traditional sectors like textiles, footwear, petrochemistry, and tequila with modern industries such as electronics, attracting both local and international investments.

Dubbed "Mexico's Silicon Valley," Guadalajara excels in producing software, electronics, and digital components, accounting for about 25% of Mexico's electronic exports. It's a magnet for global giants like IBM, Intel, HP, and Oracle, which have set up operations there. Bolstered by federal funding and a partnership with MIT, Guadalajara's infrastructure for IT has flourished, making it a central hub for the IT industry.

The city also boasts a rich educational landscape with technology institutes and 12 prestigious technical universities, including UDG and ITESO, providing a skilled workforce that supports its tech-driven economy.



A multifaceted appeal

In this context, it's easy to see why the city is attracting the attention of associations. In fact, Guadalajara's appeal as a conference destination is multifaceted, combining logistical convenience with a commitment to inclusivity and cultural immersion.

In interviews with Boardroom, Elena Cuadra Moreno, Conference Planning and Supply Manager for BTC, who served as the PCO for the 19th World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) in April 2023, and Luis Víquez, Program Director for the North American Society for Bat Research, planning to host the organisation's Symposium in the city in October 2024, both highlight the city's unique attributes.



Cuadra Moreno says, *"Guadalajara boasts several advantages, such as the proximity of hotels to Expo Guadalajara. The neighborhood around*

that big, but easy-to-manage venue, where the Congress took place last year, makes for a good conference district, which delegates can easily navigate. The city's commitment to accessibility and service quality stood out, with efforts to accommodate all guests, including those with disabilities, through thoughtful planning and execution of transportation and venue accessibility. In fact, most delegates realised they could do a lot of things just by walking, an aspect they hadn't anticipated in a large city like Guadalajara."

Víquez echoes this sentiment, drawn to the city's *"mild weather in October, friendly community eager to share their traditions,"* underlining the city's capacity to blend professional settings with cultural warmth.

Despite the allure, organising international events in Guadalajara comes with its set of challenges.

Cuadra Moreno reflects on the hurdles faced during the ISPO Congress, from navigating international banking complexities to adapting registration systems for a diverse attendee base. *"We encountered a significant volume of registrants, presenting a unique challenge due to our foreign client's operational style,"* Cuadra Moreno reveals, shedding light on the intricacies behind the scenes.

Ultimately, the ISPO marked its successful debut in Latin America, attracting 1,500 participants from 73 countries keen on the latest scientific discoveries and advancements in treatment and care. The exhibition saw 110 companies from 28 nations presenting their innovative products and solutions designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Overcoming Misconceptions, Showcasing Inclusivity

Víquez, who's expecting about 400 participants to the Symposium, discusses the importance of addressing safety perceptions, stating, *"Safety perceptions vary by region, but we address these concerns directly by highlighting the safety measures in place and the selected safe areas for the event. It's crucial to communicate transparently about safety to alleviate any apprehensions. In the end, Guadalajara despite what some people might think – is as safe as your next big city."*

Both Cuadra Moreno and Víquez touch on the challenge of overcoming misconceptions, which some foreign governments are quick to perpetuate unfortunately. Despite initial concerns, the reality experienced by delegates often contrasts sharply with preconceived notions. Cuadra Moreno observes, *"Many delegates initially expressed concerns about safety... However, their experiences in Guadalajara significantly changed these perceptions."*

In fact, Guadalajara may excel above all in ensuring inclusivity for everyone, regardless of who you are or where you're from. *"Guadalajara's experience in*

hosting diverse and mission-driven events, such as the Gay Games, demonstrated their ability to meet our inclusivity requirements. Their expertise helped us ensure the meeting remains accessible and affordable, especially for students and local researchers. We also have a special program for our LGBTQ+ members, and they will feel safe in Guadalajara," says Víquez.

Cultural Immersion & Local Engagement

A common thread in both events is the emphasis on cultural immersion and local engagement. Cuadra Moreno describes the integration of Mexican culture into the ISPO Congress, *"The delegates appreciated the cultural tours and experiences offered, such as visits to a local hacienda."* This approach not only enriches the attendees' experience but also fosters a deeper understanding of the host city in particular – and Mexican culture in general.



Víquez highlights a similar strategy for the Bat Research Symposium, leveraging Guadalajara's role in tequila production to connect scientific

research with local agriculture. *"There's a vibrant research community in Mexico, with Guadalajara playing a significant role due to its status as the primary tequila-producing state. Since tequila production relies on agave pollinated by bats, the city holds a special place in bat research for highlighting the importance of bats in agriculture,"* Víquez notes, illustrating how the symposium aims to blend scientific discourse with regional significance.

Another feature both Víquez and Cuadra Moreno agreed on is the enthusiastic, proactive approach of Guadalajara Convention Bureau.

"We considered several locations, including Mexico City, but preferred central Mexico for its accessibility



and potential to draw more Mexican researchers,” says Viquez. “After reaching out to the Guadalajara Convention Bureau, we received an enthusiastic response, underscoring their genuine interest in our meeting and support in organising it. So far, they have not disappointed and are prompt in addressing every issue we might face.”

This sentiment is shared by Cuadra Moreno, who plans to bring two more conferences to Guadalajara this year alone, noting, *“They’re just easy to work with. I know I can rely on them for all the support I might need.”*

The Impact of International Conferences

The successful hosting of events like the ISPO Congress and the buildup to the Bat Research Symposium has naturally

broader implications for Guadalajara’s image and its future in the international conference circuit. Both Cuadra Moreno’s and Viquez’s experiences highlight the city’s growing reputation as a capable and attractive host for diverse global communities.

Viquez in particular states, “By bringing the meeting to Mexico, we provide a platform for researchers who may face travel restrictions to the US or Canada, fostering collaboration and opportunities for young researchers. Additionally, our presence helps raise awareness about the importance of bats, contributing to the local and scientific community’s understanding. This is the power of conferences, and the kind of legacy we want to leave behind.”

The positive feedback and the shift in safety perceptions among delegates

serve as a testament to Guadalajara’s potential to transcend its traditional image, inviting a reevaluation of its role in the international event planning landscape.

As more associations look beyond conventional destinations for their gatherings, Guadalajara stands ready, offering a blend of modernity, tradition, and a warm welcome to the world. The city’s journey from a regional hub to a protagonist on the international stage embodies its transformation into a nexus of culture and innovation, promising a vibrant future for conferences and meetings that wish to leave a lasting impact.

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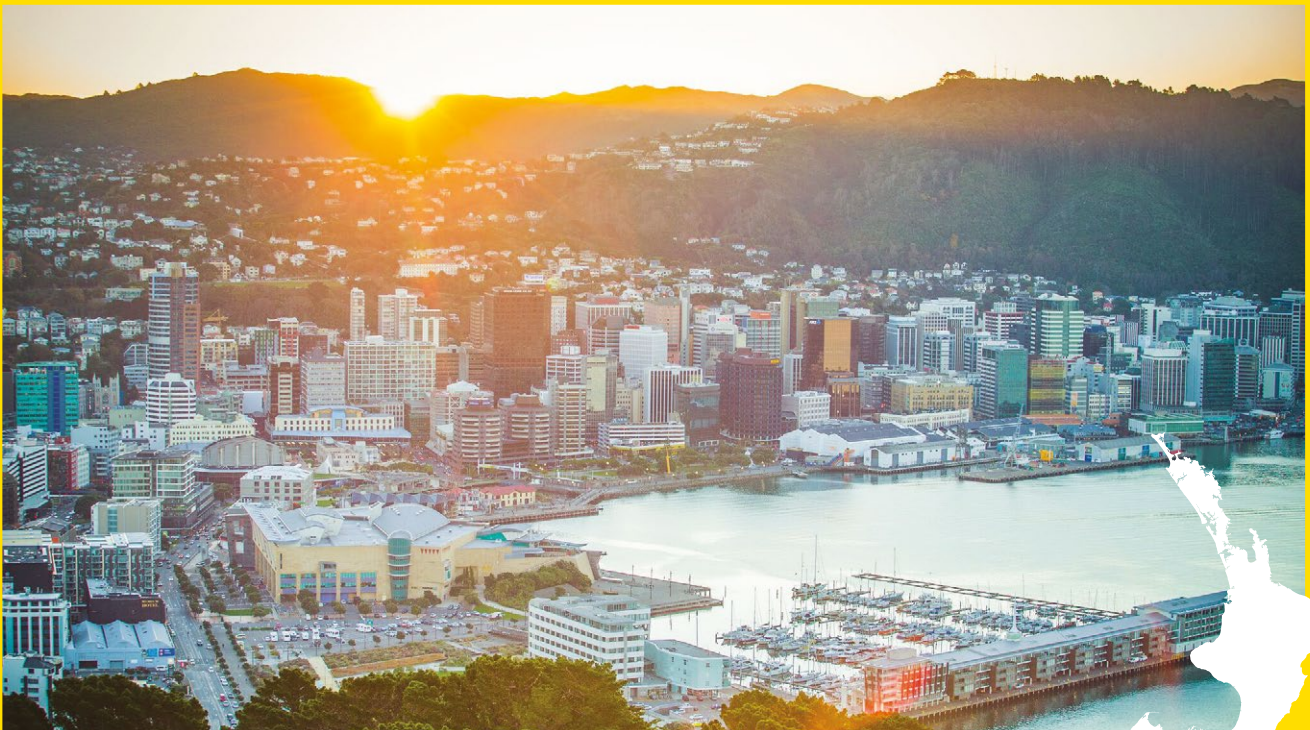
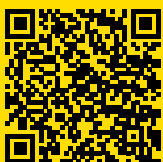


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**Business
Events
Wellington**

By Guy Hall

How to Organise Impact Conscious Conferences in Wellington, New Zealand

New Zealand is well known for its spectacular scenery but, increasingly, the country is gaining a formidable reputation as an intellectual powerhouse and enticing international event organisers. At the centre of this perception shift is the country's capital, Wellington, which is attracting associations from across the globe looking to leverage New Zealand's focus on climate action, research, science and innovation for its benefit.

New Zealand's stature as a global force for science and innovation continues to grow, and the country has firmly established both arenas at the top of its agenda. This is proving attractive for international associations looking to tap into a destination's intellectual strengths to enhance their event.

Wellington, the country's third most populous city, is at the forefront of New Zealand's economic progress and boasts the largest research, science and innovation workforce in the country. As home to the New Zealand Government, and the headquarters of many government agencies and industry associations, Wellington is where decisions are made and progress stems – which makes it a compelling option for

associations looking to host events with intellectual impact at their core.

Internationally Renowned Research

Not only is Wellington regarded as a creative city, it's also home to Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). Founded in 1897, VUW is one of the country's oldest universities and has the highest proportion of academics conducting high-quality research of any university in New Zealand. As a result, the university has garnered a strong international reputation and ranks in the top 2% of 18,000 universities globally.



© Jason Mann Photography

VUW is also home to New Zealand's top institution for Antarctic and climate research.

Helping drive progress in their fields, the institution's scientists serve as lead authors, advisers and changemakers in these arenas. Meanwhile, the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research – a prominent, independent research centre – specialises in the immune system, and how it can be used to improve human health.

Elsewhere in Wellington, you can find Massey University's College of Creative Arts, Otago University's Wellington medical school campus and a number of New Zealand's government-funded Crown Research Institutes. With all these intellectual riches, it's no surprise that the city's experts and institutes receive international praise across disciplines ranging from the life sciences to climate innovation, and from healthcare to deep technology.

Climate Conscious Collaboration

Wellington's academics do not work in isolation. In fact, the city is incredibly well connected and has a highly collaborative business environment. But this should hardly come as a shock; New Zealand has often ranked as the easiest country in the world to do business, according to recent reports from the World Bank.

Wellington's supportive and dynamic business ecosystem has led to the development of such forward-thinking companies as Humble Bee Bio. Having observed that the nesting material of a specific bee has many plastic-like qualities, the team at Humble Bee Bio is replicating the material in the lab, with the goal of producing a biodegradable alternative to plastic. Such climate-friendly innovation thrives in Wellington, and the city's experts are driving change, using imaginative and enterprising thinking to improve not only people's lives, but the life of the planet.

Green Gatherings

Importantly, Wellington's interest in sustainability extends into the world of business events. Designed with environmental considerations at its core, the Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre is impressing conference organisers looking to meet sustainably. Tākina is breaking new ground when it comes to hosting responsible events in New Zealand, and is the first venue of its kind to receive a 5-Star Green Star Design certification from the New Zealand Green Building Council.

Sustainable approaches permeate throughout Wellington's entire business events industry. For example, venue operators work with organisations like Kaibosh – which was New Zealand's first food rescue organisation – to help support a conference's sustainability goals. On top of this, even the city itself has received notable sustainability accolades. With the lowest emissions per capita of any Australasian city, and thanks to its climate innovations, New Zealand's capital was the proud recipient of the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge and 2023's Seoul Smart City Tech-Innovacity Prize.

Wellington's focus on sustainable solutions means conference organisers will have no difficulty finding support – and inspiration – when hosting responsible events in the city.

Leading Legacy

Business Events Wellington (BEW) are doing their utmost to help associations host conferences that will leave a positive impact. Blazing a trail in New Zealand, they have launched a legacy programme – the first of its kind in the country – featuring a host of resources to help clients capture the positive outcomes generated by business events hosted in Wellington. These include a new specialist conference advisor, who has been appointed to guide organisations through the process of crafting their individual legacy project.

As BEW manager, Irette Ferreira, notes “*Whatever the purpose, conferences also have the potential to create something meaningful for the community and drive wider socio-economic gain...We are capturing these outcomes and supporting our clients to achieve their legacy goals.*”

Although the legacy initiative is initially focused on international conferences, BEW is also working with domestic events – fostering long-term relationships and anchoring them to the city. One such conference, the Life Sciences Summit organised by BioTech New Zealand, is helping to develop the country's burgeoning biotech sector. The event united New Zealand's life science and biotechnology communities – in arenas ranging from agriculture to animal health – and seeks to positively impact government policy and regulations in the future.

To learn more about hosting a conference in this innovative city committed to change, contact Business Events Wellington at businessesevents@WellingtonNZ.com. For more information, visit WellingtonNZ.com/meet



Abras are used to ferry people across the Dubai Creek

By Remi Deve

Dubai is Paving the Way to the 2026 UITP Summit

Dubai's visionary approach to public transportation has not only transformed the cityscape but has also significantly enhanced the quality of life for its residents and visitors. This commitment to developing a world-class transit system was a key factor in Dubai's successful bid to host the UITP Global Public Transport Summit in 2026. With the recent go-ahead for the development of the new Blue Line of the Dubai Metro and record-breaking ridership numbers, Dubai has demonstrated its dedication to redefining urban mobility.

The UITP Global Public Transport Summit's selection of Dubai as its 2026 host city reflects the city's dynamic advancements in public transport. It is in fact in perfect alignment with the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to enhance the city's global economic presence through six specific goals, including boosting foreign

trade, increasing direct investment, and expanding digital transformation projects.

As His Excellency Mattar Al Tayer, Director General, Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), puts it: "The UITP Summit underscores Dubai's global leadership as a preferred

destination for international events and highlights the international community's confidence in Dubai's outstanding global reputation.

The selection also exemplifies Dubai's proven capability to host successful international events, showcasing the excellence and efficiency of its public transport infrastructure."

It will actually be the first time UITP returns to Dubai since 2011. *“Even then, the city was very well advanced when it comes to urban mobility,”* said Mohamed Mezghani, Secretary General of the UITP. *“But since then, public transport has developed at a truly impressive rate thanks to the strong focus and commitment of RTA. With the changes to our global events strategy, Dubai will become the first city outside of Europe to host the new UITP Annual Summit. I’m excited to see what outstanding urban mobility options the delegates will experience upon their arrival.”*

A New Era in Public Transportation

The RTA’s Strategic Plan for 2024–2030 aligns with the Dubai Urban Plan 2040, focusing on promoting the economy, wellbeing, and happiness of Dubai’s residents and visitors. *“RTA’s future entails studying and deploying integrated and soft mobility solutions along with connected and real-time mobility systems, and self-driving transport,”* explains Al Tayer.

Numbers speak for themselves here. The RTA has recently accomplished several major projects worth over AED 146 billion (€37 billion), including the establishment of the 89.3 km Dubai Metro, the longest automated metro globally; the 11 km Dubai Tram; a contemporary fleet of more than 1,400 public buses adhering to Euro 6 standards for low emissions; and a comprehensive marine transport network featuring abras (used to ferry people across the Dubai Creek), the Dubai Ferry, and water taxis, across 24 lines and 54 stations. With ongoing urban and tourist developments like the Dubai Water Canal, the usage of marine



transport is, for that matter, expected to grow significantly.

The Dubai Metro Blue Line project specifically, approved by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, represents a significant leap forward in the city’s transportation infrastructure. Spanning over 30 kilometers and featuring 14 stations, this line will connect critical areas of Dubai, offering a direct link between Dubai International Airport and key urban centres. *“The Blue Line is a key integration point between the Red and Green Lines of Dubai Metro. It plays a significant role in realising the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) and Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan,”* states the Government of Dubai Media Office.

Riding the Wave of Sustainable Success

In 2023, Dubai’s public transport and shared mobility services, including the metro, trams, buses, marine transport, and taxis, saw an unprecedented surge in usage, with 702 million riders taking advantage of these services. *“These indicators stem from substantial investments and concerted efforts to promote public transport,”* says Al Tayer.

The Dubai Metro itself achieved a new milestone with over two billion

riders since its inception. *“It serves the community and reflects Dubai’s keenness to provide effective, environmentally friendly and sustainable transport solutions,”* says His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai. This achievement highlights the role of Dubai’s public transport in facilitating seamless mobility and its contribution to Dubai’s economic growth and ability to host global events like Expo 2020.

However, Dubai’s transit system is not just about enhancing mobility but also about committing to sustainability. In that regard, there is such a thing as the RTA’s ‘Zero-Emissions Public Transportation in Dubai 2050’ strategy, which aims to convert all taxis and limousines to electric and hydrogen vehicles by 2040 and the entire public bus fleet by 2050. This ambitious goal positions Dubai as a pioneer in the Middle East in the transition to net-zero emission public transport, further cementing its reputation as a city of the future.

Last but not least, the RTA is also advancing its Smart Self-Driving Transport Strategy, targeting 25% of all mobility journeys in Dubai to utilise self-driving technology by 2030. A significant achievement in this direction is the completion of digital maps for Cruise’s Origin autonomous vehicles, preparing for their 2023 launch in Dubai. This move marks Dubai as the first city outside the US to adopt Cruise’s AV technology for taxi and e-hail services (which provide to book public transport through apps), with plans to expand the fleet to 4,000 by 2030.

By Vicky Koffa

Dubai Association Conference 2024: Value Amplified through Associations

The curtains have drawn on the Dubai Association Conference 2024 (DAC 2024), leaving behind a trail of inspiration, collaboration, and transformative ideas. Held on February 26-28, 2024, the 4th edition of the event was an important gathering for international and local association executives, thought leaders from the sector, government officials, and industry partners.

Hosted at the Sheikh Maktoum Hall, Dubai World Trade Centre, this conference built upon the success of previous editions, which explored the societal impact of associations. Now, in 2024, the focus shifted from theory to practicality, allowing participants to assess and measure the impact and value of associations firsthand.

In line with the objectives of D33, the Dubai Association Centre aims at facilitating the establishment of professional associations and trade bodies in the city. The annual conference

exists to help associations in the region grow and reinforce Dubai's transition to a knowledge-based economy.

With the help of an actual set of scales on stage and under the theme "Value Amplified: Associations Empowering Change," attendees were called to vote on how association business events (and association activities at large) may create or destroy value. Examining six dimensions (intellectual, social, financial, governance, cultural and natural), we tipped the scales heavily on the plus side: despite the negative (often

environmental) impacts, events offer knowledge transfer and innovative ideas, cultural awareness, and collaboration opportunities.

The conclusion was reached by the participants partly thanks to the educational value they received during the sessions and the discussions that were ignited because of them within the walls of the conference centre. However, a key factor for valuable impact were the outdoor cultural and environmental activities which were carefully planned to



enhance the value created when visiting a destination like Dubai.

Delegates were called to plant ghaf trees (the UAE's national tree) in order to offset some of the carbon footprint created because of travelling, leaving a legacy in Dubai. Furthermore, a cultural lunch with local cuisine followed by a relaxed conversation to explain the Emirate's history and customs helped participants break some of the prejudice around the Muslim culture and feel more immersed in the host destination.

Conference Topics & Learnings

Over a day and a half of educational sessions with experts giving presentations on the main stage or in smaller learning labs, discussing in panels, and walking among the attendees to engage with them close up, DAC2024 gave a chance to everyone to share challenges and successes and learn from peers. Covering a variety of topics, from societal impact and financial wellness to artificial intelligence and nurturing human resources for success, the conference left the over 250 delegates with more understanding on what associations can offer on a local as well as a global level.

In one of the plenary panel discussions, Boardroom's own Deputy Director, Vicky Koffa, shared insights on how associations create positive societal and economic impact. Communicating this effectively (either through conferences, policy making or public initiatives) helps members realise the value created

by their association and increases membership interest and engagement.

The use of a 'playbook' served not only for note taking but also as work required around the sessions for deeper understanding. Participants were armed with tangible takeaways:

- Beyond strategies and metrics lies the essence of success – human relationships. Trust, empathy, and genuine connections form the bedrock of thriving associations. When we invest in our colleagues, we unlock solutions to challenges that seemed impossible. Good leadership skills include trusting your coworkers, empowering them to grow and creating a strong work community which leads to an inclusive work environment.
- From streamlining administrative tasks to enhancing member experiences, AI is here to stay. Associations can harness its power to make informed decisions, personalise interactions, and drive efficiency, according to Veemal Gungadin, CEO of Gevme, and his captivating presentation.
- Whether it's advocating for social justice, promoting sustainable practices, or driving innovation, associations find strength in pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and fostering partnerships.

Annika Månsson, Founder & CEO of Happy At Work, wrapped up the conference by pointing out the importance of work-life harmony. Striking the right balance between the two requires conscious effort and active

scheduling of sleep, exercise, down time, family time, 'me' time and work.

"Only few leave an impact, and this year's DAC was one of them. The well-thought agenda, topics, speakers, moderators, workshops, organisers, venue, and different activities scored high. I have taken many action items that will help our association mission: investing in AI tools to empower our association, increase the younger generation involvement, exploring the different membership options and categories, the pros and cons of hybrid events, and more. I'm looking forward to next year's conference and would love to see more local experience as well," said Zehra' Al-Hilali, President of the Arab Resuscitation Council (ArRC).

During his closing remarks, Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President of International Relations at Dubai Chambers – one of the organisations that founded DAC – shared his vision for the key role associations will play in achieving Dubai's ambitions: *"With the Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) as our roadmap, Dubai Chambers is working to create a sustainable future for all economic sectors. We focus on international relations, and associations are at the centre of that. By connecting the world to the region, association events can unlock untapped value, which is key to accelerating our goals. The outcome of this year's conference has proved just that."*

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By Guy Hall

How Montréal Cultivates Connections for Conferences

Montréal, one of Canada's largest and most cosmopolitan cities, gives associations the opportunity to bring their delegates together in a destination that thrives on genuine connection.

More to discover

While the majority of the city's residents are francophones – speaking French as their first language – it is Montréal's rich tapestry of cultures that foster its distinct character and creative energy. Nearly 33% of the city's residents were born abroad and relocated to this bustling hub, making Montréal a truly global destination and allowing visiting delegations to engage with a diverse range of cultures.

The city itself is compact, walkable and easy to get around, which means it is ideal for exploration. This is good news because Montréal provides plenty of opportunities for event attendees to make more of their conference experience, connect with one another and let the city bring out their playful side.

They can do this by tapping into the thriving cultural scene with visits to one of Montréal's many galleries, such as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, or by attending one of the city's vibrant festivals, like the Montréal International Jazz Festival – the world's largest celebration of jazz. Another option is simply soaking up the *je ne sais quoi* atmosphere that permeates throughout the streets, cafés and public spaces.

Also popular amongst conference participants travelling to the city is its array of well-reputed restaurants, like Vin mon Lapin or Toqué!. Located just across from the Palais des congrès de Montréal, the city's cutting-edge convention centre, Toqué! offers a fine dining experience with exquisite dishes and tasting menus from renowned chef Normand Laprise.

Montréal's diverse and inclusive atmosphere also means event organisers from across the globe can bring their events to Montréal in the knowledge that their attendees will feel at home. Ranked as one of the world's safest cities for American travellers by Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection, Holidu also recently rated Montréal as the safest city in the world for solo women travellers. With delegate safety and comfort a top concern for many association planners, this confirms Montréal as a compelling option.

More to innovate

Innovation further strengthens Montréal's appeal, and Business Events Montréal (BEM) can connect event organisers to some of the meetings industry's most creative minds.



Central to the city's progressive approaches is the work being done by the Events Lab at the Palais de congrès. Their partnership with MT Lab, North America's first startup incubator dedicated to innovation in tourism, culture and entertainment – and their 14 innovative partners – seeks to push boundaries in all facets of the events industry.

For example, the work being done by RE-AK Technologies is reinventing the way that participant satisfaction can be measured. By adopting a biometric approach, RE-AK Technologies uses biosignals such as brain waves, heart rate and skin reactions to understand the emotional state of participants at each stage of their event journey. This heightened connection to delegates and their emotional responses gives event organisers the opportunity to better comprehend, and therefore improve, the attendee experiences.

Another innovative approach coming out of Montréal is already on display at major events such as the Paris Peace Forum and numerous TED conferences. A platform conceived by e180, a Montréal-based education and events company, "Braindate" connects people and allows them to learn from one another. Participants at events – in-person or virtual – use the Braindate platform to book one-on-one or small group meetings from a crowd-sourced topic market, facilitating meaningful exchanges. At events across the world, Braindate users have booked more than 10,000 meetings with each other, leading to more than 50,000 valuable interactions.

Elsewhere in Montréal, networking and knowledge sharing experts Yulism are helping event organisers transform their approaches. With access to the city's unique spaces and varied activities, the team at Yulism are able to integrate the international events community into the local ecosystem – be this with bespoke itineraries or key introductions – and find ways for them to enhance the impact of their event.



More support

Providing connections to event innovators is not BEM's only role in the event planning process. In fact, the DMO acts as a one-stop-shop to help make creating an event as straightforward as possible.

Through Team Montréal, a coalition of the city's meeting and convention industry leaders, BEM can help events boost their impact with access to local entrepreneurs, academics and researchers. The city is a hub of expertise in sectors ranging from the life sciences to artificial intelligence, and BEM can

connect conferences to industry leaders who can use their specialised knowledge to elevate the event. BEM also partners conference organisers with an in-house convention services manager who, as a single point of contact, aims to ensure that each and every aspect of the event is a success.

Located just 60km from the US border and with direct flights from over 160 destinations, Montréal is a gateway to North America and the BEM team has plenty of experience working with international delegations. Their team can refer reliable customs brokers who can assist visiting associations with any international customs and shipping needs.

Finally, working with Team Montréal, BEM can connect event organisers with the city's many unique hotels and venues – such as the PHI Centre, a sustainable space with a LEED Gold-certified heritage building from 1861 located in Old Montréal.

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By Remi Deve

Monaco's Vision for Sustainable & Inclusive Events

In an era where CSR is not just valued but expected, the meetings industry stands at a crossroads between tradition and transformation. Monaco – perhaps surprisingly for some – is pioneering a path toward sustainable and inclusive events. With the recent unveiling of the Sustainable Event Manager's Guide, the Principality sets a global benchmark, proving that events can be both impactful and mindful. This initiative reflects Monaco's broader commitment to environmental stewardship and social inclusion.

Nestled along the French Riviera, the petite yet sovereign city-state of Monaco has been advancing its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in recent years. Guided by the vision of HSH Prince Albert II (who has set a national target of full carbon neutrality by 2050), Monaco's government, businesses, and citizens have embraced the critical importance of social and environmental custodianship. Together, they have initiated and adopted sustainable practices, demonstrating a collective commitment to contributing positively to the global community.

In this context, the Mission for Energy Transition (MTE) takes on a crucial role in facilitating the planning of sustainable events by developing infrastructure for electric vehicles. This effort makes environmentally friendly transportation options easily accessible for those attending events. The initiative builds on Monaco's longstanding commitment to soft

mobility, offering a variety of solutions within its territory: pedestrian paths, electric bikes, solar-powered shuttle boats, electric taxis, and electric vehicle charging stations. Notably, Monaco now boasts 421 spots where electric vehicles can be recharged for free.

The Grimaldi Forum is playing its part with a strong commitment to sustainability, and initiatives aimed at significant energy conservation and the use of sustainable materials. Its forthcoming expansion plans are designed with sustainability at their core, reflecting how Monaco's premier event venue embodies the principality's eco-friendly ethos. In recognition of its efforts, the Forum has, for six years now, been awarded the ISO 14001 certification for its comprehensive environmental management system. It was also certified ISO 20121 for the very first time in November 2023.



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The venue is leading by example: it has embraced eco-friendly materials and technologies, such as LED lighting and energy-efficient air conditioning systems. Additionally, it prioritises partnerships with local vendors to procure organic and ethically-sourced goods for its catering offerings.

Monaco's hotel sector is also actively engaging in CSR by establishing "Green Teams" within their facilities. These groups are tasked with crafting and executing strategies aimed at diminishing the ecological footprint of the hotels, concentrating on key areas such as conserving water, enhancing energy efficiency, and promoting recycling practices. As a result, a significant portion, more than 80% of hotel rooms in the Principality have achieved various environmental certifications, such as Green Globe or Green Key, reflecting their commitment to sustainability.

A Guide With an Impact

To help planners organise sustainable events with an impact, Monaco Convention Bureau recently launched the Sustainable Event Manager's Guide.

More than a manual, it's Monaco's manifesto for sustainable event planning. Created with insights from Monaco's foremost sustainability experts, the guide covers every aspect of eco-friendly event execution, from energy conservation and waste reduction to sustainable sourcing. It emphasises practical strategies that have been successfully implemented in Monaco, showcasing events that have significantly minimised their environmental footprint.

There are also some educational tools that have been launched to aid in the measurement and improvement of one's impact on the environment while staying in the area. These tools, called 'carbon calculators' like the one developed by Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority, are tailored to professional event organisers and individual visitors. By utilising them, visitors can gain a better understanding of their carbon footprint and receive suggestions on how to decrease it.

Association organisers are encouraged to adopt these methodologies, creating experiences that resonate with responsibility and impact. The Sustainable Event Manager's Guide is available for download (see above), serving as a crucial resource for anyone looking to infuse their events with sustainable practices.

To download the Sustainable Event Manager's Guide



Inclusion & Accessibility: A Monaco Mandate

Monaco's vision for inclusive event planning goes beyond environmental concerns, addressing the essential aspect of social responsibility—accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

In that area, Monaco has launched a national policy – Handipact – for the inclusion of people with disabilities, under the guidance of Christophe Robino, the Government Counselor-Minister of Social Affairs and Health. The initiative aims to make Monaco an exemplary land for disability inclusion. It spans nine action areas, including awareness, education, employment, housing, mobility, and international recognition. Spearheaded by Lionel Galfre, Technical Advisor for Disabled People, the national plan is part of a broader effort to ensure everyone is 'ready' to engage with, support, and include people with disabilities in every aspect of societal life.

This National Plan for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities, *in fine* outlines comprehensive strategies for integrating inclusivity into every facet of societal interaction, including events. These initiatives aim to make Monaco a model of excellence in accessibility, challenging event organisers to consider all attendees' needs in their planning processes.

The Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority is committed to supporting Handipact and, to this end, plans to establish working groups. These groups, in collaboration with Lionel Galfre and various partners, will focus on addressing and advancing the initiative's objectives. Some individuals working at the DTC have, for that matter, already undergone training in sign language.

Event organisers have a unique opportunity to draw inspiration from Monaco's efforts, leveraging these insights to host events that are not only successful but also socially and environmentally responsible. In embracing Monaco's vision, they can contribute to a global movement toward more ethical and impactful events, setting new standards for excellence in the industry.

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By Remi Deve

Dijon in the Meetings Spotlight

Dijon, traditionally celebrated for its historical and gastronomical significance, has transformed into a vibrant hub for economic and cultural activities. As the capital of the Burgundy region, Dijon is not only steeped in history but also stands as a dynamic economic centre, making it an increasingly popular choice for hosting conferences and events.

The city's economic landscape is characterised by its innovative industries and strong educational institutions, fostering a fertile ground for research and development. This dynamic economic environment is supported by Dijon's deep cultural roots – the city is home to two UNESCO-listed sites – particularly when it comes to gastronomy and wine. Dijon's historical commitment to these fields is exemplified by the Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie et du Vin, a two-year-old landmark project that not only attracts visitors but also serves as a sophisticated venue that offers unique culinary experiences in its 4,500-sqm dedicated food court.

In fact, Dijon's conference infrastructure is robust, featuring a variety of high-quality venues that cater to a range of event sizes and types. Central to this infrastructure is the Palais des Congrès and des Expositions, a state-of-the-art facility ideally suited for large-scale gatherings with 31,000 sqm of event space and a 1,6000-seat auditorium, the Gaston Gérard stadium or the Zénith arena. The availability of these venues, coupled with their accessibility via an efficient tramway system and proximity to over 4,500 hotel rooms (and counting!) in the city and a high-speed train station sitting directly in its centre, demonstrates Dijon's readiness to accommodate events of all sizes and format.

As it should, sustainability is another draw in the Burgundy capital. The city is at the forefront of energy transition and sustainable urban development: initiatives such as promoting soft mobility and green energy use in urban planning are not only enhancing the quality of life for its residents but are also positioning Dijon as a model for sustainable event hosting. These efforts reflect a commitment to environmental responsibility that resonates well with associations looking to minimise their ecological footprint.

Illustrating Dijon's capability and readiness to host significant events, the city is scheduled to welcome two major conferences in 2024: the Journée Hydrogène in June and the World



Palais des Congrès

© Alice Colas

Congress on Vine and Wine in October. These events are set to attract global attention, showcasing Dijon's strengths in sectors like sustainable energy and viticulture. The World Congress on Vine and Wine, for instance, will coincide with the inauguration of the headquarters of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, highlighting Dijon's influential role in the global wine industry.

And if you're looking for support, the Dijon Convention Bureau, which was recently launched, is at your service. Serving as a one-stop shop for event planners, providing comprehensive support from the initial planning stages to the execution of the event, the Bureau can assist with venue selection, ensuring that each event finds a perfect fit among Dijon's array of facilities.

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Adapting for Tomorrow: Insights from Association Focus at IMEX Frankfurt

Adapting to change is a top priority for association planners today – whether it's shifting member needs and demographics, or balancing budgets, policies and partnerships. It's a topic that runs throughout Association Focus, sponsored by Amsterdam Convention Bureau - a dedicated day of education for association professionals.

Taking place on Monday May 13, the day before IMEX Frankfurt, the collaborative program, delivered in association with ICCA, AC Forum and ASAE, offers insights and recommendations as well as the opportunity to debate and exchange ideas.

Association Focus highlights:

- Disabled adventurer and explorer, Darren Edwards, knows a thing or two about adapting to change. A soldier and avid mountaineer, Darren's life changed the moment he suffered a spinal cord injury in a rock-climbing accident. Now an acclaimed speaker and expert in mental toughness and teamwork, he'll be sharing some of his life lessons in his plenary session: *The Adaptive Mindset: Five Pillars to Overcome Adversity*.
- With the World Economic Forum recently stating that 23 per cent of jobs will change in the next five years, upskilling and reskilling is a must. Meredith Ellison from the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence will lead the discussion in *The race to reskill: Building a future workforce*.
- AI is fuelling current discussions around changing roles and responsibilities and it's a technology that nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of associations and not-for-profits are already engaging with. Veemal Gungadin, founder and CEO of Gevme leads the discussion around how associations can make it work for them in AI: *Artificial Intelligence meets Association impact*.
- Designing events with long lasting impact sits at the heart of a session by Pigalle Tavakkoli founder of the School of Experience Design. She explains: "Experience design allows us to go beyond designing the form and function of an event, to designing the audiences' emotions, memories and behavior."

- Every organization is on a sustainability journey, and yet there are many missed opportunities along the way. According to latest ICCA & Destination Canada International Sustainability Report, only 19 per cent planners include their sustainability impact in annual reports. Guy Bigwood from GDS heads an energizing session covering best practice examples and sharing the strategies needed to build the ripple of sustainability at events.

Solid skillset for success

"While global recovery is progressing, there are still significant economic, political and environmental challenges on the horizon," says Carina Bauer, CEO of the IMEX Group. "Our international roster of speakers is set to share their take on the skills needed for the journey ahead, namely: adaptability, innovation, resilience and a collaborative spirit. Our dedicated day of learning and connections for association professionals is a surefire way to create a solid base for future business success."

Association Focus is sponsored by Amsterdam Convention Bureau and takes place at the Sheraton Frankfurt on Monday May 13, followed by Association Social at the Marriott Frankfurt. It is delivered in association with ICCA, AC Forum, and ASAE.

Register to attend IMEX Frankfurt from May 14 to 16 – for free – [here](#).



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Date: Monday,
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Association Focus
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Association Social
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