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LETTER TO OUR READERS

Lessons for Associations from the Paris Olympics

As the Paris 2024 Olympics are wrapping up (at the time of writing these lines), the event has already left behind more than just memories of incredible athletic performances; it's also offered valuable insights into leadership, innovation, and community engagement. For associations, the strategies and principles that have driven the success of the Games provide a blueprint for achieving long-term impact and relevance.

The Paris Olympics are a testament to the power of vision and long-term planning. Years of preparation, guided by clear objectives, have ensured that the event not only met but exceeded expectations. Associations can draw from this approach by emphasizing strategic planning and setting clear, achievable goals.

In an ever-changing environment, a well-defined plan acts as a guiding light, helping organisations navigate challenges while staying focused on their mission.

Innovation has also played a crucial role in the Paris Olympics, from the sustainable design of venues to the use of advanced technologies in event management. The Games have demonstrated that embracing new ideas and tools can significantly enhance both the experience and efficiency of large-scale operations. Associations, too, must be willing to innovate, exploring new digital platforms, and adopting creative approaches to member engagement and event management to stay competitive and relevant.

Inclusivity and diversity have also been central to the Paris Olympics, reflecting the event's global nature. The Games brought together athletes and audiences from all walks of life, underscoring the importance of representation. In fact, they've been heavily promoted as the most gender-balanced, inclusive, and sustainable event the world has ever seen. Associations can take a cue from this by ensuring their programs and leadership reflect the diversity of their members and the broader community. By prioritizing inclusivity, organisations can foster a more dynamic, resilient, and engaged membership base.

The legacy of the Paris Olympics will be felt for years to come – in fact it was thought out from the start as something that would leave a positive mark in many different fields, not just in the city's infrastructure but in the lasting impact on the community. Associations should similarly focus on creating long-term value through their initiatives, whether it's through education, advocacy, or community outreach. The goal should always be to leave a positive, enduring impact that goes beyond immediate outcomes.



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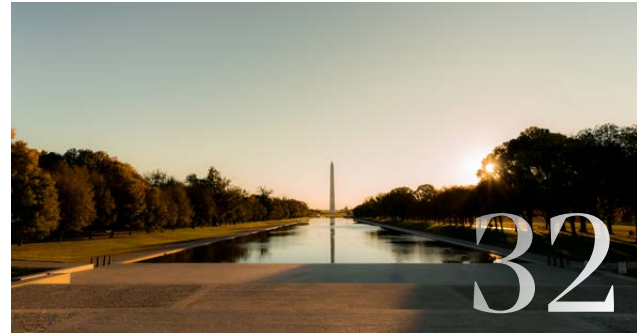


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By Remi Deve

Celebrating Excellence: The European Association Awards 2024

Organised by Boardroom's partners, the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE), the European Association Awards recognised and celebrated the outstanding achievements of associations across four categories: Impact, Digital Communication, Event Transformation, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). These awards, whose ceremony was held during the European Association Summit in Brussels in May, were designed to highlight the knowledge and efforts of teams that often work behind the scenes, ensuring that the broader association community can learn from best practices and transferable knowledge.

Impact Award: Cycling Industries Europe

Cycling Industries Europe (CIE) emerged as the winner of the Impact Award for its pivotal role in promoting cycling as a fundamental element of EU policy. Established in 2018, CIE has been at the forefront of advocating for cycling as a sustainable mode of transport, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The association's strategic campaign successfully elevated cycling's status within EU policy frameworks, culminating in the adoption of a strategic policy by the EU Commission that includes 36 commitments aimed at doubling the impact of cycling across Europe.

The adoption of the EU Declaration on Cycling received widespread support from stakeholders and the public. Kevin Mayne, the founding CEO of CIE, expressed deep gratitude

to the dedicated individuals who contributed to this achievement. *"The declaration is a reward for the unsung heroes in our movement, from local campaigners to innovative tech developers,"* he said.

Mayne also highlighted the campaign's success as it shifted cycling from being viewed as a local issue to a strategic transport mode. By focusing on the unique benefits of cycling, such as rapid deployment and job creation, CIE effectively positioned cycling as a key component of the EU's broader sustainability goals.

CIE is gearing up for the next phase of its advocacy efforts, guided by a new manifesto titled *"From Zero Carbon Mobility to World Class Industry."* This document will set CIE's policy priorities for the coming year, with a focus on implementing strategies across all levels of governance.

Digital Communication Award: MedTech Europe

MedTech Europe was honored with the Digital Communication Award for its groundbreaking "Connecting the Dots" campaign. This video series, produced in collaboration with BBC StoryWorks, showcases how digital transformation is revolutionising healthcare. The campaign, which reached an impressive 40.7 million impressions on social media and 12.2 million total video views, highlights the importance of medical technologies in enhancing patient care and streamlining clinician workflows. Miriam D'Ambrosio, Senior Manager Communications at MedTech Europe, emphasized the campaign's goal of fostering confidence in medical innovation as the path to better patient outcomes. *"The way we present ourselves to the outside world affects not just our organisation, but the reputation of the entire sector,"* she also stated.

The success of "Connecting the Dots" underscores the power of storytelling in shaping public perception and trust in the medical technology sector. The Digital Communication Award acknowledges MedTech Europe's innovative approach to communication, which has set a new standard in the association industry.

Event Transformation Award: European Sleep Research Society (ESRS)

The European Sleep Research Society (ESRS) received the Event Transformation Award for its innovative approach to reimagining its annual congress through the eSleep Europe 2023 Virtual Congress. This online event was designed to increase accessibility to scientific developments in sleep research, particularly at a time when travel and in-person meetings were limited.

ESRS President Pierre-Hervé Luppi and Secretary Erna Sif Arnardóttir led the initiative, which focused on offering participants a flexible and comprehensive educational experience. The virtual congress featured six half-days of categorized sessions, including keynote lectures, symposia, and roundtable discussions, all accessible both live and on-demand.

"There were some detractors, saying we were crazy having a virtual conference post COVID, but it worked very well: we have reached more countries than we reached with any of our physical conferences to date," said Jennifer Thomsen, ESRS Executive Manager. In that regard, the Award recognized ESRS's ability to adapt and innovate in the face of challenges, ensuring that its members continue to benefit from cutting-edge knowledge and networking opportunities.



DEI Award: International Association of Public Transport (UITP)

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) has made significant strides in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, earning recognition with the DEI Award at the European Association Summit.

Despite its long-standing history and traditional roots, UITP has shifted its focus towards diversity to better reflect the varied demographics of the public it serves. The DEI initiative aimed at gender parity within the organisation has been transformative, doubling the number of women in events, eradicating male-only panels, and significantly increasing female representation on boards, including the appointment of UITP's first female President in its 140-year history.

The initiative has positively changed the association's atmosphere, making it more welcoming and engaging for women members. While there were initial challenges and skepticism about the feasibility of the DEI goals, strong leadership and commitment helped overcome these obstacles.

Lindsey Mancini, Senior Director of Events and Academy Services at

UITP, emphasized the importance of top management support and active involvement in implementing DEI initiatives.

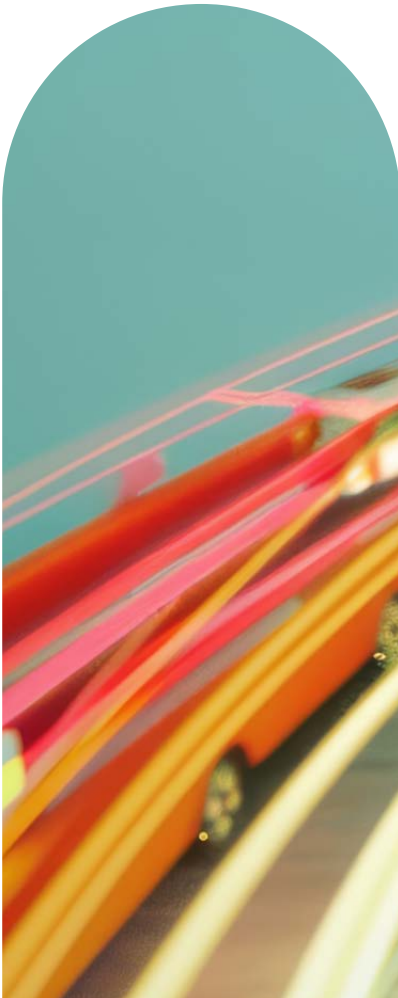
"Our mission encompasses advocacy, knowledge, and networking," she said. *"In recent years, we have been putting more and more focus on issues around diversity. The travelling public our members serve are as diverse as society, therefore it is important for the sector (and for UITP) to reflect that diversity."*

In the end, the European Association Awards 2024 highlighted the exceptional work being done by associations across various sectors. Whether through impactful advocacy, innovative digital communication, transformative event management, or a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, these associations are leading the way in shaping the future of their respective fields. As the broader association community learns from these best practices, the Awards serve as both recognition and inspiration, encouraging continuous improvement and collaboration.

More about the European Association Awards on www.esae.eu/european-association-awards

EEDI – From Compliance to Commitment

Special Boardroom contributor **Dr Ole Petter Anfinssen**, explores the controversy of compliance and commitment in EEDI, or Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.



Throughout history, individuals have faced unfair treatment and exclusion due to differences in beliefs, traits, sexual orientation, gender, race, and identity. Despite the current emphasis on Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI), there remains a contentious debate between genuine commitment and mere compliance. For some organisations, EEDI initiatives are reduced to a political box-ticking exercise rather than a heartfelt endeavour to do what is morally right.

Performative Allyship & Unconscious Bias

Fortunately, some organisations are at the forefront of this important work—but they are, in fact, forgetting about “everyone.” Even though they believe they are being inclusive, they are, in fact, excluding.

For many years, I have observed various organisations developing their EEDI strategies. What surprises me is that they often end up focusing on only one or two minority groups, typically driven by gender and race. Despite their claims of inclusivity, their actions suggest otherwise.

Let’s take Pride as an example. This seems to be more of a commercial

undertaking to many organisations rather than something they are committed to, as there are few actions behind their words. They change the colours of their logos, and that is basically it.

This phenomenon is known as Performative Allyship, which is primarily driven by “personal gain” and brand perception. Often, this is not done intentionally but stems from a lack of understanding or genuine interest in the cause. It is done because it seems to be the trend.

In contrast, organisations need to practice True Allyship, which involves taking deliberate actions to support and include individuals or groups who are underrepresented or unfairly treated. True Allyship requires a genuine commitment to making a positive impact rather than merely following a trend.

Emotional tax & psychological safety

If there is a lack of authenticity or the organisation is not committed to EEDI, the emotional tax for those concerned may be high. For example, this may negatively impact well-being due to unpleasant experiences rooted



in feelings of alienation (Catalyst Inc, 2021).

Exclusion may also be a result of unconscious bias. This is probably something most of us can testify to – where we judge or forget, due to our own perception and/or experiences of context, something or someone.

Increased complexity

There is an increased level of complexity, which becomes even more intense when we start talking about cognitive diversity. How do we ensure diversity of thought? Even though a group may look diverse from the outside, they may come from the same school of thought – meaning there will be no cognitive diversity. In a team, this can be fatal, as one ends up with a dodo mentality – with the danger of running off a cliff.

These unprecedented times, coupled with growing awareness of EEDI

injustices, have compelled leaders and organisations to strive for more inclusive environments. As a result, there is a stronger focus on creating workplaces where people feel cared for, safe, and trusted.

It is crucial to provide psychological safety in the workplace: *“Always, but especially in times of disruption and uncertainty, it’s important that all employees—regardless of rank or role—practice inclusive leadership to support a culture of trust and predictability, help “anchor” teams, and ensure individuals can thrive”* (Catalyst Inc, 2021).

The importance of Equity

It is also important to understand the true meaning of equity in this context and how it differs from equality. While equality is treating everyone the same way, often under the assumption that everyone has the same starting point, equity is working to create unbiased

outcomes for everyone, addressing their uniqueness, advantages and barriers – and limiting and adjusting imbalances.

This does not mean special treatment is required. Still, it is important to understand that most of these benefits and difficulties are due to, e.g., privileges and biases outside of personal control (Catalyst Inc, 2021). In short: *“If equality is the end goal, equity is the means to get there”* (Catalyst Inc, 2021).

In conclusion, Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are crucial and a must in our society, as well as in business, and we must include everyone! We all carry this responsibility – to be inclusive and non-biased.

Sources

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Catalyst Inc (2021). *edx – Race, Gender and Workplace Equity*.



Virginia Janssens, Managing Director of Plastics Europe

By Vicky Koffa

Association Portrait

Plastics Europe's Transformative Journey

As environmental challenges are piling up, plastic seems to play a dual role. Its versatility offers many innovations, yet its ecological impact is a growing concern which has triggered a global call for innovation and sustainability in the industry. Leading this transformative journey in Europe is Virginia Janssens, Managing Director of Plastics Europe. Her ambitious vision aims to transition the sector towards circularity and achieve net zero emissions

What is Plastics Europe all about?

Plastics Europe is the pan-European association of plastics manufacturers, representing close to 100 members producing over 90% of all polymers across Europe. At Plastics Europe, we see our role as a catalyst of much-needed change, not only within the plastics industry, but also outside it. Our commitment as an industry is to focus on ensuring plastics continue to deliver much-needed societal benefits while minimising their environmental footprint.

Can you share your journey to your current role, what motivated you to take on this position, and how your previous experiences have prepared you for it?

My vision for carbon neutrality is challenging but achievable, and I am committed to helping advance it and make it a reality. Previously, I served as Managing Director of EUROOPEN, the European Organisation for Packaging and the Environment, for eight years. There, I represented the entire packaging value chain and worked closely with the plastics industry, so I knew the landscape and challenges well. Before EUROOPEN, I worked as a public affairs consultant on multi-sector clients, including food, chemicals, and energy. These experiences have served me well since I took up my role on 16 March 2020, the first day of the Covid lockdown.

What is your long-term vision for Plastics Europe, and how do you plan to lead the association in achieving its strategic goals?

My vision is to foster a sustainable and competitive plastics industry in Europe, aligned with our Plastics Transition roadmap published in 2023. Plastics remain crucial for the EU's green transition and various sectors such as automotive, construction, renewable energy, medical equipment, and aerospace. However, the European plastics industry has lost global market share due to increasing imports, uncompetitive energy costs, stricter EU regulations, and lengthy permitting procedures.

Our Roadmap outlines actions needed by the industry, policymakers, and our broader value chain to help the European plastics system become circular, with net-zero emissions by 2050. Specifically, we aim for 65% of total plastics used by converters to be made from circular feedstocks by 2050 and 28% GHG reductions by 2030 while working towards net zero emissions by 2050.

We are shifting from a linear to a circular system to achieve our ambitious goals. Explicit and increasing support from EU political leadership is necessary. As green investments accelerate globally, enabling policies must boost investments in Europe for the EU to reclaim its global leadership position. It's also important to maintain our members' support and leadership on this vision despite the challenging political and economic realities.

“Our commitment as an industry is to focus on ensuring plastics continue to deliver much-needed societal benefits while minimising their environmental footprint „

How do you see Plastics Europe addressing the current challenges in the plastics value chain, and what initiatives are being implemented to promote sustainability and innovation within the industry?

Our Plastics Transition Roadmap presents a clear pathway for solving the plastics system’s challenges, including transitioning from a linear to a circular system. The impact will be significant, but so will the investments needed, projected at least €235 billion by 2050.

Currently, we are focused on implementing our Roadmap to reach circularity targets while strengthening value-chain collaboration. For instance, the use of recycled plastics has increased by 70% since 2018, and circular plastics now make up 13,5% of all plastic resins converted into new products in Europe. We are more than halfway towards achieving 25% circular plastics by 2030.

Our members are transforming their operations into more circular business models and investing in innovative recycling technologies. This shift is paying off with a positive trend towards circularity. For example, 26,9% of European plastic waste is now recycled, surpassing the amount put into landfills.

Plastics Europe is also investing in independent research to close the microplastics data gap and producing circular economy reports to foster an evidence-based approach to policymaking. We are working closely with our value chain to improve our impact through initiatives like the Operation Clean Sweep (OCS) programme, which provides best practices for preventing and remedying pellet loss.

Could you elaborate on the key events organised by the association and their significance in advancing the industry?

A core objective of Plastics Europe is deepening collaboration with our value chain. This year, we began organising the “Let’s Talk Plastics” series to inform our partners on critical issues and policies affecting the plastics system.

The event is held in Brussels with attendance ranging between 100 and 180 persons.

Every three years at K-Fair, the world’s leading trade fair for innovations in the plastics and rubber industries, Plastics Europe hosts high-level discussions with key opinion leaders from industry, academia, and civil society. The fair welcomes over 170.000 visitors. The next K-Fair is scheduled for October 2025 in Düsseldorf.

Given your extensive background in advocacy, how are you leveraging your experience to enhance Plastics Europe’s efforts on sustainability-related challenges? What are your priorities moving forward?

Advancing sustainability requires collective effort. Our work, particularly the ReShaping Plastics report by SystemIQ, has been pivotal. This independent report explored pathways to circularity and net zero in Europe, demonstrating our commitment to effect change. We have made significant progress by being open to listening and considering key stakeholders’ views.

The ReShaping Plastics report led to our Plastics Transition Roadmap, a significant achievement that united the industry on a shared path forward. My priorities include accelerating the implementation of our Roadmap in an attractive investment climate, allowing Plastics Europe and our members to thrive while becoming more circular and net zero. Additionally, I am committed to keeping my team motivated and entrepreneurial.

How do you stay inspired and motivated in your work? What advice would you give to other leaders in the industry who are striving to balance innovation, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement?

The commitment of the Plastics Europe team and our members to transforming the plastics industry inspires me. I am also motivated by the larger positive impact my work enables on our planet and society, and my 5-year-old son motivates me to strive for the well-being of future generations.

I strive to be ambitious, realistic, and authentic, balancing industry and societal objectives. A leader has no impact without a motivated and strong team, which I nurture and acknowledge daily. Innovation, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement require support, investment, collaboration, trust, and action. Keeping societal objectives in mind will help drive all in the same direction. Leadership skills need to be adjusted to achieve this.

FEATURE

High-Impact Products & Programmes for Associations

In the association landscape, the ability to create high-impact products and programmes is essential for associations aiming to attract and engage not only new members but also the younger generation. Whether the focus is on capacity building or professional development, innovation is key to maintaining relevance.

This feature brings together a wealth of insights from our knowledgeable contributors, offering diverse perspectives on how associations can successfully meet the needs of professionals and stay ahead in the industry.

Innovating to Ensure Your Association's Future

According to **Danielle Jacobs**, CEO of Beltug, the Belgian Association for CIOs and digital technology leaders, achieving long-term success and sustainability requires associations to do more than just attract members; they must actively engage them. Offering initiatives that encourage interaction, involvement, and commitment by delivering value to diverse member profiles is essential.

Aligning mission and vision with member values

With roots firmly in the digital sphere, Beltug naturally attracts professionals eager to engage with technological advancements. However, maintaining their engagement requires deliberate and structured effort. It is crucial to align the association's mission and vision with the values and needs of its members.

The process starts with understanding the contributions a diverse membership base brings to the association. Engaging with them should be viewed as a net benefit, delivering significant advantages. A diverse membership brings innovative ideas and fresh approaches, adding new dimensions to peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing across sectors, ages and experience levels. This helps us remain relevant and in tune with all levels of our member organisations, ensuring the continuity and evolution of our association.

I have been working at Beltug for over 27 years and have witnessed the association's mission and vision evolve to adapt to the impact of changing technology on organisations. We started by representing business users of telecommunications; today, we are a broad community of digital leaders, including CIOs, ICT managers, vendor managers, software asset managers, privacy experts, cybersecurity specialists, innovation directors, IT infrastructure managers, IT

architects, and more. Yet, our fundamental vision remains the same: to enable peer-to-peer learning and provide a voice for our members in discussions with policymakers. These values effectively create a safe and supportive environment for all members to advance in their careers.

Building upon strengths: Beltug's approach

Associations should leverage their strengths to create high-impact initiatives. At Beltug, we focus on dynamic learning experiences, access to cutting-edge industry knowledge, and networking opportunities with both peers and seasoned experts. This ensures our members find both immediate and long-term value, fostering their loyalty and active participation.

By leveraging its strengths, Beltug implements its mission in practice through a variety of targeted programmes that:

- Create opportunities for members to learn from the expertise and real-life experiences of their peers
- Create opportunities for members to develop their own expertise through interactive events
- Create opportunities for members to gain visibility by co-creating content and events
- Create opportunities for members to network with peers of all ages through events and task forces

Because member needs evolve, associations must remain adaptable and responsive by continuously assessing and refining their offerings. Our structured approach includes regular polls and an extensive agenda of member activities that is created each year based on the members' changing priorities. These are complemented with ad hoc events driven by direct interaction with members.

“Because member needs evolve, associations must remain adaptable and responsive by continuously assessing and refining their offerings. „

As our members are active users of digital technologies, the pace of change is rapid, leading to yearly shifts in certain priorities. However, associations that aim to grow and attract new members must stay attuned to evolving member needs.

Embedding younger members in the association's core

Younger members are a key demographic for us, contributing valuable knowledge and insights into rapidly evolving technologies. In some areas, younger individuals may possess more up-to-date expertise than their older counterparts, so we believe it's crucial to ensure they are represented at the highest levels of our organisation. For instance, the Beltug Board includes two members under 35 years old, and our team spans a wide range of ages.

To facilitate engagement with younger professionals, we offer various membership options that allow organisations to register multiple colleagues. It's important to involve not only top-level executives and managers but also the “up-and-comers.”

A mixed offer of programmes & initiatives

Our initiatives aim to bring value to members of all profiles and ages. Every year, we survey our members to uncover their priorities, and then design our action plan around those priorities. This shows our members that we are committed to being a member-led association, motivating them to engage actively with us.

Our D-scover events give participants a chance to explore, discuss, and demystify current topics, such as evolving legislation and innovative technologies. Our task forces bring together members with specific interests and expertise to exchange on those themes. And our interactive events offer participants the opportunity to discuss with others and express their own ideas, rather than just passively listening.

In the digital world, professionals of all ages have the potential to grow into leadership roles. We give them the opportunity to speak at our events, where they can showcase their technical knowledge and strategic vision to a broad audience. By fostering this early connection with Beltug, they also bring their future organisations into contact with us.

Beltug is also actively involved in outreach initiatives. We have relationships with several universities, collaborating on events, being a sounding board for master's theses, and giving guest lectures that bring researchers and students into our scope.

Open-minded & agile

Staying open-minded and agile is crucial for any association. Maintaining an adventurous spirit and a willingness to try—and fail—is key to remaining relevant. To engage members effectively, we can never rest on our accomplishments. We need to keep evaluating the resources, services and benefits we deliver.

Through its approach, Beltug engages with the leaders of today and the future, providing a safe space for high potentials to develop, grow and connect. By fostering this kind of environment, associations can ensure their own growth and sustainability, and pave the way for a thriving, future-ready community.

In addition to being CEO of Beltug, Danielle Jacobs is a member of the Leadership Team of the European Digital Business User Associations, a Member VDAB's Ethics Council for AI, a Board member of DNS Belgium and a member of the Digital Minds of Secretary of State Digitisation Mathieu Michel.

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



By Rasheeda Childress

The Importance of Having a Product-Development Process

Developing new products that continue to generate revenue helps associations thrive. To improve chances of creating products that have long-term success, it's key that associations research need, test concepts, and stay within their mission.

As associations look to achieve steady revenue in this pandemic-recovery economy, many are launching new products. Experts have suggested that developing products for the long haul requires a slightly different mindset than some of the short-term products deployed during the height of the pandemic. And once you have that mindset in place, it's important to follow a process to make sure the new products you launch have the power to last.

"A lot of organizations don't have the resources or the structure or framework for proper product development and management processes," said Craig Dykstra, senior marketing consultant at McKinley Advisors. *"They are willing and able to roll up their sleeves and dig into these problems, but they don't necessarily know exactly what the proper processes and workflows are in order to efficiently and effectively develop, manage, or pivot new products or existing products to generate the revenue or engagement they're looking for."*

That process can generally be boiled down to a handful of steps. Jennifer Blenkle, director of new product development and strategic initiatives at the American Physiological Society

(APS), said APS streamlined the steps needed for developing long-term revenue-generating products.

"We narrowed it down to five steps, or five phases," Blenkle said. *"They are intelligence, exploration of an idea, developing an idea, testing an idea, and then reviewing it."*

Blenkle boiled down the most essential elements of the steps for clarity. *"Intelligence is really looking at the market, trends, or policy shifts that we are seeing in the field and thinking about whether there are opportunities for APS to create a product that could address those needs,"* Blenkle said. *"Then we develop what we call idea proposals, which is really looking at what's the vision of the product, what are the different components, and what's the rationale for the product?"*

Dykstra said that researching the need and testing whether the proposed product meets the need are key to keeping associations on the right track. *"Whenever it comes to product development and management, do your research—whether you're just testing a hypothesis by talking to [potential customers] or you're testing a concept with a sketch or a prototype,"* Dykstra said.

While associations want to be innovative with new products, it's also important to make sure the product is something the association is equipped to do.

When associations skip this part of the process, Dykstra said the results are typically bad.

“The more assumptions you have around a product or a concept that go unconfirmed or unvalidated, the more costly it’s going to be in the long run,” he said. “While research may take some time, it’s much better to confirm everything and gather as much in-depth information as you can. It’s going to save you money in the long run, because you have confirmed and iterated and used that information to build your product over time.”

While associations want to be innovative with new products, it’s also important to make sure the product is something the association is equipped to do.

“One of the things we joke is: We’re not creating a hotel,” Blenkle said. “We are not creating an ice cream line. It still needs to be within advancing our mission, which is to advance scientific discovery, understanding life and improving health. If it comes through that phase, it goes into development.”

The five-phase process APS designed is meant to have flexibility. *“Our goal in creating the five phases, it is linear,*

in that ideas move through, but our goal is to constantly be working on developing the pipeline as we move through it,” Blenkle said. *“There won’t be a straight step-one, step-two, step-three process. We expect things to go back and forth as we explore ideas to kind of flow back and forth throughout the different phases.”*

Dykstra noted that while the pandemic has been challenging, it’s also provided opportunities for associations to reconnect with members and provide products that best serve them. *“Associations have a great opportunity on their hands to actually consider the products they’ve been selling and been providing to their audiences,”* Dykstra said. *“There is actually an opportunity to say, ‘Here is the need of the audience we currently serve or new audiences we are considering.’”*

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The Center for Association Leadership

Empowering the Next Generation with Innovative Programmes

Senthil Gopinath, CEO of ICCA, outlines the organisation's initiatives aimed at equipping the next generation of event professionals with the skills and knowledge needed for future success.

As the world changes and becomes ever-more interconnected, the way we meet and exchange ideas will continue to shift. The global events of the tumultuous last few years have definitively shown us that face-to-face interaction is still incredibly valuable, even as technology moves forward, and new tools and platforms come into play. There's no substitute for face-to-face interactions for knowledge exchange, building relationships, and connecting as a community.

To continue the legacy our community has built, it's crucial to ensure the next cohort of business events professionals is equipped with technical skills,


region-specific knowledge and understanding, and a grasp of the global landscape at a high level. It's essential that we pass the baton of leadership to up-and-coming members of our industry in a way that leaves them prepared to not only carry on the important work we do in the space, but also iterate on our past successes and innovate the initiatives of the future.

At ICCA, we've always been strong advocates for professional development, training, and ongoing education for up-and-coming members of the international meetings industry. To that end, the ICCA education team has developed certification programmes and masterclass courses that focus on equipping everyone in the business events space – from university students just embarking on their career journeys to recent graduates seeking mentorship and inspiration, to senior executives interested in furthering their professional training – with essential skills, knowledge, and tools needed to advance their careers in the meetings industry.

Unique Initiatives for the Next Generation

The cornerstones of our educational offerings are the vanguard programmes ICCASkills and ICCAUni, two initiatives that provide certification and training for a wide range of participants. In addition to our extensive roster of Masterclasses, which take place all around the world, ICCA's educational portfolio is poised to shape the way our community grows into the future.

ICCAUni aims to attract potential new members to our community. ICCAUni offers selected students at participating universities and colleges around the world the chance to attend – and be a real part of – the ICCA Congress. This event will take place this October in Abu Dhabi, offering an opportunity to take part in research projects and get hands-on experience being involved in the production of a major industry event. It's a front-row seat to all of the action going within our ecosystem, providing a glimpse at the teamwork, collaboration, and innovation that make our industry strong.



Following the conclusion of the Congress, participating ICCAUni students can take advantage of potential job placements, internships, and other employment opportunities with ICCA member organisations. It's an incredible way for younger colleagues to get real exposure to our meetings community while gaining skills, insights, and the chance to network with established industry leaders.

A Commitment to Global Reach

With an eye on the expanding scope of global business events, ICCA is working to expand the reach of meetings that matter around the globe, with an emphasis on creating opportunities to work in areas that may have not garnered a lot of attention in the past. The world is getting more connected, and ICCA is dedicated to staying ahead of the curve when it comes to emerging markets.

In June, ICCA signed a landmark agreement with Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security, in cooperation with North Star LLC, to develop an educational programme for meetings and events professionals in China and beyond. The certification, Certified International Business Events Professional (CIBEP), is designed to give participants training in the Chinese market, going beyond the ICCA skills curriculum to include specific content that applies to professionals in the region.

CIBEP joins ICCA's roster of educational initiatives and will boost international engagement and knowledge exchange in business events development in both Chinese and international markets. It will offer different tracks to meet individual professional development needs, in English and Mandarin, for the Chinese and international conference market.

Vanguard Programmes for Emerging Talent

In addition to ICCA's educational and certification curricula, we are offering programmes geared toward reaching out to young people who are still deciding on next steps in their careers. The Young Professionals Forum provides emerging talent with the opportunity to share their voices and help shape the narrative

around the future of meetings and events. Members meet during the Congress and collaborate throughout the year. By matching participants with mentors who are already established in the industry, the programme aids knowledge-sharing and promotes innovation.

The Future Leaders Council is an elected two-year, fixed-term post for future leaders to facilitate sharing ideas and strategies. This influx of new talent helps keep ICCA current, relevant, and at the forefront of thought leadership in the association meeting community. Members of the Council works on projects of their choosing, as well as projects chosen by the ICCA board. The initiatives they develop provide valuable insights for those on the Council, ICCA, and the industry overall.

ICCA is committed to the ongoing education of all members of our industry, but we aim to pay special attention to the next generation of events professionals. It's this new cohort that will carry the torch forward for us all in the areas of DEI, sustainability, technology, and business development in our industry. We're excited to be a part of helping our younger colleagues build their careers, and we look forward to the continued growth and innovation of our community.

Engaging Tomorrow's Leaders: Crafting Offerings for Young Professionals

Sarah Markey-Hamm, Chief Executive Officer, ICMS Pty Ltd, and IAPCO President, explores the importance of developing innovative products and programmes tailored to the next generation of congress delegates, emphasizing the need for associations to adopt a bottom-up approach, allowing younger members to take ownership of content creation.

In the fast-changing world of professional associations, developing high-impact products and programmes is more essential than ever. The challenge of creating offerings that capture the attention of the next generation of congress delegates is one that many association managers and PCOs face regularly.

Typically, those who are designing programmes are not in the same demographic as those we are wanting to attract. Therefore, our approach must adapt to ensure that programs are created to attract our next generation of customers.

Constant innovation

To maintain a competitive edge, associations must consistently innovate, ensuring that their products and programmes are both novel and aligned with the evolving needs and expectations of younger professionals.

This is a conversation that we have been having with our clients on a regular basis. We have also been planning for our Next Generation members within IAPCO, offering new avenues for engagement and participation within the IAPCO community.

It is a process of trial and error but there is no way to

understand what works and what doesn't without trying it! I have compiled some ideas for consideration when designing offerings to cater for our new markets.

Create a group specifically for this market that the Next Generation (NG) members run and own the products. A NG representative should be reporting to the management team with their ideas and business plans for the delivery of their offering.

The NG group should know how their contemporaries engage with their peers and how they want to learn. This could be a combination of traditional and new technology, or it could be all online. However, guiding them to reflect on their own behaviours can reveal nuggets of gold to become the guiding methodologies for the future.

It is vital to create options for our NG to learn. Many are not afforded opportunities to attend meetings in person, therefore we need to create other options for them to engage with their peers.

While repurposing of content is great, the content may not be relevant to the NG. Therefore, creating groups within regions, by interest or experience can be the beginnings of some life-long friendships. Creating connections amongst this group will lead to the NG group wanting to attend the in-person events that are offered.

When attending an in-person event, it is vital that there is content specific to the NG's needs that is a combination of peer-to-peer learning and learning from those outside the industry and those who are not NG... Mentoring programmes

are a great way to connect both audiences as those of us who aren't NG can learn much from them as well.

Of course, we need to use social media to attract and engage this group, however which channel should be chosen? Who manages the content and how is it moderated to ensure that DEI and electronic safety are adhered to? Do the current channels meet requirements for this, or should there be a member-only channel that is hosted within the organisation's infrastructure? Whatever channel it is, the management needs to be transferrable as inevitably the tenure of the current NGs will end and there needs to be continuation of the channel.

Bottom-up approach

Developing products that will "speak" to our NG cannot be looked at with a top-down approach, it has to be a bottom-up approach so that there is ownership of the output. The groups managing these programmes need to be given a licence to design content that they need, and they will be involved in.

There is a saying "you learn more from failure than you do from success", it is a great principle to use when innovating for new markets. Provided the risk is managed, learning from failure is the path for future growth.

There is no magic "pill" for success, to create the perfect product or products that will cater for our new generation of customer. However, a mixture of imagination, collaboration and intrepidity along with a diverse team working together will create the path to success.

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 Sven Bossu

Beyond Continuous Improvement

The pandemic was in a way a great opportunity for many associations to re-visit their value proposal and financial model, often with a focus on survival in uncertain times. It forced organisations to think beyond “continuous improvement” and come up with new ways of engaging with their communities and ensuring financial continuity. In an environment which is in constant flux, keeping that mindset alive could make a big difference in the long term. Below is a story of how AIPC, the international association of convention centres, tries to do this in practice.

The event industry is back in great shape, as we saw when we received the results of the yearly AIPC member survey, which were presented at the annual conference in July. While attendance might be lower, overall revenues are back at 2019 level. However, convention centres have witnessed a shift towards more diverse and innovative event formats, and a growing emphasis on sustainability and

technology integration. Additionally, there's been a notable increase in client expectations for seamless coordination and customization, requiring venues to adapt our services to meet these evolving needs effectively. So no, we are not back to the 2019 situation: the landscape has completely changed, impacting the full event value chain, including convention centres.

Understanding changes

This means that – to stay relevant for its community – AIPC needs to fully understand these changes and adapt its value proposal in terms of products and services at a faster pace than in the past.

When we started reflecting, the question was: what needs to be changed and how do we rank the changes needed in terms of priority?



The starting point for us was the mission: to encourage, support and acknowledge excellence when it comes to convention centre management. While at its core this is still correct, we added the notion of world-class standards and the education around it.

Next step was to perform a SWOT analysis, clearly outlining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats linked to the mission. While this seems straightforward, it proved more difficult than expected to be fully aligned with the outcome between the different stakeholders. Just as an example: while we all agreed that member engagement is important to fulfill the mission, when do we consider it a strength? Is that 50%? Or should it be 70%? It might seem trivial, but agreeing on this is very important for the next steps.

The first step was to define a set of key priorities which were clearly linked with the mission and addressed the outcome of the SWOT. At the end, we agreed on 5 key priorities: from strengthening member engagement

to ensuring operational and financial growth.

Next – and this is where clear definitions come in – we agreed on a set of objectives for each of these 5 objectives. The key challenge here was not so much coming up with the objectives but making sure that they were SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. AIPC is a relatively small association with limited resources, so we need to focus on what can be achieved or be creative when it comes to getting more resources. As an example: one of the objectives is around defining and publishing best practices related to sustainability. The knowledge for doing so obviously sits with our members, so a small but dedicated group of sustainability officers was created to work on this, with the practical support of the AIPC team.

Finally, a dashboard was created, allowing to monitor progress made “at a glance” and which is discussed at every board meeting. Here as well, it’s important to agree on definitions (what does “on track” actually mean?)

and that – to paraphrase Keynes – “if facts change, objectives can change”.

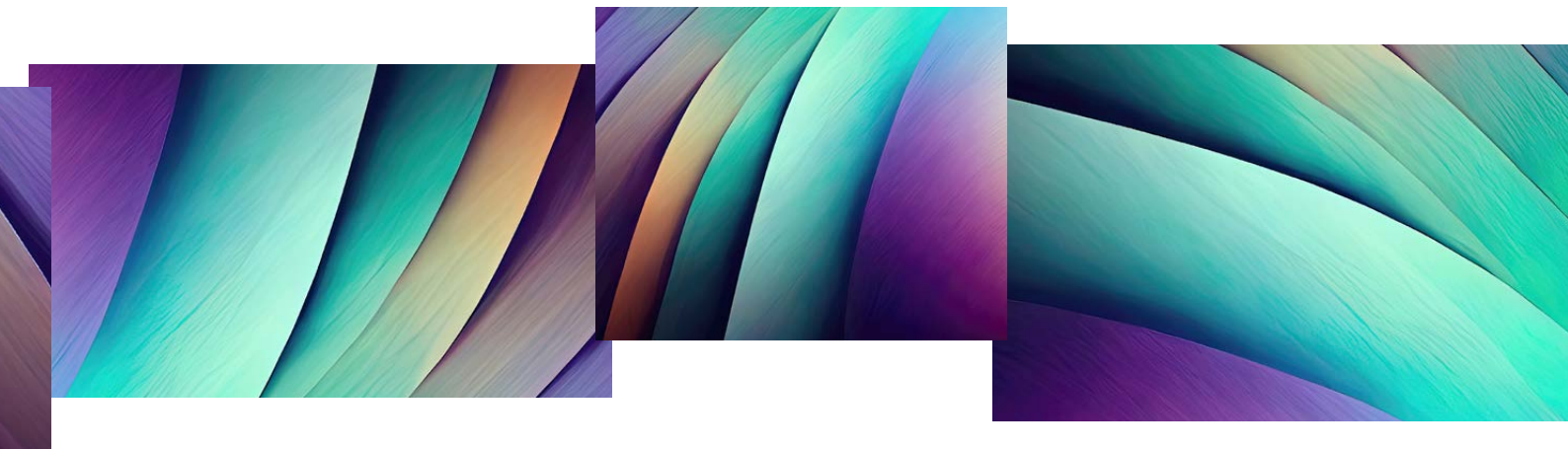
Clear view

All this work has allowed us to have a clear view on where we want to take the association and how we will achieve this and goes way beyond continuous improvement. It was shared with the members at the General Assembly during the Annual Conference and implementation has started.

One key lesson learned: definitions and agreement on these definitions are of key importance and the necessary time should be taken to achieve this, in order to avoid any ambiguity and ensuring focus on delivery.

Sven Bossu is the CEO of AIPC, which represents a global network of over 200 leading centres in 55 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide.

www.aipc.org



Citius, Altius, Fortius Communiter

Global Association Hubs' International Advisor **Martin Sirk** encourages associations to draw high-performance inspiration from the evolution of elite athlete coaching and the recent Paris Olympics.

When the International Olympic Committee added the word “Together” to Baron Pierre De Coubertin’s founding motto in 2021, they acknowledged the reality of elite sports performance. We are captivated by the talent of athletes like Leon Marchand or Simone Biles, but their success is a result of more than just natural ability. It comes from combining this with scientific knowledge, technological innovation, psychological insights, and incremental improvements in training. And this success is built upon a growing body of shared expertise and understanding within the global coaching and sports science community.

It's instructive to look at the evolution of high-performance philosophy in elite sports over the years, and consider the parallels with how associations' own methodologies have (or have not!) changed.

From growing pains to best practice

From early to mid-20th century, the emphasis was on quantity of training: endurance and pain! Coaching practices were largely based on anecdotal evidence and limited physiological knowledge. The second half of the century saw the emergence of Sports Science as a discipline, with pioneering coaches introducing scientific principles and professional standards into training, often in the teeth of opposition from advocates of accepted practices and amateurism.

In parallel, dozens of sports-related associations arose to disseminate and discuss this new body of knowledge, amongst them the International Society of Sports Psychology in 1965, International Society for Biomechanics in Sports in 1982, International Society for Performance Analysis of Sport in 1991 and International Council for Coaching Excellence in 1997.

This mirrors the evolution of performance methodologies and metrics in associations more generally over the same period. In the first half

of the century the norm was well-meaning amateur leaders managing quasi-monopolistic clubs for professions and industries, content to invent their own isolated operational and philosophical models. In the second half we saw the emergence of professional standards and certifications for both organisations and individuals, with more systematic processes and new platforms for sharing experiences and ideas.

Hyper-competition and -complexity

But in sports over the last twenty to thirty years the level of professionalism and complexity of inputs have increased exponentially, accelerated by competitive pressures and commercial rewards. Training now involves collaboration between coaches, sports scientists and technicians, nutritionists, physiotherapists and psychologists, equipment and clothing manufacturers, with far more proactive input from the athletes themselves. Soccer steals ideas from cycling, swimming coaches share data

with track and field colleagues, and psychologists swap insights between fields ranging from triathlon to table tennis and taekwondo. Every avenue is explored to find an extra centimetre, microsecond or joule of energy.

So how do associations measure up against this hyper-competitive focus on constant improvement? Well, we definitely aren't standing on the Olympic podium! For example, there currently exist no systematically-organised repositories of knowledge about association elite performance. Our conferences abound with ad-hoc case-study storytelling and panels reliant on personal perspectives, rather than providing delegates with access to rigorously objective evidence and annually improved methodologies for every facet of association management.

And many association Boards address major challenges using anecdotal evidence and personal experience, regularly "reinventing the wheel" instead of selecting the most aerodynamically appropriate solution from a (currently non-available) menu of well-proven, cutting-edge vehicles. Inevitably, our default thinking is to pick up ideas from similar associations' experiences rather than to cast our intellectual net more widely into other fields which can offer us high-performance lessons and insights.

Whilst there are some pioneering associations that have implemented key principles of evidence-led

high-performance, it will take a long time for the association world in general to adopt this mentality and methodology.

Going for gold

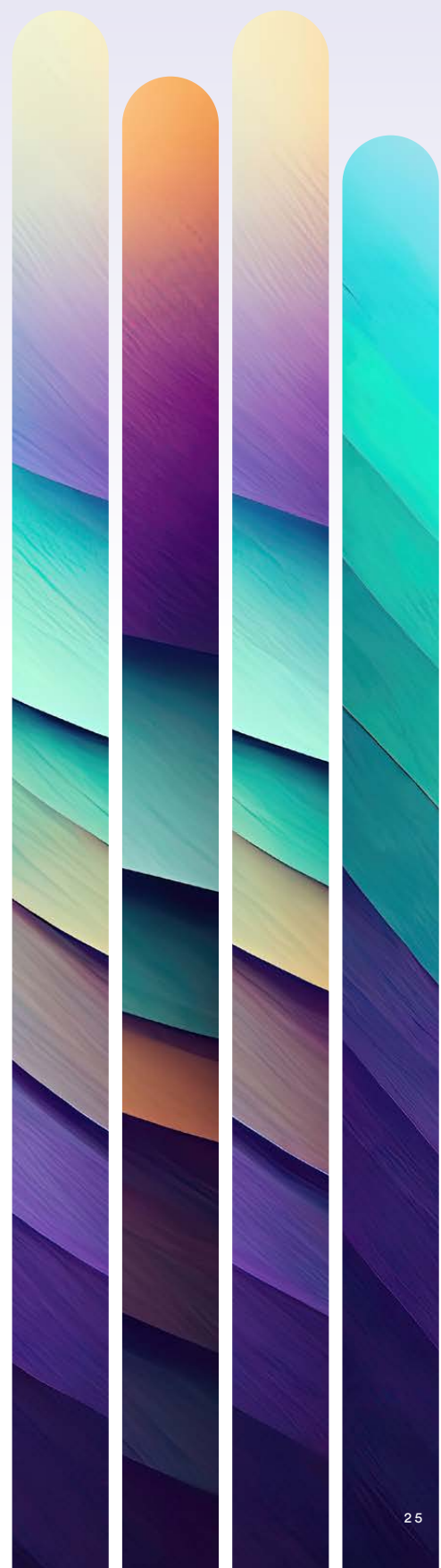
Meanwhile, on a practical note, what "easy wins" can we borrow from the world of elite sports coaching?

Efficiency & intensity

Short, intensive sessions have become the norm in most sports training. Associations need to similarly laser-focus their financial, intellectual and communication resources on the most critical interactions with members and other stakeholders, recognising that their attention can only be association-centric for a small proportion of work and leisure time. It isn't quantity of contact that wins medals, but quality combined with perfect timing.

Specificity & individualisation

New ways are constantly being found to identify, isolate and perfect each tiny element that makes up a particular skill, and to customise programmes for each athlete. Associations need to combine granular analysis of our own processes to see why and how they work (or fall short), and design delivery to meet the very different objectives and needs of each association's complex mix of stakeholders.





Constant experimentation

Whilst physiological and psychological theory are essential high-performance foundations, the best coaches are also constantly tinkering to identify marginal competitive advantages. Critically, once identified these are added systematically to performance data records and integrated into theoretical models. This is a key lesson for associations: experiment as much as possible, but catalogue and share the insights, and update each “routine” process so that performance continuously, incrementally improves. All too often, association experiments are treated as one-offs.

Athlete/member input

Athletes were once viewed as raw material to be shaped by coaches’ ideas, expected to follow orders uncomplainingly. Today, these relationships are far more power-balanced, intensively interactive, transparent about purpose, and address the “whole athlete” including the necessity of good mental health. This is the perfect model for an association’s ideal relationship with its members!

Global & diverse inspiration

Whilst I’ve argued that associations can learn enormous amounts from the usually invisible processes and principles that underpin outstanding sports performance, the Olympic inspiration we feel comes from individual moments of success or give-everything failure, and how these touch us emotionally.

But this also requires that we recognise ourselves in our heroes. The Paris Games were the first to be 50-50 gender balanced, and Refugee Team athletes won medals for the first time, as did numerous small or under-resourced countries. Every body size and shape had its day in the sun; newly added sports brought in younger generations whilst leaving space in the spotlight for events that hark back to the original Olympics in Ancient Greece, like wrestling and discus.

There are lessons for associations from this as well. We can only benefit when we think and act globally and inclusively, telling inspiring stories about and learning from all our members (and potential members) worldwide, those who are under-resourced as well as big-budget, whatever their native language, whether they are established veterans or newcomers to the community. The Olympics teaches us that new insights and knowledge cannot be constrained by national borders or narrow disciplines, and that inspiration takes an infinite variety of forms.

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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By Ombeline Marchon

Guadalajara's Winning Formula

Guadalajara may not be the first city to come to mind when thinking of a place in the America's to host a congress. And yet, it has repeatedly been chosen in the past few years by a wide range of associations for its ability to respond to all needs both in terms of organisation and attractiveness.



Located in the state of Jalisco, known as the Silicon Valley of Mexico, Guadalajara combines up-to-date industries and technologies with a historical heritage. Surrounded by stunning mountains and forests, the second largest city in Mexico also offers an ideal climate all year round, making it easy and enjoyable to set up events of all sizes and formats with the help of a very dynamic Visitors & Conventions Bureau.

A Smart City

Guadalajara is famous the world over for its tequila production and mariachi music. But now it is also labelled as a ‘Smart City’, a technologically advanced urban area producing software, electronics and digital components accounting for 25% of Mexico’s electronic export.

The city, which holds technology institutes and 12 prestigious universities, also offers abundant specialized and highly-qualified human capital, and *“the best and the first public network of free Wi-Fi statewide”*, according to Xavier Orendain, Strategic General Coordinator of Economic Growth and Development. Driven by the *Ciudad Creativa Digital* campaign, Guadalajara is becoming a centre of digital media creation, and as such, attracts world famous companies such as Intel, IBM or HP which are now implanted there.

Boosted by Jalisco’s Tech Hub Act that aims at consolidating its technological ecosystem, the Metropolitan Area has developed its own local virtual coin and recently launched the JAPI, or Jalisco Interactive Walk, *“a completely renovated, familiar and interactive experience transporting visitors through history, nature and grandeur of our State”*, Miriam Villaseñor explains. The Managing Director of the Museums, Exhibitions and Galleries of Jalisco describes it as *“a unique space that uses the wealth of its state to develop curatorial axes that unite in a transversal way tradition, art, culture, heritage, sport, nature and technology”*.

Guadalajara is indeed a multi-faceted city combining historical monuments

with high-tech facilities, warm people with skilled workforce, *art de vivre* with innovation and experimentation. Such assets make it attractive to associations and business events. With programmes such as *Ciencia al Mercado* (‘From Science to Market’), or REDi, a Network of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centers launched last year, the city not only helps local scientists and inventors spread their intellectual property or inventions, but also offers its citizens *“friendly spaces to develop their entrepreneurship projects and for out-of-town visitors, a good space to have meetings and job interviews”*, says Orendain.

As a hosting city, Guadalajara offers a large capacity of accommodation for congress participants – including the disabled –, numerous meeting venues, as well as an efficient and safe hub of public transportation, should the hotels not be at walking distance from the meeting sites.

EXPO Guadalajara, the largest venue in the city, can accommodate up to 60,000 daily visitors, which makes it an ideal option for major conferences. Not far from the Performing Arts Center (*Conjunto Santander de Artes Escénicas*), which holds five theatrical spaces, is the Cineteca with its five screening rooms. Espacio 1500 offers nine different halls with stunning views of the city, and luxury hotels such as the JW Marriott, the Hyatt Regency Andares or the Hilton Midtown are other options for conferences and meetings. In addition to those venues, Guadalajara already counts as many as 28,000 hotel

rooms, with thousands more currently under construction.

Urban and economic growth inevitably bring environmental challenges. To address these, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area launched a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan in 2018, aimed at promoting transportation that is sustainable, accessible, safe, and economically efficient. Akron Stadium, set to host the upcoming FIFA World Cup (set to bring between 155 and 180 million dollars to the city!), is equipped with eco-friendly technology. Additionally, the Guadalajara Visitors & Conventions Bureau collaborates with organizations like GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT to enhance sustainability and foster regeneration around major events in the city.

Hosting The World Cup

For decades now, Guadalajara has been a favorite spot for major events with a worldwide impact.

Created in 1987, the Guadalajara International Book Fair, also known as FIL, is put on by the University of Guadalajara and held every November at EXPO Guadalajara. In 2023, 2,469 publishing houses from 61 countries participated, attracting 857,315 visitors. Exhibitors, media, literary agents and guest writers from around the world gather to promote both the book industry and the pleasure of reading through animations and meetings... and those numbers keep growing!



Twice a year, Guadalajara also holds Intermoda, the biggest fashion show in Latin America with as many as 650 exhibitors, 1,150 brands and 24,404 buyers and visitors attending the 4-day event in January and July. Intermoda has just celebrated its 81st edition.

In addition to these events, the city regularly hosts high-profile professional gatherings that draw thousands of attendees. Guadalajara was selected by the National Association of Bus, Truck, and Tractor Producers to host Expo Transporte in both 2019 and 2023. This event, described by its Executive President as *“the biggest and largest exhibition so far,”* featured a gross area of 80,000 square meters, 400 stands, and more than 50,000 attendees. As one of the largest fairs in Mexico, Expo Transporte will return to the city in 2025, attracting professionals, experts, and leading firms in the motor transportation sector from over 30 countries.

In April 2023, the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics gathered 1,500 participants from 73 countries, with 110 companies presenting their innovative products designed to improve the lives of the disabled, thus marking its successful debut in Latin America.

Meanwhile, the International Aquarium Congress will be held in the city next October, and, Guadalajara’s Akron Stadium will host the FIFA World Cup in 2026. *“It’s an enormous privilege,”* says Maria Olimpia Cabral Rodriguez, Business Manager & Marketing Director from Chivas. *“This city has already hosted events of great international importance in sports. It is an incredible opportunity to put our traditions back on the world map, to proudly share our gastronomy and multiple expressions of the Guadalajara and Mexican culture in general, in addition to demonstrating that we are excellent hosts.”*

Additionally, Guadalajara will host both the World Congress of Dermatology and the World Congress of Physiotherapy in 2027.



A Dedicated Convention Bureau

A key factor in hosting such major events is the Guadalajara Convention & Visitors Bureau, which collaborates closely with associations from the very beginning to ensure the city meets all expectations and requirements. *“Eight years before winning the World Congress of Dermatology, we started working together and joining forces with the CVB,”* says Professor Jorge Ocampo Candiani, its President. *“They supported us in every possible way: face to face meetings and activities, financial support, in-kind support, ideas, assistance with logistics... They are the best convention bureau ally that exists in Mexico, and if I’m not mistaken, in all of Latin America.”*

Gustavo Staufert, CEO of the Guadalajara Visitors & Conventions Bureau, is committed not only to promoting his city but also to assisting organisations in overcoming any challenges in bidding for conferences. He believes that Guadalajara offers all the necessary infrastructure and digital capabilities, along with the touristic appeal of a city founded in the 16th century, rich in historical monuments and cultural depth. *“Guadalajara is one of the 17 most innovative digital cities in the world,”* he says, *“yet it also preserves a rich*

history and cultural heritage that maintains its authentic Mexican identity.”

Echoing Gustavo’s sentiments, MSc. Claudia Figueroa Padilla, AMEFI’s President and Mexican Bid Leader for the 2027 World Congress of Physiotherapy, stated: *“Guadalajara was chosen for its rich culture, vibrant atmosphere, and world-class infrastructure. The city not only provides the facilities needed for an event of this magnitude—we expect over 4,000 attendees—but also promises an unforgettable experience for all. Guadalajara combines professionalism with hospitality, making it not just a potential host city, but a strategic ally. Its participation and support were crucial to our successful bid.”*

Why choose between tequila and technology when you can enjoy both? Associations from around the globe are now selecting Guadalajara for its unique blend of modern innovation and traditional charm, offering a fulfilling experience for organisers and attendees alike, both professionally and personally.

More information
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By Vicky Koffa

Dubai Transforms Marine Conservation & Sustainability in the UAE

Dubai is in the world's spotlight once more with progressive sustainability initiatives. Case in point: the Dubai Reef project, standing out as an innovative step towards ecological preservation in the region and beyond. Launched earlier this year by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, it is set to evolve Dubai's marine ecosystem and reinforce its commitment to sustainability.

In April 2024, Sheikh Hamdan inaugurated the Dubai Reef project by deploying the first pilot reef modules. This initiative, part of the Dubai Can movement, aims to become the world's largest marine reef development. Spanning 600 square kilometres of Dubai's waters, it involves the installation of 20,000 purpose-built reef modules over four years, creating an extensive artificial reef system designed to boost marine life and biodiversity.

"The landmark Dubai Reef initiative is a testament to the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Reef ecosystems are unique life sources and vital components in the protection of marine life. Dubai Can's Dubai Reef project will

inject vitality into our coastal waters and contribute to global conservation efforts," stated Sheikh Hamdan.

Strategic Goals & Partners

With a true commitment to ensuring a resilient and diversified economy, the Dubai Reef project aligns with several key strategic initiatives of the country, including the Dubai Economic Agenda (D33), the UAE's Green Agenda 2030, and the UAE Net Zero 2050 strategy.

In order to achieve its goals, the project is a collaborative effort, bringing together various public and private sector partners. Main contributors are the Dubai Department of Economy Corporation, and Emirates.

The pilot phase of the Dubai Reef project began with the deployment of ten reef modules arranged in a 'D' shape, symbolising the start of a new era in Dubai's marine conservation efforts. These initial modules serve as a blueprint, demonstrating the feasibility and potential impact of the larger project, which is slated for completion within four years.

Environmental & Socio-Economic Impact

From an environmental perspective, the Dubai Reef project is designed to enhance marine biodiversity, safeguard coastal and marine habitats, and increase ecosystem resilience. The artificial reefs provide habitats for a wide range of marine species, including sponges, oysters, clams, crabs, sea stars, sea urchins, and various fish. These reefs also play a crucial



role in carbon sequestration, with an estimated capacity to capture over seven million tonnes of carbon annually. Moreover, the project aims to achieve an eight-fold increase in fish and biomass populations over the next decade. This boost in marine life will support sustainable fishing practices, contributing to food security and the local economy. The project's long-term vision includes fostering environmental stewardship, strengthening socio-economic prosperity, and preserving Dubai's marine heritage.

"In 2021, we partnered with leading reef developer HaejooX to launch a two-year proof of concept, analysing the effectiveness of purpose-built reefs in Dubai. The study used advanced technologies and utilised a three-dimensional scanning system to understand the quantities and types of fish present. Preliminary data showed an abundant expansion in marine life," noted His Excellency Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani, Director General of DECCA.

A Global Model for Sustainability

The Dubai Reef project is not just a local initiative; it has attracted international attention and support. Renowned investor and philanthropist Ray Dalio, known for his interest in ocean exploration and conservation, has praised the project for its ambitious goals and positive impact.

"I love this audacious project because it will be a remarkable contribution to the world's understanding of the benefits of ocean restoration and as well make the Dubai environment healthier and provide an incredible recreation park. Once again, Dubai is pursuing an ambitiously great project, this time under the visionary guidance of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan. It is an amazing project in an amazing place under amazing leadership," Dalio remarked.

Dubai's sustainability efforts are, of course, not limited to the Dubai Reef project. The emirate has launched several initiatives aimed at promoting ecological conservation and reducing environmental impact. The citywide Dubai Can movement, launched in February 2022, encourages residents and visitors to reduce single-use plastic consumption. The movement's 'Refill for Life' campaign has already significantly reduced plastic waste, cutting down the use of over 18 million 500 ml plastic water bottles since its inception.

The Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) also showcases the emirate's focus on sustainability, aiming to develop a green economy and stimulate growth in sectors that support environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. Hosting the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Expo City Dubai last year helped share these initiatives with the world, proving Dubai's role as a leader in environmental responsibility.



The Dubai Reef project represents a strategic investment in the future, leaving a lasting legacy for marine conservation and environmental sustainability. As His Highness Sheikh Hamdan highlighted, *"preserving the environment, safeguarding wildlife, and promoting biodiversity are core priorities for the UAE."*

Hold your next event in Dubai and visit
www.dubaibusinesssevents.com

By Vicky Koffa

Washington, DC's Blueprint for Inclusive Business Events

Washington, DC prides itself on being one of the world's most accessible and inclusive cities. As a prime destination for business events, the city offers a plethora of features that cater to the diverse needs of its visitors, always with the support of its dedicated convention bureau, Destination DC.

From well-designed public transport systems to state-of-the-art venues, Washington, DC ensures that every delegate can fully participate and engage in the events the city offers.

Bethany Coleman, Director of Event Management at the Institute of Internal Auditors, Global Headquarters, remarked: *"Working with the DMO provided the best insight into the unique venues, experiences and vendors available in their location. Destination DC (DDC) arranged the entire itinerary for our first site visit, they took into account all of the venue types needed for our events and ensured we saw a variety of locations. The knowledge of Washington, DC that DDC provided was irreplaceable, and we were able to deliver an incredible experience for our attendees and VIPs."*

Accessibility & Inclusivity in Transportation

For those arriving by air, Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) offer extensive accessibility services, including

wheelchair assistance, accessible restrooms and trained staff ready to assist passengers with disabilities.

Travelling within Washington, DC is made seamless for all, including those with mobility challenges. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has ensured that all Metro stations are equipped with elevators, tactile strips and Braille signage. Additionally, Metro buses are wheelchair accessible, featuring low floors and ramps to facilitate easy boarding. ScootAround service offers scooter and wheelchair rentals, while the city's sidewalks are designed with curb cuts, ensuring smooth navigation for wheelchair users.

Venues Catering to All

At the heart of Washington, DC's business events landscape is the **Walter E. Washington Convention Center**, a LEED Gold-certified venue that stands out in the District's efforts for accessibility. Located in the heart of the city,



the Center can welcome from 500 to 42,000 attendees, boasting a range of elements designed to accommodate a large variety of requirements.

The building features automatic doors and accessible restrooms strategically located throughout the venue, as well as tactile Braille signage at the entrance of all meeting rooms, restrooms and elevators. Passenger elevators equipped with tactile Braille call buttons and two-way communication systems provide access to all common areas. Assistive services, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, Communication Assisted Realtime Translation (CART) interpretation during keynotes and captions for classroom sessions are readily available.

To cater to the needs of all groups, the Center also offers gender-neutral restrooms, a parent/infant room and private Mamava lactation pods. Service animals are welcome in all areas of the convention center. Additional accessibility services, including electric scooter rentals, wheelchair lecterns, stage ramps and food allergy accommodations are available upon request.

Yariv Gal-Yam, Director of Client Accounts at Kenes Group, commented on the 35th International Papillomavirus Conference: *“We had 1,782 participants from 105 countries convene for four days at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, which was a spectacular venue. The delegates enjoyed the access to great neighbourhoods, hotels and eclectic restaurants. DC is close to the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, research institutions and a growing biotech hub with a strong vaccine development ecosystem.”*

Case Study: IEEE International Microwave Symposium (IMS) 2024

The convention center’s accessibility capabilities were put to the test during this year’s IEEE International Microwave Symposium (IMS), which took place in DC this past June. The six-day microwave industry event not only showcased the latest advancements in technology but also highlighted the city’s continuous efforts for diversity. Organisers had their minds set on a fully accessible and inclusive event and the Center delivered.



The IMS Plenary featured a local speaker, creating a sense of community and local engagement. The attendees connected with the local expertise, getting a first-hand taste of the city’s vibrant intellectual and professional landscape. The IMS Welcome Reception was held at the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), a venue that celebrates diversity and inclusion. NMAAHC is fully accessible, with features such as accessible entrances, elevators and restrooms.

Recognising the diverse needs of attendees, IMS requested childcare services, ensuring that parents could participate fully in the symposium. This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative was fully catered for by the convention center in collaboration with the organisers and KiddieCorp, providing care to children ages 6 months through 10 years old.

City-Wide Initiatives

The city’s proactive approach to inclusivity ensures that all attendees can engage not only in professional gatherings but also in the cultural and social experiences that make Washington, DC such a compelling destination. While all of DC’s attractions and cultural institutions are welcoming and accessible to all visitors (including the neurodivergent), the Destination DC website has [dedicated web pages](#) outlining their accessibility features, including ramps, sign language-interpreted tours and wheelchairs. From the iconic Lincoln Memorial to the White House Visitor Center, options such as adjacent, permit-only parking are available, as well as on-loan wheelchairs.

Landmarks like the Smithsonian museums—where accessibility programming includes ASL tours, open captioning and assistive listening devices, tactile exhibits and easy access to all facilities—create fully engaging and satisfying visits.

Visit [washington.org/meetings](https://www.washington.org/meetings) to learn more about hosting your next event in Washington, DC.

By Remi Deve

Adelaide's 'Green' Advantage

Known for its pristine landscapes and innovative spirit, Adelaide not only provides a stunning backdrop for business events but also exemplifies a deep commitment to sustainability. At the forefront of this movement is Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC), which sets the standard for environmental, social, and business sustainability.

It's no secret: sustainability has become a pivotal factor for conference planners globally. According to a 2023 survey by Global DMC Partners, 78% of international respondents now incorporate sustainability goals into their meetings, a significant increase from previous years. Similarly, the recent Euromonitor International's "Voice of the Industry: Sustainability Survey" highlights that 84% of businesses acknowledge the critical importance of climate change,

marking a notable increase in climate action initiatives.

These insights underscore the increasing pressure on organisations to adopt sustainable practices, driven by both regulatory demands and consumer expectations. For conference planners, this means choosing destinations and venues that align with these sustainability goals. Good news: Adelaide and Adelaide Convention Centre are here to help.

A Sustainable Destination

Often celebrated as a 'city in a park,' Adelaide is encircled by 760 hectares of lush parklands and holds the distinction of being the southern hemisphere's first National Park city. The city's ambitious mission to become the world's first carbon-neutral city underscores its unwavering commitment to sustainability. Adelaide consistently ranks highly in 'most liveable city' surveys and, in 2024, it became the fourth Australian city to join the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-M).

The city's dedication to sustainability is evident in various initiatives that enhance its environmental credentials. Adelaide significantly reduced its carbon footprint by transitioning to renewable energy sources, with 100% of its municipal electricity now generated from wind and solar power. Additionally, it has implemented extensive urban greening projects, increasing green spaces and planting thousands of trees to enhance carbon sequestration. The introduction of energy-efficient public transportation, such as electric buses, trams and improved cycling infrastructure, has further underscored the city's dedication to reducing emissions.



A City in a Park – Adelaide Convention Centre

Damien Kitto, CEO of Business Events Adelaide, argues that simply talking about being eco-conscious is no longer enough, and that destinations and venues really need to take action.

“We are aware that sustainability issues are becoming an increasingly important consideration for business event organisers. Delegates visiting Adelaide often refer to our green, walkable city-in-a-park, and whilst we feel this is an advantage over other destinations, we need to actively demonstrate practices that reduce the impact on our planet.”

“Working with a recognised global authority like GDS-M is helping Adelaide to develop action plans to build a solid sustainability strategy. It is good for our profile as we position Adelaide as a destination of choice, but more importantly it is the right thing to do for the future.”

Adelaide Convention Centre: Leading the Way

Adelaide Convention Centre is playing its part to further bolster Adelaide's reputation as a clean, green sustainable events destination. In September 2023, the ACC became the world's first convention centre to achieve EarthCheck's prestigious Master certification, reflecting a 15-year dedication to best practices in sustainability. The Centre's newly launched ESG strategy, The Green Print, underscores this commitment, focusing on environmental, social, and business sustainability. This comprehensive four-year plan aims to minimize environmental impact, maximize community benefits, and offer practical solutions for clients and guests.

The ACC's sustainability achievements are impressive. Since 2018, the Centre has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over 51%. Its latest EarthCheck audit revealed a greater than 99% waste diversion from landfill. Through

partnerships with local food rescue organisations, including OzHarvest, Foodbank, and Faithworks, the ACC has donated over 200,000 unused meals since 2008, demonstrating its dedication to social responsibility.

Building on these solid foundations, The Green Print outlines several key areas of focus. The ACC is exploring innovative methods to reduce energy use, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and eliminate waste. This includes transitioning to 100% LED lighting and increasing on-site renewable electricity generation. Sustainable sourcing is another priority, with a commitment to maintaining at least 97% of suppliers from South Australia, ensuring that the Centre's operations benefit local businesses and highlight the region's renowned food and beverage production.

The ACC also emphasizes community education and engagement, collaborating with local ventures to build awareness and motivate change. This extends to fostering deeper relationships with First Nations suppliers and local not-for-profit organisations, enhancing social sustainability. The Centre is also adapting to climate change by developing resilience strategies guided by EarthCheck standards, exploring sustainable food production, and supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services growth in South Australia.

Sarah Goldfinch, ACC General Manager says: *“Sustainability is embedded in everything we do, from our food and design to our procurement and people. We're obsessed with energy and water conservation, responsible sourcing and minimizing waste to landfill, and work closely with our clients on sustainable event management to help reduce their event footprint for a better tomorrow.”*

“We're acutely aware that sustainability is a major focus in the business events

industry, with growing delegate expectations and event organisers seeking to align with sustainable venues – which is why we've doubled down on our commitment to sustainability with the release of our new ESG strategy.”

“The Green Print prioritises areas of most importance to our clients, team and the industry at large, as we work to support client objectives, create lasting legacies, and map our path towards a more sustainable future.”

Wellness Focus in Business Events

In addition to sustainability, the ACC caters to the growing focus on wellness in the business events space. The Centre's strategic use of outdoor spaces for events leverages its prime location on the Adelaide Riverbank, encouraging clients to integrate morning fitness rituals into their programs. The Centre's design, featuring wide open foyers filled with natural light and overlooking the River Torrens and surrounding parklands, provides delegates with revitalising spaces during sessions.

The ACC also offers 'quiet rooms' for meditation, sensory experiences, prayer, and general wellbeing, along with newly launched sensory pods. The Honest Goodness menu philosophy further enhances the wellness theme. Developed in collaboration with leading nutritional experts, this menu emphasizes minimal intervention foods, reducing processed elements, and focusing on house-made items.

This thoughtful approach to dining ensures delegates feel refreshed and energized, while also showcasing the best of South Australian produce sourced from sustainable environments.

For more details on the ACC's sustainability efforts, visit www.adelaidecc.com.au

By Guy Hall

Leaving Long-Lasting Legacies in Western Australia

Today, when selecting an event destination, associations are looking beyond the classic criteria of things like cost, accessibility and the reputation of the local event services. While these fundamental considerations are still key, many associations are equally mindful of ensuring that their events will leave a positive impact on both their members, and the destination in which they are hosting.

With this in mind, Perth and Western Australia prove an enticing option for forward-thinking associations.

Perth, the state's capital city, is one of Australia's gateways to the world with over 30 international and domestic airlines servicing Perth, and direct flights from major cities like Rome, Paris, Tokyo and Dubai.

Associations can be assured that their delegates will feel welcome in the city. Perth is a multicultural city with 40.5% of the population born overseas. It's no wonder that both immigrants and international conferences are drawn to Perth. Continuously ranked in the top 20 most liveable cities, and with

an average of 8 hours of sunshine daily, Perth has an undeniable appeal.

Aligning with strategic sectors

The city's draw extends beyond good weather and a diverse population – associations are attracted to Perth's acumen in a variety of industries. Business Events Perth (BE Perth), the official convention bureau of Western Australia, is sharply focused on working with conferences and events that align with the Western Australian (WA) Government's economic development framework: "Diversify WA".

Through Diversify WA, the government hopes to achieve their vision for "*a strong and diversified economy developing secure, quality jobs through increased investment across a broad range of industries.*" These sectors include the health and medical life sciences field, international education and energy sectors – in which WA excels.

When hosting events in WA, therefore, associations working within these arenas will have much to gain for both themselves and their host destination. By tapping into the local innovation ecosystem





to create more unique and valuable programming, associations will be assisting WA in the development of these sectors on the global stage.

As Gareth Martin, CEO of BE Perth describes it, *“Business Events in Western Australia extend their impact beyond leisure and the tourism industry. Business events foster not only direct economic growth but drive innovation, facilitate networking and promote cultural exchange. All of which support legacy projects and advance academic and research through global collaboration.”*

Cultural Connections

Cultural sustainability is a core element of a holistic approach to sustainability and, in WA, fostering an exchange of cultures is top of mind. In 2021, backed by a \$20 million Aboriginal Tourism Fund, WA launched a four-year plan with the goal of making Western Australia the country’s premier destination for authentic Aboriginal tourism.

The “Jina: Action Plan” is not merely an Aboriginal Tourism Strategy, it is an Action Plan with an accountable set of actions designed to drive tangible outcomes. Among the many paths towards achieving their goal, the Jina seeks to make Aboriginal tourism

experiences an essential, fully-integrated, part of the mainstream tourism industry – promoting Aboriginal culture and connection to the country.

Associations hosting in WA can therefore expect unique and impactful experiences, with benefits that extend beyond tourism and leisure. Integrating Aboriginal tourism experiences into their event programming not only promotes the concept of global cooperation across cultures but will have a marked impact on event attendees.

When it comes to promotional activities, associations have the opportunity to collaborate with local Indigenous Peoples in several areas. BE Perth collaborates with groups like Nani Creative – an Indigenous-led creative agency – and Ngwarle Untye Art, producing corporate attire and art pieces for gifting, of which associations can also look to incorporate.

Supporting Sustainability

For BE Perth, environmental sustainability is equally integral to their operations. Their team partners with Gondwana Link to help protect existing bushland and restore critical gaps in natural habitats across 100km

of south-western Australia – a place of distinct natural diversity.

Gareth Martin had this to say on the partnership: *“We are proud to partner with Gondwana Link, one of the ‘Founding 50’ and the only Australian organisation recognised for the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Through this partnership, Business Events Perth makes a contribution per travelling international and national delegate to support restoration projects and opportunities for First Nations people in line with Gondwana Link’s vision.”*

Impact Beyond Events

With Western Australia’s classic appeals, future-conscious approaches to sustainability and thought leadership in a variety of industries, the destination makes for an attractive option for associations looking to leave an impact that extends beyond tourism and leisure.

Get in touch with Business Events Perth at info@bep Perth.com to learn how their team can work collaboratively with yours to secure and deliver business events that drive tangible outcomes and long-lasting legacies.

By Remi Deve

Innovation Meets Impact in Wellington, New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and innovative spirit, is home to Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington, the nation's vibrant capital city. As the seat of the New Zealand Government and headquarters for many central government agencies and industry associations – as well as a dynamic hub for scientists, researchers, policymakers, business leaders, and entrepreneurs – Wellington fosters a collaborative and connected environment that advocates for progress and change.



In the competitive landscape of global conference destinations, cities around the world strive to attract events that align with their key industry strengths, a strategic move that maximises local expertise and infrastructure. This targeted approach not only boosts the event's success but also highlights the host city's leadership in specific sectors. While many destinations adopt this strategy, some excel more than others, seamlessly integrating their unique advantages into the conference

experience. In this regard, Wellington stands out by leveraging its robust science, innovation, and governmental sectors to draw high-profile conferences, making it a compelling choice for organisers seeking impactful and resource-rich environments.

Wellington's Strengths

New Zealand is building a formidable reputation by prioritising science, innovation, and climate action. Leading the way, Wellington boasts the largest research, science, and innovation workforce in the country.

The city is a center of academic excellence. It's home to Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, which has the highest proportion of academics conducting high-quality research in New Zealand and ranks in the top 2% of 18,000 universities globally. Wellington also hosts government-funded Crown Research Institutes, a medical school campus, and many creative arts colleges. Wellington's interconnected science industry is breaking new ground through collaboration between universities, research institutes, and industry, leading to life-changing discoveries that have

global impacts. Case in point: a Victoria University of Wellington scientist is developing potential new treatments for advanced (metastatic) breast cancer.

Medical & Biomedical Innovations

The Malaghan Institute of Medical Research (MIMR) is at the forefront of cutting-edge research and clinical trials. A recent successful trial of CAR T-cell therapy, a groundbreaking cancer treatment, is providing hope to people in New Zealand with incurable blood cancer. MIMR is also harnessing mRNA technology to develop a powerful new malaria vaccine.

Meanwhile, the Medical Research Institute of New Zealand has set new standards in asthma treatment globally through three clinical trials on asthma management. Also based in Wellington, the Ferrier Research Institute's team of chemistry experts is developing better drugs, materials, and technology.

Some of the bright ideas coming out of Wellington are being commercialised into successful medical businesses. BioOra, for instance, is partnering with the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research to automate the manufacture of CAR

T-cells and revolutionise cancer immunotherapy. Meanwhile, Volpara Healt is advancing AI-driven software for personalized screening and early detection of breast cancer.

Events Driving Impact

Wellington is an ideal location for organisations seeking to host impactful events. Ranked second out of 102 countries for open government, New Zealand fosters citizen participation in decision-making and transparency. Conference planners can easily connect with high-profile political, scientific, academic, and cultural leaders, making Wellington a compelling choice for hosting events focused on positive change. The city's institutions are attracting international conferences, such as the 27th International Symposium on Epidemiology in Occupational Health hosted in Wellington. The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) Annual Scientific Meeting will take place this October at Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre, Wellington's newest conference venue.

"We're delighted to be bringing our Australian and New Zealand members together in New Zealand for the first time in seven years," says RANZCOG event manager Anna Smaragdi. "Wellington is centrally located with easy access for all our members, as well as home to New Zealand's Government and a strong women's health community. The capital provides great opportunities for international networking and collaboration. Plus, it has a cool vibe and is a fantastic place to visit."

Easily accessible with short flights from Australia and other international hubs in New Zealand, Wellington's central location makes it the perfect springboard to other parts of the country and beyond. The city is just a 15-minute drive from the airport,

ensuring convenience for conference attendees. There are also 4000 hotel rooms within the CBD, from five-star with harbour views to laidback budget-friendly options, all within a short walk from your convention venue.

This last point is also what makes Wellington a good, compact candidate to run events looking to minimise their impact on the environment. The city is in fact well-known for its environmental focus. With the lowest emissions per capita of any Australasian city, it is a leader in climate innovation, being recognised as one of the top 10 eco-cities in the world by Lonely Planet. Wellington is also home to Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne, the world's first fully-fenced urban sanctuary, and is one of the only cities globally where native biodiversity is increasing.

To learn more about conferencing opportunities in Wellington, contact Business Events Wellington at BusinessEvents@WellingtonNZ.com. For more information, visit www.WellingtonNZ.com/meet

WELLINGTON'S LEGACY PROGRAMME

Business Events Wellington (BEW) has launched a legacy programme, the first of its kind in New Zealand, featuring resources to help clients formulate individual legacy projects. BEW manager Irette Ferreira emphasizes the programme's role in capturing the positive outcomes and impacts generated by conferences in Wellington, beyond the economic benefits.

"Conferences have the potential to create meaningful contributions to the community and drive wider socio-economic gain," says Ferreira. "We support our clients in achieving their legacy goals, leading to social and global change."

The legacy programme underscores conferences as platforms for exchanging knowledge and ideas, fostering collaboration, and birthing new solutions for societal challenges.



Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre

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By Remi Deve

Basel's BOOM Summit & the Future of Healthtech

At the confluence of Switzerland, Germany, and France Basel played host to the BOOM Summit early April 2024—an event that is set to become unmissable in the evolving world of healthtech. On this occasion, Boardroom met with key stakeholders who reflected on the summit's proceedings while capturing the essence of Basel as a burgeoning hub in the healthcare and digital health landscapes.

The Basel Area stands as Europe's top life sciences cluster, positioned centrally on the continent. This vibrant hub of innovation is home to more than 700 life sciences companies and over 1,000 research groups, featuring an unparalleled pool of life sciences talent, with 33,000 highly skilled employees in the region.

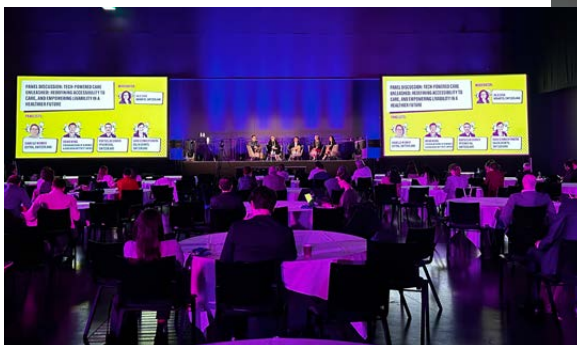
But news in the sector are bleak: healthcare expenses continue to climb, the digital transformation of healthcare systems progresses sluggishly, and funding for startups focused on healthcare technologies is declining. At the BOOM Summit held at Messe and Congress Center Basel from 10-11 April 2024, around 500 experts, entrepreneurs, patients, investors, and policymakers gathered to explore solutions that could tackle these issues. Over the course of two days, participants shared insights into innovative technologies, discussing how they could potentially reshape the healthcare landscape.

Instrumental in getting BOOM up and running, Basel Area Business & Innovation is a non-profit organisation that promotes innovation across various sectors in the Basel region, providing operational services, office and lab spaces for startups, and international business support through its three business units.

Caoimhe Vallely, Director DayOne Strategy, explained the summit's genesis and intentions. *"It started from the previous DayOne Conference, where startups within our accelerators had a platform to pitch and network. After listening to the feedback and seeing the need for such an event at a larger scale, the BOOM Summit was born,"* Vallely shared. This new iteration aimed to be more than just a meeting; it was to be a melting pot for the giants of healthcare, spirited startups, and technology enthusiasts. Vallely highlighted, *"Basel, with its strategic location enriched by a dense network of pharma and biotech companies, offered the perfect backdrop for such a convergence."*



Messeplatz, Basel



The BOOM Summit unfolded as a meticulously planned event where discussions transcended traditional boundaries of healthtech. According to Vallely, who played a pivotal role in shaping the program, the focus was on fostering innovation that could disrupt traditional healthcare modalities. *"We spearheaded the program's development, focusing on emergent themes and selecting speakers who could bring fresh perspectives,"* she explained. This careful curation was central to the summit's objective of not just sharing ideas but sparking actionable collaborations.

Another layer

Christian Ortlepp, Director Guest Events at Messe and Congress Center Basel, brought another layer to the understanding of the event's conception. *"The initiative to host more guest events leveraging our city's industrial strengths, particularly in life sciences, led us to amplify an existing event into what became the BOOM Summit,"* Ortlepp stated. His vision was clear: position Basel as a hub for niche healthtech gatherings, distinct from traditional large-scale conferences. *"We provided a venue and are hoping to scale the event, incorporating innovative concepts and diverse partnerships,"* he added, emphasising the collaborative effort that marked the summit's planning and execution.

From Kenes Group, Violina Kodeva provided insights into the operational and strategic execution of the summit. Her organisation played a crucial role, bringing extensive experience in managing global medical and healthcare events. *"Our engagement was sparked by a clear synergy between the summit's goals and our commitment to advancing healthcare through professional gatherings,"* Kodeva said. *"We worked closely with our partners to ensure the summit not only ran smoothly but also delivered on its promise to inspire change and foster connections,"* she noted.

Aligning with the BOOM Summit's emphasis on sustainability, it's worth noting Basel is at the forefront of environmental initiatives, boasting a compact city design, excellent public transportation that is free of charge for every hotel guest with the BaselCard, and green policies. Hosting the Summit in a city that lives

and breathes sustainability reinforced the event's mission to promote sustainable practices within the healthcare sector.

More than an event

In the end, the BOOM Summit was more than an event; it was a strategic endeavor to showcase and catalyze innovation in healthcare. *"Ideally, BOOM will evolve into a year-round consortium, driving tangible healthcare innovations,"* Vallely said, detailing their ambitions to establish continuous workstreams in areas like health equity to make a lasting impact on the industry and the broader community.

The role of Basel as an attractive conference destination was unanimously emphasised. Its strategic geographical position, robust infrastructure, and vibrant healthcare ecosystem make it an ideal locale for such high-caliber gatherings. Ortlepp and Kodeva both highlighted how Basel's attributes—ranging from its global healthcare hub status to its rich cultural scene—contribute significantly to its allure as a host city. *"Basel is not merely hosting discussions; it is setting the stage for the future of healthcare innovation,"* Kodeva added.

As such, Basel is host to a healthcare ecosystem that you perhaps can't find anywhere else in the world, advancing not only innovation but also nurturing the growth of the city as a community deeply embedded in the future of global healthtech discussions. The commitment to sustainability and the focus on transforming healthcare from reactive to proactive paradigms were evident throughout the BOOM Summit, signaling a shift towards a more sustainable and health-oriented future.

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:
myriam.winnepenninckx@switzerland.com /
www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings

More info on Basel: stefan.bonsels@basel.com /
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