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— VOLUME 1 | 2022 VOLUME 2 | VOLUME 3 | VOLUME 4 —

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LOSE SIGHT

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STOP!

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WE ARE NOT ALL EQUAL?



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How to add value to make associations relevant and ever-competitive? This is what Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, wonders in this special contribution for Boardroom.

Taking a Stand – Leading by Example

It's been more than two months (at the time of writing this letter) since the war in Ukraine began, and in the time since, the uncertainty and severity have left many associations struggling to address the situation. Some went diplomatic in their statements, others were full-on dismissive in their reactions, and others drew a line and took sides.

Even if you're a non-political organization, it's hard to remain silent when a nation and its people — who are not too far away — are suffering and fleeing a country they once called home. Some would even say that associations have a moral duty to lead by example and take a clear stance against aggression that is, to this day, still resulting in thousands of victims. Some members of certain trade associations or professional societies have even been pretty vocal about it — especially on social media platforms, where your voice can be quickly and efficiently disseminated, for better or worse.

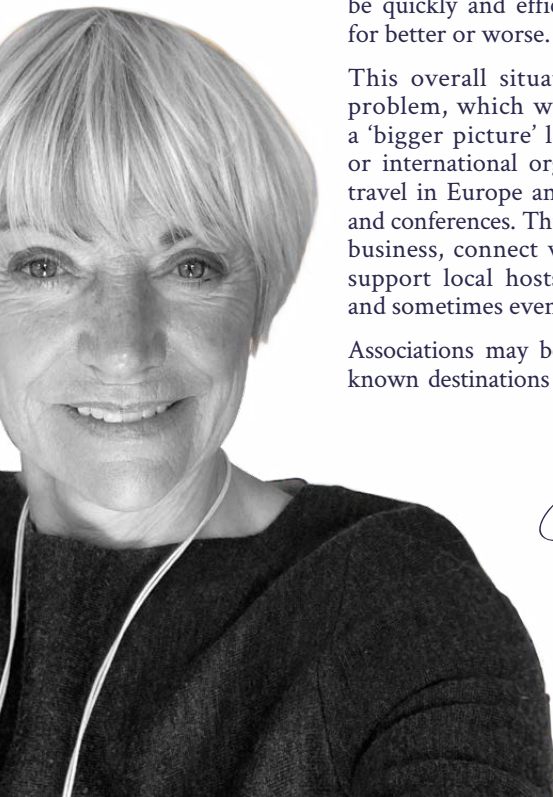
This overall situation poses a larger problem, which we can view through a 'bigger picture' lens. As a European or international organization, you may travel in Europe and beyond for events and conferences. This is how you conduct business, connect with your members, support local hosts and communities, and sometimes even find new markets.

Associations may be attracted to lesser-known destinations that are emerging in

the meetings industry, especially those that can provide a full range of benefits (at a cost-effective price point) or offer strong financial support. And some destinations, if you do your research right, are clearly not ready to create strong stances themselves in terms of issues and solutions in areas that are key today, such as biodiversity protection, sustainability, LGBT rights, and women's and human rights.

When selecting a host destination, are you conducting this research and ensuring this spot aligns with your values and purpose? It's easy to look the other way, but your members and broader stakeholders would probably agree otherwise — and they trust your judgment in these situations. You have to lead by example in order to act as a successful thought leader and strengthen capacity development — or you may lose in the long run.

We're not here to teach you a lesson or sound like we're preaching. But at Boardroom, we believe associations can play a key role in a 'build back a better' world (as our much-read series of articles explores), and sometimes there are simple ways to make a difference. We're here to help guide and share the resources we've curated with the help of our advisors and industry experts, and, hopefully, you can find ways to pass these messages on to your members and help contribute to a brighter new world ahead.



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Building Back Better Series

Sustainability – The Social Pillar: “What Do You Mean We Are Not All Equal?”

Think twice before accessing the environmental part of your mind at the sound of the buzzword ‘sustainability’. The term has been largely connected to climate change or resources for energy production, or economic growth. In this article, part of our Building Back Better Series, we focus on the social (and often neglected) aspect of sustainability, the one which is actually the basis for all other pillars to build on. Have associations realized their role in this? Is there enough awareness on the matter before changes within an organization are made?

Words Vicky Koffa

The transitions towards a greener planet and a sustainable economy are well documented, but this pandemic also presented the opportunity to raise the need for a social transition towards a more inclusive and diverse labor market. All three transitions - economic, green, and inclusive - require innovation and reorganization. Without removing focus from the first two, systematic attention should be given to the third one.

DEL... MEANING?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are terms which are used interchangeably by most; as if though finding a strategy and solutions for one, automatically covers the bases for all three. The truth is things are not that simple. This 'holy trinity' consists of three different components, with different aspects of social behavior, which, however, coexist and complement each other. They are mutually reinforcing principles within an organization.

- 1 In short, diversity is all the ways in which people differ. It allows for the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment without the prejudice that might follow ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, education, or disability. Let's refrain from calling a person 'diverse'; this immediately attaches a label of 'being different' and 'outside the majority' leading to alienation and exclusion. Diversity is more about understanding differences, accepting them, and finding their value to the workplace and the society.
- 2 Which brings us to equity (not to be confused with equality), which refers to the fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all people. It recognizes that each person has different circumstances and assigns the appropriate resources and opportunities necessary to achieve an equal outcome. It helps balance unfair social systems, whether that refers to health, for instance, or within the workplace. Equity forms the foundation of inclusion.
- 3 Inclusion is the last piece of the puzzle. It is not taken for granted that securing the previous two, inclusion magically happens. Belonging, respect, and support are the three main elements a community must offer an individual for him/her to be able to thrive. An environment where everyone is valued, given the right opportunities for growth, and has their voice heard is a truly inclusive one.

HOW DO ASSOCIATIONS FIT IN THIS?

Combine the three elements and the result is a fair community. It might sound utopic, but the whole idea of building back a more sustainable future requires bold actions, policy changes

and mindset shifts. That is where associations come in with their power as transformative agents. Every association has a mission and a responsibility to the community it serves to take the necessary steps for its advancement.



Karen Horting, Executive Director and CEO of **Society of Women Engineers (SWE)**, says: *"The role of associations is very important because in an age of misinformation, associations are seen as trusted, credible sources. We can provide unbiased data and best practices that will lead to impactful changes within organizations and society at large to advance DEI. Serving as a resource to our members but also to our stakeholders is a critically important role for professional societies. If we don't take a leadership role in making the professions we represent more diverse and welcoming, who will?"*

The role of associations is, in fact, twofold: lead by example and put pressure on local governments for actual community change. As all roads towards improvement, change needs to start from within. The all-time classic model of leaders, executive boards, and members with like-minded ideas and similar backgrounds is obsolete and will probably lead any association to a rut, with no actual progress in sight.



As **Michelle Mason**, President and CEO at **ASAE**, points out: *"Advancing our own commitment to DEI is not only a business imperative, based on the changing nature of our world, it's really just part of our mission as associations. If certain segments of our membership or future membership feel marginalized or left out of our organizations, we are doing a disservice to ourselves and them. This is the fundamental purpose of associations, to allow different voices to be heard, to accept that there are many ways of resolving a problem, and ultimately, to make our industries, our professions, and our society stronger."*

Once the core of the association becomes healthy and up to date with what a sustainable future requires, the domino effect should start. Other associations follow the success of the few bold ones, and the new norm of a more diverse and inclusive mindset settles in for the majority. Leading by example, associations can then work their way into the government and propose policy changes to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

Mason supports this: “Associations are embedded in the fabric of society, advancing the industries and professions that comprise the global economy and serving as facilitators between governments and the private sector. Associations are also one of the primary sources of career development and skills training for the global workforce. We are about collaboration and community and lifting others on their professional journey.”

WHY BOTHER?

Simply put, because it is “a basic human right”, as was the conclusion of Benita Lipps (Head of [Interel Association Management](#)) workshop during the recent [BIAF](#) event. But if that is not enough to convince the more conservative leaders, the benefits of implementing DEI in an association are many and they all lead to the desired sustainable economic growth.

A diverse and inclusive work environment exhumes a sort of uniqueness from which original ideas will surely flow. Only a group of people looking at the same problem from different perspectives can come up with a truly unique and innovative solution. Creativity, employee engagement and satisfaction also drive quality productivity and performance. If DEI is properly woven into the backbone of an organization, then the business will attract and retain both talent and revenue.

Mason confirms this from her experience: “This is one of the key macro trends impacting society and economic growth today. It’s both a business and a social imperative because it impacts the health of communities, access to education and jobs, and performance and profitability in the workplace. In today’s era of disruption and rapid change – marked recently by the COVID-19 pandemic, political and social polarization, a “Great Resignation” and a massive competition for talent – economies and individual organizations that prioritize DEI are much more likely to thrive because they are creating a sense of belonging for all contributors and benefiting from the different skills, experiences and collective problem-solving that a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce provides. Studies show that organizations that systematically embrace diversity, equity and inclusion set the stage for creativity, innovation, and economic growth.”

HOW FEASIBLE IS IT?

After discussion during the same workshop at the BIAF conference, the conclusion was that “the concept has to start within the leadership and drip down the ladder. The passion of one person can be contagious, especially coming from a leader who often serves as a role model.” This does not forbid the opposite from happening, meaning the movement could also start from the grassroots and move from

the bottom up. In this case the job of an attentive leader is to have an open ear to what is happening ‘below’. Of course, time, money and resources are needed to find support to implement new ideas and create inclusive activities. “DEI is a marathon, not a sprint,” said Kat Van Nuffel, Founder of [Legal Diversity & Inclusion Alliance](#).

Within our own industry, the [International Congress and Convention Association \(ICCA\)](#) has established the Future Leaders Council to give voice to young professionals and allow for the sharing of completely new ideas, concepts, and approaches. In their first [project](#), they emphasize: “If organizations do not focus on social sustainability and attracting, empowering, growing and retaining the younger generation, our industry’s future will be put at risk. There will be no informed and empowered thought leaders to champion the continuation of economic and environmental sustainability.”

Gender equality is a major issue in most sectors, but loud voices are able to change the scene. The [World Heart Federation](#) is committed to empowering and supporting women so they can lead heart-healthy lives. “We use our platform to advocate for more women in cardiology and decision-making roles related to health. Women are facing challenges to develop their career as cardiologists or heart surgeons with unequal access to education and unfair access to job opportunities. We have created various opportunities at events and in all our year-long campaigns, to share ideas, journeys, and solutions to achieve real gender equity in heart health. Our role as women in professional setting, regardless in which sector and at which level we are, should be to be seen; we owe that to the ones who come after us and to the society as a whole; a healthy and prosperous society is one when women are given a seat at the table,” says [Borjana Pervan](#), Director of Strategy and Communications at the [World Heart Federation](#).



Active empowerment of women can be found even in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Horting says: “The SWE was founded in 1950. As the first engineering society of its kind, SWE challenged public stereotypes about women’s roles and technical abilities. Since the very beginning, SWE has empowered women to succeed in careers as engineers and leaders by providing professional development and a community of support. In those days, women were often prohibited from participating in the existing professional societies. It was utmost importance to our founders that the contributions of women in engineering be acknowledged and celebrated.”

The association has advanced understanding of what DEI is all about and is actively helping others get there too. *"SWE also works with global employers, institutions of higher education, government agencies and other professional associations on their DEI efforts to recruit, retain and advance women in engineering and technology. Most importantly, we help these organizations understand what it means to have a truly inclusive environment where everyone can feel valued and have their contributions recognized,"* Horning continues.

There are underrepresented groups in the workplace and in society alike that have found loud voices to advocate for them, like women, young talent, and ethnic minorities. Others seem to be 'left out,' with little effort made towards change. Disabled people are systematically forgotten, when, if given the opportunity, have a great deal to offer to the community through their knowledge, determination and experience. The **Disabled People's Association (DPA)** aims to create awareness about as well as engage people, with or without disabilities, in discussions about disability through public education, training, consultative services, research and advocacy.

IT IS A JOURNEY

The fact that some associations have made more progress, doesn't mean it has been an easy task. As DEI committees are set up, the practice has become a box-ticking exercise rather than a real ambition to make ongoing change. DEI efforts cannot be seen as one-off campaigns but as initiatives that need to be maintained and nurtured. Another challenge rises when there is lack of communication and awareness between members, employees, and leaders. The message needs to be aligned on all levels (inclusion might mean different things to different people) and communication channels remain open.

Clearly, no one wants to sacrifice retaining bad talent in the name of diversity. The right qualifications are a priority, but with an open mind, they can be found in all kinds of people, regardless their background. Some associations might find it difficult to overcome cultural differences that might come along, but in an inclusive environment people become more respectful of others and are more willing to receive different points of view.

Education and information on the matter is, yet again, part of the solution. *"While it is important to fully implement anti-discrimination legislation, making the most of the diversity of our societies cannot be done by focusing only on what people and companies should not do, but also promote pro-active efforts by all stakeholders,"* says part of a **report** published by the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**. Such publications help associations be informed as to how the issue is evolving worldwide, what obstacles lie ahead, and ideas to solve them. Hiring a specialized company to help kickstart things is often a basic first step.

If associations can move past the traditional standards of team composition and embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion fully, they can set the example of how communities must be structured as well. *"I think the key to overcoming the obstacles is an open mind and of course, an open heart! By observing, listening, understanding others and their perceptions; what drives them, what their values are, and over time realizing that teamwork and shared purpose are eliminating all artificial walls in our minds. It is easier said than done, but it is the most certain way,"* concludes Pervan.

Campaigns For Awareness

- For the first time this year, the European Commission has launched the **European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award**, which recognizes the work done by cities, towns, or regions in Europe to promote inclusion and create discrimination-free societies. It complements the annual *EU Diversity Month*, which raises awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and across our societies.
- If major companies can do it, why not associations? In 2021, Google launched the **#IamRemarkable** initiative, empowering women, and other underrepresented groups to celebrate their achievements in the workplace and beyond.
- One of **UNESCO's** main priorities is gender equality, with actions and campaigns around the globe and a dedicated publication on the matter.

This article is graciously sponsored by VisitScotland Business Events, whose values align with the Building Back Better concept. To learn more about Scotland as a conference destination, read the Special Boardroom Supplement that has been published about it this month.

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It's all About the Membership Experience...

—

Sébastien Desmet, Head of Membership at UITP, the International Association of Public Transport, makes the case for growing the organization around those who make it what it is: the members. Today, UITP is in the process of building a people-centric approach, focused on a more personable membership experience.

Heading the membership department within a member-led association. This sounds like a self-explanatory description on the process of membership recruitment, engagement, and management. But in an organization built around those who participate in it, what does it truly mean to become a member of one that has existed since 1885? And what is that experience like for more than 1900 of them in over 100 countries?

The word to highlight here is experience. At **UITP** we often refer with pride to the fact that we are the only global association of our kind to bring around the table those with a vested interest in advancing sustainable urban mobility. We know that as an international umbrella to operators, networks, and authorities, we can make sure the discussion and debate being held moves us towards the desired outcome: healthier, more liveable cities, built around people. This time I'd like to highlight the word people. If we are a member-led association, and our members are the people who make UITP what it is, what does it mean to consider their actual membership experience?

VITAL COLLABORATION

These past two years have brought unprecedented times to the forefront of

every sector around the world. Public transport, and associations themselves, have faced crises like never before. And in times of unpredictability, the need for collaboration is vital. We may have already known the value of public transport to urban life, and the importance of UITP and our members to advocate for that vision, but the strength of community

that the sector is known for shone through during the coronavirus pandemic.

With almost 2000 different members now a part of UITP, we must always work to make sure their interests and needs are recognized and met. Throughout the pandemic, we saw the importance of sharing ideas and holding conversations, to showcase what our members were



doing, and what the eventual recovery would look like for public transport. Our members worked tirelessly to keep cities across the globe moving, and UITP's role as an exchange platform for sharing this work has grown. This key role of UITP during these times was shown through our membership retention rate: currently 94%. Our average growth rate has been 3.7% in the last four years, with a peak during the pandemic of 5.5% growth in 2021.

These figures are a success story for our membership outreach, and the result of very hard work. But we must never be complacent. Alongside seeing the dedication and drive of our members to building back better, UITP came to the realization that we needed to rethink what it meant to be a member of an association *defined* by its membership. This may sound obvious to consider, but we can only see what best to do, if we take time to recognize where we may be falling short.



PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCE

It is our members who drive the direction of UITP. And moving forward, the members should shine the brightest in an association that puts them first. We're currently developing a personalized membership experience strategy that will mean from the very first contact, to their lifecycle as a member, they will know what their engagement means to them and UITP. Bringing on board new members helps to grow the association, but the focus is not just on the beginning stages of membership, it is on the entire membership cycle. Existing members should be able to see what their membership is worth, as well as new members who are currently being onboarded.

By creating a personalized membership experience, we can manage expectations, answer needs, and deliver more personalized products and services. This should include adapting existing services, as much as offering new, more tailored services. Expectations matter, but our members also appreciate results. If we are realistic in what we promise, we increase our chances of delivering on those promises. Our members are making strategic choices every day in their own workplace, and in reviewing our membership strategy, we can make strategic choices to better enhance their experience with us.

Without the full ability to hold physical events and gatherings, our members can miss the intimate connection this brings. Therefore, a digital experience is key to bridging that gap, and provide members with the opportunity to exchange virtually in a way that still delivers the essential discussion the sector needs.

IMPROVED JOURNEY

Public transport has been tackling the big question of recovery and a new

normal moving forward. I want the new normal for our members to be an improved membership journey, where interaction and experience is key to them as individuals. Membership should be driven and targeted, but this is not always the case when you are fortunate to have so many of them call your association home. What does it actually mean to recruit members? How do you make sure you bring on board a new partner in the absolute best way?

I want all of the members of UITP to understand that our association knows who they are, and what they want and need from us. I don't want a member to feel like they may not have a place to grow within UITP, or that their experience is less than any other. For them to be part of the community, they should exist within an ecosystem. What are our products? What are our services? And what do they gain from them? I am excited to see our new membership experience strategy answer those questions.

A welcome pack and a digital handshake are personal touches, but if we are to serve our members, our *customers*, then we need to have the absolute best customer experience. Recognizing the pain points is as important as acknowledging the success stories.

Ensuring high membership satisfaction is the target, and we stand the very best chance of growing our retention figures further if we understand membership from their perspective. A member-led association should put the members at the centre of each activity. I come back to the phrase 'A *member-led association*.' Words matter, but actions deliver. Within the membership department that I head, I want each member to experience a journey with us. We're beginning a new chapter with this approach right now and I hope to share that in detail with you in due course.

An Association Without Members? A Legal Perspective

Giulia Mauri and **Andréa Petemba**, lawyers at Brussels-based Kadrant law firm, look at the new shape that associations could take in the future, from a legal and ‘community’ perspective.

With the global pandemic and the rise of social media, we have seen a change in the way associations work and interact with their members and their stakeholders: many seminars are now webinars, events are organized in a hybrid way and contacts with stakeholders are more and more likely to take place virtually kept.

This new way of working allows associations to explore new horizons and, through a strong presence on online platforms to involve, in their respective activities, not only their members, but also, stakeholders which are interested in their activities and wish to actively support, participate and interact with other like-minded people.

This observation raises an interesting question: what if we were to rethink a new model for associations where, instead of an exclusive group of ‘members’ with specific rights, there is a community that shares a common interest in the purpose of the association and participate in its overall activities? And if associations move from a community of members to an online community of interested stakeholders what would this change from a legal point of view? Would this even be legally possible?

To answer these questions, it might be useful to go back to the basics. What is an association? How does it work?

THE ROLE OF MEMBERS IN ASSOCIATIONS

From a legal point of view, an association is a group of stakeholders who wish to work together to reach a common not-for-profit goal and purpose. Those stakeholders are the members of the association.

An association is a democratic entity where members elect their representatives, the directors, to manage the association

on their behalf. If the trust between the members and the directors is broken, the members have the right to remove directors. They approve the budget and the financial statements of the association, therefore further balancing the powers of the directors and deciding whether a certain budget is considered appropriate for the functioning of the association and finally whether that budget has been well spent and whether the financial statements may be approved.

The participation of members in the life of an association is necessary to guarantee that the association functions in a democratic way.

However, there are situations where one could question whether members are indeed truly interested in having and exercising the democratic rights described above. Indeed, many directors have been confronted to cases where members participate in seminars and events, but when it comes to exercising their rights, electing directors, approving budgets and financial statements or vote on amendments to the articles of association, they are quite passive and simply not interesting in participating in the organization’s corporate governance.

TOWARDS NEW ASSOCIATION MODELS

Some stakeholders may not particularly wish to become members of an association: they’d rather be informed of the initiatives taken by it, participate in the activities organized and interact with peers and other like-minded individuals and organizations.

Could one therefore imagine associations which do not have members, but instead have a strong online presence, for example an online platform made available to all individuals, groups or other organizations which share the same interests?



The creation, management and development of an online community seem to be pretty much aligned with the purpose of any association: to put together a group of people who share a common purpose and who take different actions to promote that purpose (organization of events, lobbying, conducting research, etc.). Indeed, the concept of a strong online community is in line with the pursuit of the purpose of an association: individuals, groups or organizations would interact with each other, participate in the activities of the association and contribute to the pursuit of these activities with a view to reaching the goal for which the association was created.

In this scenario, there would be no categories of members with specific rights given to them, anyone interested in the activities of an association could participate, regardless of the fact that they are members or not. This model could promote increased participation by the community and interaction amongst stakeholders.

However, what would be the legal framework of such community engagement from a legal point of view? Can an association without members, an entity that is purely driven by an online community, be still legally defined as an "association"? If so, who would then elect directors, monitor the economic performances of the association and decide whether or not the activities taken by the directors are indeed aligned with the purposes of the association? Would directors be still independent when they are exposed to constant judgement by participants to an online community who share their thoughts without having any real involvement in the governance of the association and therefore no duty towards the association and its directors?

THE FUTURE

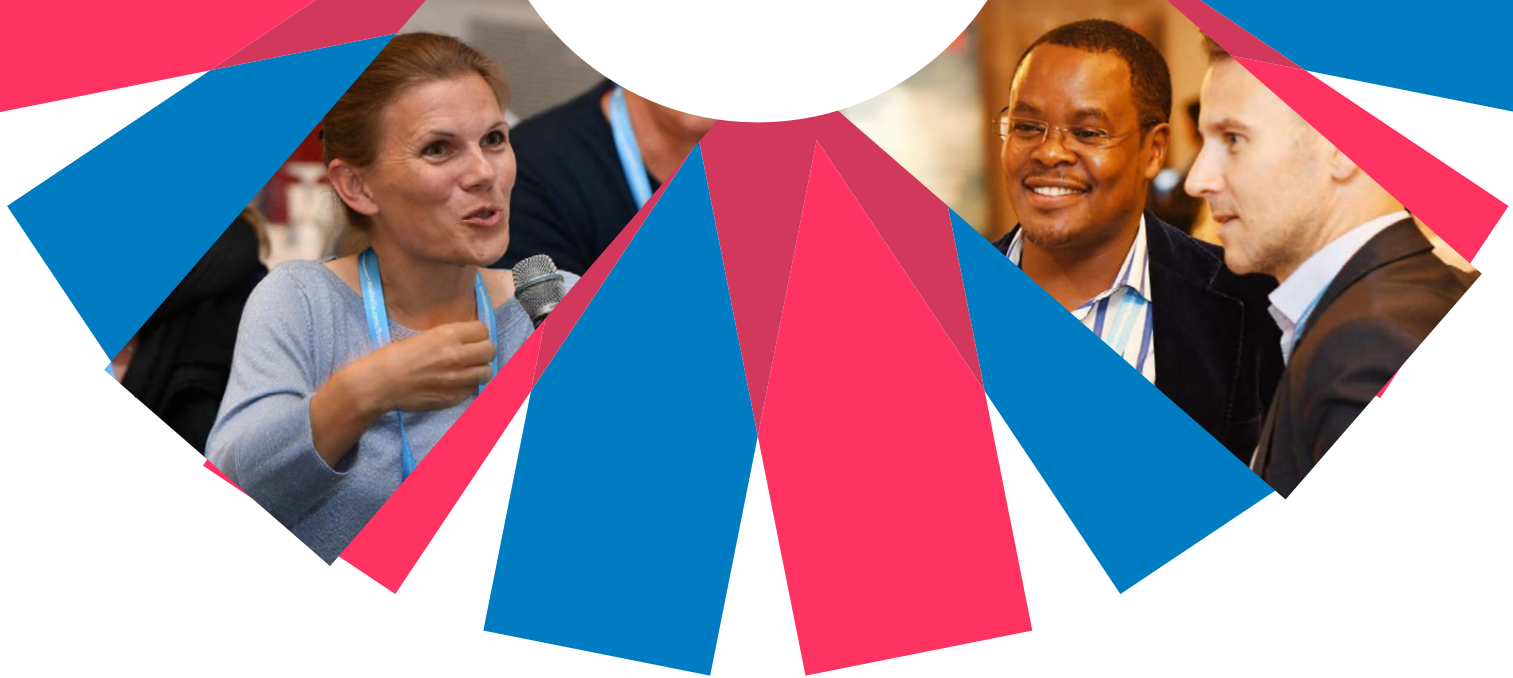
Increasing participation and promoting interaction amongst stakeholders can certainly improve the performances of associations and that those goals may certainly be reached by a targeted use of online platforms and/or a well-managed presence on social media.

However, members are a fundamental element of any association. Being a member brings a sense of belonging to a community, not just an online, virtual community, but one that has control over the activities of the relevant association and has a say as to the appointment of the people who are meant to manage such association. Being a member entails benefits, but also obligations: a community totally detached from any duty could be counterproductive as the directors would then not be judged based on facts (for example their management of the association) but purely on the basis of the very emotional criteria that often animate social networks.

However, there is definitely a balance to be found between the rights given to the members and the possibility for other interested third parties who want to actively be engaged in the association to participate in its activities through other means.

Opening up any association to the participation of non-members requires that such participation be always balanced with the participation of, and the advantages granted to, the members. This is a delicate balance to reach and to manage.

Giulia Mauri and Andréa Petemba are lawyers at Kadrant, a Brussels based law firm with a strong specialization in the not-for-profit sector. Their knowledge is not only linked to their work advising associations, but also to their participation in the activities of various associations as board member or chair of various working committees. More information on www.kadrantlaw.com.



Your association will thank you for attending

If you organise international meetings and events for an association, then you need to be at **Association Focus**, taking place at **IMEX in Frankfurt** on **30 May 2022**.

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diversity, equity and inclusion for associations, venue contracting and negotiation, 365 member content, the association workplace of the future, plus more!

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THE HEARTBEAT OF THE BUSINESS EVENTS COMMUNITY

Association Focus at IMEX in Frankfurt 2022

“In this post pandemic world associations are re-evaluating their strategies and diversifying their approach to events and community engagement. Our exclusive event, Association Focus, will bring association professionals together to review and discuss the steps they must take to meet the challenges of this new chapter.” Carina Bauer, CEO of the IMEX Group, introduces Association Focus, an exclusive day of networking and learning for association professionals at all levels.

Led by expert global speakers, the programme takes place at the Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center on Monday 30 May - the day before IMEX in Frankfurt, held 31 May - 2 June.

COUNT ME IN'S SHANE FELDMAN - MAKING TEAMS TICK

The topical and interactive programme of Association Focus is divided into two streams, designed for association leaders and association events professionals, beginning with a keynote *Leadership Passport: Helping Association Leaders Build a Thriving Community*. Shane Feldman, founder of the largest youth-led organisation in the world, Count Me In, will share the results of his research into community leadership and human behaviour in over 25 countries. He will detail the universal strategies he's uncovered that make teams click and associations thrive.

Michelle Mason, President & CEO of ASAE looks ahead to *The Association Workplace of the Future: A world reshaped by COVID*. She will moderate a panel session featuring Jeanne Sheehy, CMO of Bostrom Corporation and Liesbeth Switten, Secretary General at the Association of Issuing Bodies. Together, they'll explore the economic impact of the pandemic for associations and share advice on how to evolve the business model.

LONG LIVE CONTENT! - HOW TO CREATE 365 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Long live content! That's the rallying cry from a panel session which sees Zhanna Kovalchuk, Executive Director of ESSKA; Vicki Greenwood, Director of Global Events at the Association

of Corporate Treasurers and Davi Kaur, CEO of the European Society for Emergency Medicine discuss how they generate year-round content. Using content as a transformation tool to drive continued membership engagement and prolong the life of an event will be covered in *Long live content! - How to create 365 learning opportunities*.

Education partners ASAE, AMCI and ICCA, along with supporting partners ESAE and AC Forum, have all collaborated with IMEX to create Association Focus. Sponsored by Tel Aviv and Global Association Hubs, Association Focus takes place Monday 30 May and ends with an Association Social where attendees can catch up with industry friends and celebrate the start of the show.

JOIN YOUR COMMUNITY AT IMEX IN FRANKFURT

IMEX in Frankfurt takes place 31 May - 2 June and is set to welcome 2,500+ buyers from associations, agencies and corporates. They will meet and do business with a truly global range of destinations, venues and suppliers. Exhibitors confirmed so far span the world and include: Boston, Cuba, Egypt, Intercontinental Hotels Group, Istanbul, Malta, Meliá Hotels, Radisson Hotel Group, Titanic Hotels, Singapore and Spain.

IMEX in Frankfurt takes place 31 May - 2 June 2022.

Registration is free: www.imex-frankfurt.com



Associations should evaluate their offer competitiveness, relevance; review of success, and it's the 'must-win battle

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FEATURE

Improving Association Performance

Collaborating with peers or like-minded organizations, focusing on advocacy, adding member value, investing strategically. ... there are many ways to make your association perform better, and you can even start by stopping some of the things you are used to doing. Boardroom's wealth of exclusive contributors, from the European Society of Association Executives to AC Forum and the American Society of Association Executives, explore the topic from different perspectives, offering food for thoughts and concrete tips to improve your organization's competitive position.

How to Never Lose Sight

For AC Forum, **Nicole Kaijser**, Learning and Programme Officer, European Association for International Education (EAIE), and **Wendy Holloway**, Director of Events and Systems, International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology (ISUOG), review a few ideas to keep your association ahead of the game.

When improving the performance of one's association and its competitive position, the classic chicken and egg conundrum springs to mind. What comes first, improving your association's performance or its competitive position? Let's dissect our poultry...

STRATEGY, MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Associations must be driven by these four powerful words. A clear strategy, and common goals derived from this gives an association their measures of success and directive for planning. But what constitutes successful performance – is it footfall at the congress? Meeting member learning and accreditation KPIs? Impact? Is it turning over revenue to exist for another year? Measures of success or failure for one association can be negligible to another when viewed through the lens of their own strategy, mission, vision and values, and is rarely comparable.

Whilst performance is driven from within, we must consider the outer forces of any competition and competitive position. Relevance is critical – is your association's vision relevant? Is your mission and strategy a reflection of what matters to your community? Is regular competitor analysis prioritized when racing for relevance? Are you developing strategic partnerships to raise your associations profile and widen your audience?

A FORWARD-LOOKING TRAJECTORY

Our past informs our future, so analyze your past, but look towards your future. A number of analysis tools exist so make sure you have one that works for your organization. The classic SWOT analysis is a trusty tool; consider using this from time-to-time to help you build on what you are doing well, expose what you may lack, exploit opportunities, and manage risks.

Don't be afraid to ask hard and important questions – is it time to 'sunset' that declining product? Do we need 'new blood' from other

industries to take us in a new direction? Are you being held back by historical governance structures? Are you investing enough in your people and creating the next generation of leaders?

BE BOLD

The rise of open source, the sharing economy, kick-starters and influencers could result in new competition... Stay alert and make sure that *you* are the competition! Take risks and don't be afraid to make mistakes; we are in the business of being human after all. Push forward by trial and adjustment and strengthen the community bond. This is the only way to evolve, lead with confidence and continue existing.

FOCUS ON MEMBERS

Remember that associations are led and valued by people with limited time to invest, so *they* should be at the core of any association's mission and vision. Don't be afraid to open up a dialogue and face the good, the bad and the ugly. What does your association stand for and how can its voice be best heard? Take time to decide what is important to your members and invest in that.

Creating a safe space that promotes a sense of belonging will continually drive your performance as your members cling to their tribe. Embracing, empowering and adding a smile to their faces will ensure they (and therefore you) remain relevant.

Will we ever really know whether the chicken came first or the egg? Inevitably both are important and one wouldn't exist without the other, so be passionate about both, optimize your performance and never lose sight of the competition or what makes you competitive.

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

Charting the Course: Improving Association Performance & Competitiveness

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, improving performance and competitiveness has never been more important for associations. Writing for the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE), **Tommy Goodwin**, Vice President for the Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance, lays out the building blocks for assessing performance and competitiveness, while exploring key areas of focus for associations looking to grow their member value and social impact in 2022 and beyond.

After two years of transformational change, now is the time for associations to step back and assess their performance. *"In 2022, we have to take the opportunity to slow down and reflect,"* says Magdalena Nowicka Mook, CEO of the International Coaching Federation. *"After working nonstop since the pandemic began to respond to different and urgent needs, associations should think about where they are with respect to offering value to their members and the marketplace before moving forward."*

THE RIGHT PLACE TO START

But where to begin? *"Start with revisiting your strategic plan,"* recommends Nikki Walker, Global Vice President, Engagement - Associations & Communities, with MCI Group. *"Leaders need to ask 'What are the desired outcomes?' and work backwards to ensure that the identified priorities link directly to the strategic intent and have measurable performance metrics."* She recommends that associations continually evaluate their offerings, competitiveness, and relevance; review measures of success, and identify the 'must-win battles' that will drive future value creation and success.

From there, it is 'Association, know thyself!' *"One of the most important questions for any association is 'What is the data telling us?'"* concludes Dianna Steinbach, Chair, ESAE Programming Committee. *"The right data and key performance indicators can*

help associations better understand their current performance, identify opportunities to re-direct resources, and provide an early-warning system for performance-related challenges on the horizon." This can include both snapshot and longitudinal (e.g., year-to date, year-over year, etc.) data for performance metrics ranging from membership growth and revenue to operational efficiency and staff engagement.

Along with performance data, the voice of the member is also critical. *"Associations need to truly understand why members join and why they renew, particularly in these challenging times,"* says Ferial Saouli, COO and Director of Association Management at SEC Newgate EU. *"Ongoing 1-on-1 conversations with members can help associations understand what keeps their members up at night and what new benefits and services might be most relevant."* Dianna Steinbach adds: *"Member councils are also great way to get a pulse on what's happening in the marketplace. These groups can identify canaries in the coalmine that association leaders can respond to in an agile manner to stay ahead of the curve."*

The final ingredient is competitive intelligence and analysis. Rigorous environmental scanning will surface valuable information on emerging trends, market developments, and new offerings from competitors (and potential future competitors!) that associations



can leverage in strategic decision making and performance improvement. This can also include foresight-driven exercises such as scenario planning and creating an association's ultimate hypothetical competitor to ensure competitiveness and protect against future developments and market disruptions.

COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE

Taken together, these elements paint a comprehensive picture of an association's priorities, operating performance, and competitive environment, which will help identify opportunities for improvement going forward. But where are associations focusing their efforts on improving their performance and increasing their relevance, impact, and revenue in 2022?

One area is growing member and community engagement. *"While the value proposition of associations to create connections should not change over time, the offerings and channels that create value for members will,"* notes Chiara Gasparotto, Deputy CEO at the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO). At ESTRO, this has involved matching content with the right channel based on the needs of the membership, such as different channels for education and networking. At an SEC Newgate EU-managed association, performance information and feedback led to an EU policy audit that identified threats and opportunities for members with the circular economy package and in the European Green Deal. This led to the establishment of a new policy committee and the launch of monthly monitoring reports in preparation for increased advocacy.

In addition, associations continue to invest in their online communities. *"If you think about why associations exist, it is about bringing people together around shared interests,"* says Marjorie Anderson, Founder of Community by Association. *"It's the same for their online communities."* That's why now is the time for associations to strengthen their community offerings. Marjorie Anderson adds: *"Community performance can be improved by reviewing feedback from surveys and user interviews. Ask 'What's Working?' and 'What's not working?' to ensure that members can seamlessly engage 24/7 wherever they are."*

Along with external-facing efforts, many associations are improving organizational performance by reviewing their processes embracing automation where possible. *"Associations should critically look at the operational tasks they perform and automate them whenever possible,"* advises Ferial Saouli. Automating certain activities, which can range from report generation to social media posting, allows staff to focus on higher-value work. Dianna Steinbach adds: *"The less time staff spent on back-office work, the more facetime they spend with members, which creates more opportunities for engagement."*

Speaking of staff, two other critical areas for association investment are workforce and culture. *"Staff are a critical factor in any association's success, including at ESTRO,"* says Chiara Gasparotto. *"To recruit and retain the professionals that we all need to help us build future-proof associations, we must be ahead of the curve in offering flexible and dynamic working arrangements to be competitive going forward."* This was a key topic of conversation at the recent Brussels International Association Forum session on post-pandemic association reimagination.

Likewise, culture is a key aspect of performance improvement in associations. In her research, Silke Schlinnertz, Marketing and Communications Manager for the European Petrochemical Association, found that organizational culture drives association performance, as long as performance is defined. She says: *"It is critical for associations to create a strong, yet flexible, culture to deal with challenges as they emerge. By acclimating to the dual challenge of adapting to an ever-changing environment and needs while sharing a sense of responsibility, ownership, and commitment with all parties involved, a strong culture of performance in associations can be built, even remotely."*

While improving association performance and competitiveness requires dedicated attention and effort from association leaders, now is the perfect opportunity to ensure our associations continue to deliver relevance and engagement for years to come as we emerge from the pandemic.

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



Six Questions to Ask If Your Association Is Facing a For-Profit Competitor

A growing number of for-profit organizations have mimicked the association model by offering online educational programs and membership or subscription-based access. So, how do associations compete and protect their brand recognition? This is what **Jonathan Boyd**, Director of Certification and Online Learning at the American Association of Tissue Banks in McLean, Virginia, and a member of the ASAE Healthcare Advisory Committee, explores in this ASAE article.



Chances are that online education has become an increasing part of your association's value proposition or a means to expand nondues revenues. And given the current global COVID-19 pandemic, we can only expect this trend to continue to grow.

For-profit organizations have taken notice of the community and educational opportunities associations provide. Because of this, some associations—especially in the healthcare space—have noted competitors offering membership-based programs, online training programs, and hosting webinars mirroring the association model. The content is often well-developed, references practices and standards developed by the association, provides parallel content presented by the association, and even includes many of the same presenters.

In collaborative organizations, we commonly assume our members have the best of intentions, blurring the line of collaboration and competition. But, how can associations compete if members on our committees or councils set up rival for-profit companies with access to our internal information, which often highlights the most important trends and best speakers in the industry? Here are six questions for associations to ask to help them protect their brand recognition and to separate themselves from the competition.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION REQUIRE NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS OR DISCLOSURES?

Competing speakers and content providers became such an issue for one organization that it approved a revised conflict-of-interest statement that not only required disclosure of outside engagements but also precluded volunteer leaders from being involved with competing organizations. If your association finds itself in this situation, you may want to consider something similar.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION DEVELOP INDUSTRY STANDARDS?

Trade and professional associations that develop standards, guidance, or industry requirements can create content in preparation for upcoming or pending changes. Education and standards (or) regulatory staff should consider aligning the publication of guidance with accessible educational content. This provides a competitive advantage as the organization may be able to release programming for time-sensitive material well before external organizations.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PROVIDE CREDENTIALING AND THE APPROVAL OF CONTINUING-EDUCATION CREDITS?

Educational credits are one of the primary reasons people participate in online educational programming. Many organizations that offer credentialing and certification also handle the review and evaluation of continuing-education credits, including organizational or preferred provider programs for outside intuitions. Establishing a policy that limits continuing-education credit preapproval to member organizations may provide an added value to membership, highlight the value of association-based education, and provide a competitive advantage.

DO MEMBERSHIP AND EDUCATION WORK SYMBIOTICALLY?

Has your organization considered including education as an individual or organizational member benefit? Doing so could bring in new members and improve member retention. While this would drastically reduce online education revenue, if done well, money lost in that area could be made up by new dues revenue that will be brought in, which could ultimately provide a more long-term, sustainable model.

Competing for-profit organizations offering paid educational content may not

have the diversified revenue sources of an association, limiting their competitive edge or viability.

CAN COMPETING ORGANIZATIONS BECOME MEMBERS?

With some associations offering diverse membership types, some competing organizations may be able to become members as vendor or affiliate categories. In such situations, competing organizations may be permitted to use association branding on their webpages and marketing materials. Depending on the situation, consider establishing criteria requiring disclosure and preclusion of membership for organizations directly competing or rivaling association content or services.

CAN YOUR MEMBERS DIFFERENTIATE YOUR CONTENT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

Brand recognition is a priority for every organization and a key focus of communications and marketing professionals. If rival or competing content exists, work to differentiate your content and assure branding is consistent and recognizable throughout.

As education moves from physical spaces to the internet, so too has the increase in for-profit competition. To compete, associations need to better protect themselves against potential member conflicts of interest and focus on the competitive advantages that make our collaborative organizations unique.

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Just Say STOP!

International Advisor to the Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** looks at association performance from another viewpoint: what if it was all about stopping some of the things you do and not chase novelty at all costs?

Most advice on improving performance focuses on the new: new initiatives, freshly-minted business models, novel event formats, under-exploited market segments, implementing the results of a research project on what new benefits members need (right now!), and of course, new technology. Our natural curiosity and inbuilt love of novelty drive us inexorably towards taking on ever-increasing mental workloads and tighter-packed activity programs, personally and enterprise-wide across our associations. But at the same time, our habits, our Board demands, our business cultures are seemingly hard-wired to prevent us from jettisoning any of our existing programs and priorities.

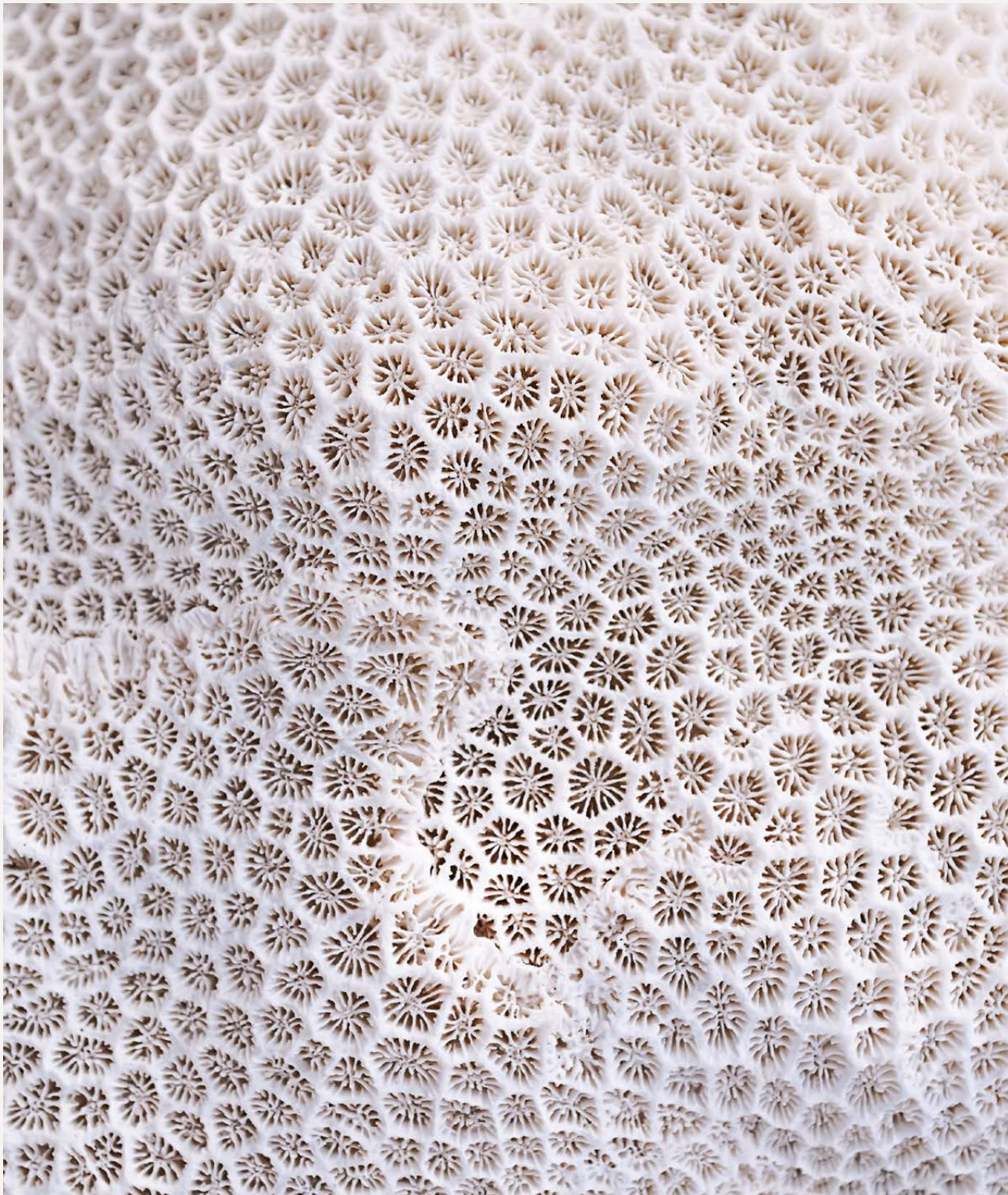
It doesn't need to be like this. Instinctively we understand that less can be more, that reflection time isn't wasted time, that neither success nor progress can be measured by the rotation speed of a hamster wheel. But at the same time, we underestimate the range and volume of what can be stopped, and the enormous opportunities that can be opened up by adopting a more comprehensive "just say STOP!" philosophy.

To illustrate this point, I reached out to a couple of dozen friends in the association community: chief executives, strategy specialists, and a few consultants, to get their perspectives and advice on this issue.

COMMON THREADS

There were some common threads: stopping something can be both really simple *and* really hard to do; it can be really simple *and* really powerful; it is typically quite boring to propose (especially compared to a shiny new project) but can lead to very exciting and surprising outcomes; and there was a unanimous consensus this is a universal challenge in the association world that we can all profitably engage with. Their suggested "stops" encompassed mental models, unthinking habits, a wide range of typical association activities, and a few radical big-picture revolutions!

As association leaders, we should "*stop finding excuses why something can't be done or changed*" (Tom Reiser, *ISTH*), "*stop stressing about what you can't change or influence*" and "*stop thinking that taking breaks of time for yourself is not efficient*" (both from Jenny Ennis, *ESSKA*).





Switching from mental exercises to practical actions, we can “*stop sending out newsletters which have ever-shrinking engagement*” (John Bruno, IES - who still hasn’t managed to stop producing his, even though he knows he should!), or more broadly, why not “*stop maintaining legacy products that are no longer profitable or relevant*” (Nikki Walker, MCI Global), or push the boat out and “*just stop your association’s autopilot: its navigation system is outdated!*” (Kai Hattendorf, UFI). Want to be really radical? “*Stop charging for membership! We did and it worked!*” (Iain Bitran, ISPIM).

Unsurprisingly, Boards were in the firing line: “*Stop reporting to Board meetings, this precious time should be for discussion (but still we keep on reporting!)*” (Bonny Koenig, Going International), “*stop saying “yes” to every Board member’s requests*” (Mohamed Mezghani, UITP), and even more challenging, “*stop the Board trying to recapture where you were three years ago*” (Dianna Steinbach, formerly at ISSA).

Language matters, too. “*Stop talking about legacies and start talking about impact!*” (Alessandro Cortese, ESTRO), and this heartfelt plea (a favourite of mine as well), “*Stop saying Hybrid, please!*” (Ben Hainsworth, EASL).

A particular challenge is how leaders can model and reinforce the “stopping” behaviour they want their teams to adopt. “*Stop sending emails and meeting requests during off-hours (weekends and evenings) to demonstrate your appreciation of everyone’s whole life - family, friends and non-work commitments*” (Brenda Sanderson, IxDA), a sentiment echoed by Mohamed Mezghani: “*stop sending*

or reading emails on your smartphone anytime/anywhere” (ironically, this advice was sent and read late on a Friday evening!).

Magda Mook from ICF credits her Marketing & Communication VP who challenged the entire management team to come up with five things they wanted to or could stop doing every month, after which each person attempted to stop one thing for the following month. More times than not, it worked, and fascinatingly, most of the time “*nobody even noticed!*” Experimentation and “temporary stops” can be very effective at getting buy-in!

FOCUS ON THE MISSION

It always helps to focus on the association’s mission. “*Especially when staff resources are stretched (but even if they aren’t), ask if projects genuinely contribute towards the association’s long-term success. If not, stop them!*” (Florence Bindelle, EuropeanIssuers), while Tommy Goodwin from ECA and Dean West from Association Laboratory Inc both advise: “*Stop trying to be everything to everyone.*”

Global strategy can strongly benefit from one particular “stop”: Jon Bruno advises, “*Stop imagining a single office with team members in one city*”. This has a particular resonance for Global Association Hubs partner cities, Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC, as we see more and more associations setting up regional hubs, empowering their geographical chapters with more responsibility, and embracing the growing mega-trend of remote working: more and more people are going to stop commuting,



and associations will be able to stop recruiting only people who live within 30 km of one particular city.

My association friends have only revealed the tip of the iceberg of valuable “stops.” Association CEOs can stop involving themselves in every project, stop looking too far ahead, stop being paranoid about what their competition are doing. Associations should stop running so many in-office meetings, stop so many back-to-back Zoom calls, stop making so many assumptions about members, and stop hiring so many consultants. The list goes on and on.

But why is it that with so many opportunities for positive cutting and pruning, so many associations find it incredibly difficult to stop almost anything. There is a range of very different reasons, each of which require different solutions:

- Ignorance
- Inertia
- Bureaucracy & rules
- Habit & comfort
- Wrong frameworks
- Procrastination
- Fear

The greatest of all these is fear: fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of upsetting vested interests, fear in some cases of success (and thereby showing up previous actions, decisions, and programmes as being inefficient or flawed).

Perhaps the strongest solution is to build-in “stopping” as one of the centrepieces of your strategy and business culture, empowering all your management team to constantly be on the lookout for any opportunity to challenge and stop, rewarding “stops” that turn out to add value. Keynote speakers from the recent Dubai Association Conference Bo Kruger and Jason Thomson respectively advise: *“Use the SKS framework - What should we STOP doing; What should we KEEP doing; What should we START doing”* and *“follow Jim Collins’ recommendation: You probably have a “to do” list, but where is your “to stop” list?”*

But the final, very wise words should go to Amanda Millard from IWTO: *“Just STOP.....and think”*.

With thanks to ISTH - Int'l Soc for Thrombosis & Haemostasis; IES - Int'l Ecolourism Soc; Going International; IWTO - Int'l Wool Textile Org; IsDA - Interaction Design Assoc; MCI Global; ESSKA - Euro Soc for Sports Traumatology, Knee Surgery & Arthroscopy; ECA - Exhibitions & Conventions Alliance; UITP - Int'l Union for Public Transport; ISPIIM - Int'l Soc for Professional Innovation Management; Assoc Laboratory Inc; UFI - Global Assoc for Exhibition Industry; ESTRO - Euro Soc for Radiotherapy & Oncology; EASL - the Home of Hepatology; EuropeanIssues; ISSA - Worldwide Cleaning Industry Assoc.

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

How to Position Your Association to the Next Level

For the International Association of Congress Organizers (IAPCO), **Barbara Calderwood**, Divisional Director Associations & Communities, MCI UK, identifies a few ways that will allow professional societies, non-profits and trade associations to perform better.

PRODUCTS

A crucial element of digital transformation is the ability to organize products. By bringing all available materials into one place, associations can simplify the way members access content. When you consider the entertainment content we access now, it's mainly on-demand, like television or music streaming.

When your audience is able to choose content on demand, the experience becomes more bespoke, where personalization and algorithms allow for the content to be shaped around them. But smart access to content doesn't have to end with your members...

ENGAGEMENT BEYOND THE MEMBERSHIP

Previously, I have worked with associations that have a lot of content to offer but are still struggling with engagement. Quite often, there is plenty of engagement among members, but there is still untapped opportunity among non-members. And that is where we have set our focus.

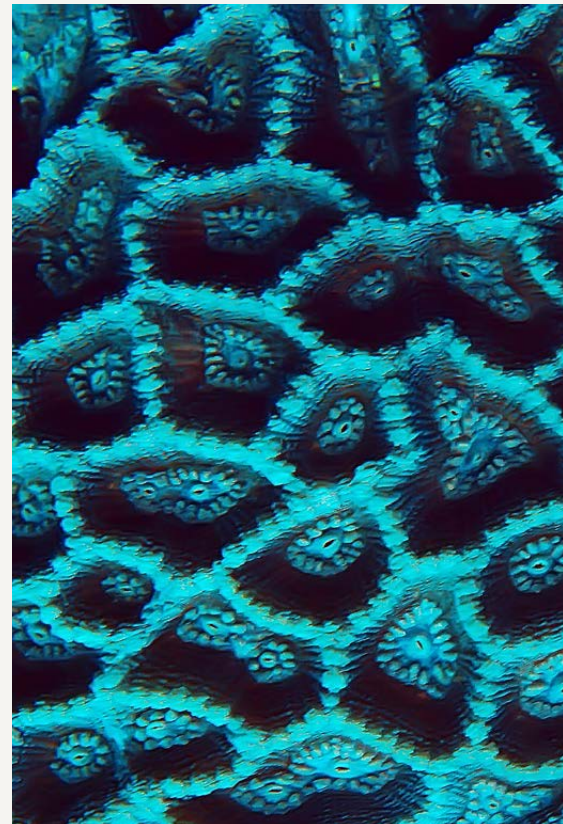
Educational materials are a valuable commodity for associations and their members. But there is an opportunity to boost the return on investment by making these materials available for others who are not yet members of this organization. This opportunity is twofold. Firstly, by giving non-members access to materials without the need to sign up, there could be a potential revenue stream which didn't exist before. Secondly, by gating certain pieces of content for members only, there is a chance that people could become members to access the rest of the work; a try before you buy-style positioning.

DIGITAL & ITS DISCONTENTS

As we know, the pandemic shifted many associations over to the digital sphere to help maintain attendance, engagement, and of course revenue. This was entirely necessary and for some, it was a brand-new way of approaching meetings and events.

But there is one thing to bear in mind.

Digital transformation is not a bridge. Once you reach the other side, the journey



isn't over. The truth is, almost everybody went digital when the pandemic hit, and most of their lives (work, entertainment, shopping) were conducted through a screen. The consideration for associations is how you are going to engage with your audiences while keeping the very real issue of digital fatigue in mind.



JOINING FORCES

The pandemic proved a trying time for all organizations and put into sharp focus the robustness of business models and member engagement strategies. Traditional revenue sources have been tested and do not offer the same stability they once did. In crowded marketplaces, members, customers and sponsors will want the most value for their investment. Association staff have this enormous pressure to evolve their offering to ensure relevance.

The adage there is strength in numbers does bear weight in uncertain times. The stand-alone model, in which one association owns one space, specialty or niche, might be too limited. If you can no longer go it alone, why not look to other associations to collaborate, partner, or even merge?

There are numerous benefits in considering joining forces with similar like-minded organizations, institutions, and agencies. An integrated approach to bringing together the best minds from research, academia and industry can maximize opportunities in better advocacy, world-class training, economies of scale as well as transformative outcomes for your industry or profession.

Collaboration is key and achieving this balance means recognizing the strength derived from the diversity of participating organizations.

GROWING VIRTUALLY

There are many reasons why going virtual can bring benefits to associations, and the opportunity for growth is at the forefront. Previously, associations focused on one main conference to make space for networking, education, and member updates. But as we know, associations thrive on community, and a virtual community can offer audiences from around the world, with all the benefits that a worldwide community brings.

When considering global audiences, associations must always bring time zones into account and the way audiences engage with them. Once again, on-demand content and access is paramount to creating a relevant and fulfilling experience. When going virtual, consider how audiences outside of the current reach will interact with content.

Digital transformation is already bringing change and benefits to associations. When undergoing transformation, keep each of these points in mind, as they may be the elements which take your association's performance and positioning to the next level.

IAPCO represents today 138 companies comprised of over 9,900 professional congress organizers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org.



Excellence, Especially When Managing an Association

Associations are a very particular type of organization. They are member driven and focus on serving the interest of their community in the best possible way.

The way this is done can take many shapes and forms – from advocacy to professional education. Discussions at the recent Brussels International Associations Forum showed the bar for delivering excellence is set higher. But how to do it? How to add value to make associations relevant and ever-competitive? This is what **Sven Bossu**, CEO of AIPC, wonders in this special contribution for Boardroom.

There are about 2,300 associations based in Brussels, most of them with a European or a global membership and it was great to reengage with old friends and colleagues during the Brussels International Associations Forum. Common challenges, like talent management, diversity and leadership were brought to the table and discussed both during the sessions and the coffee breaks. It became rapidly clear that the association community went through a thorough transformation process over the last two years.

Research done by PCMA at the start of the pandemic found that given the focus of the COVID-19 impact on face-to-face/in-person meetings, any association without reserves equal to or greater than anticipated meetings income could be designated as at-risk. So, a lot of associations needed to move fast and navigate through uncharted territories.

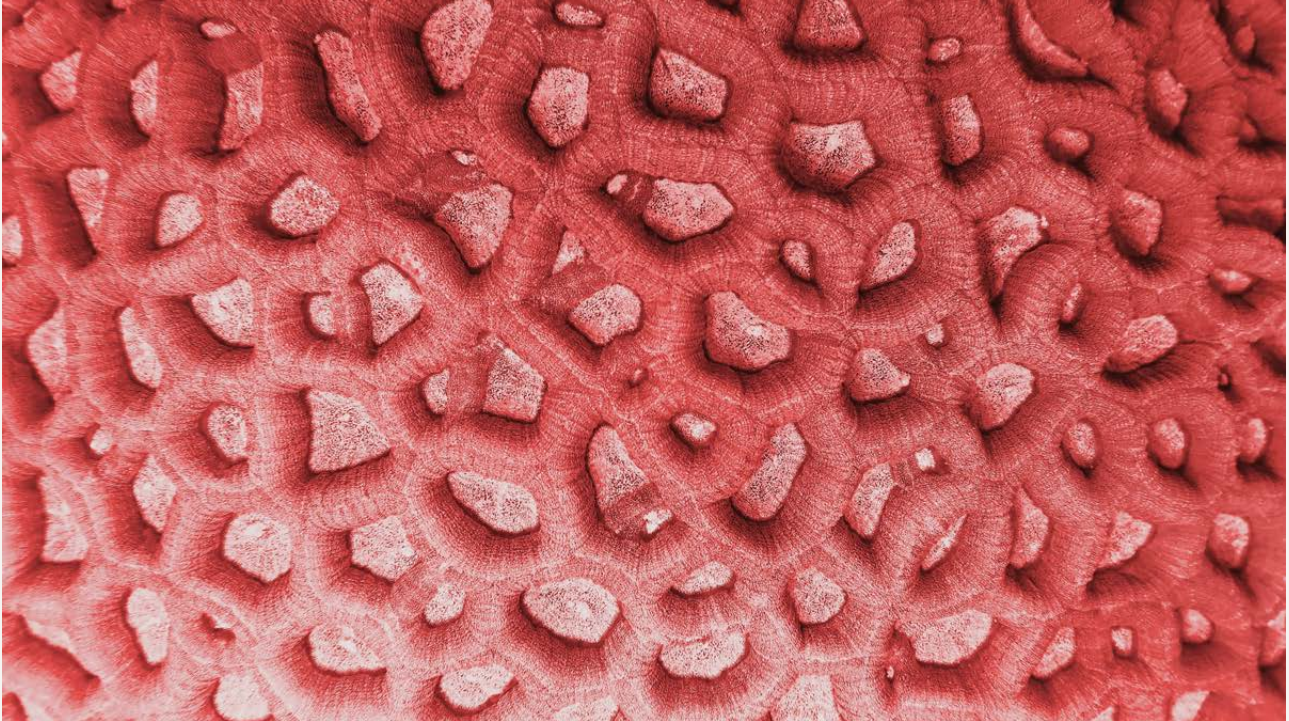
WHAT & HOW

This also provided an opportunity to have a good look at the activities portfolio of the associations and evaluate whether the “what” and the “how” still made sense. At AIPC, the change process was already initiated in 2019 but obviously needed to accelerate as from the first quarter of 2020. The good news was that AIPC was not dependent on revenues from the events organized. However, these events were the platform for the key

value proposition of AIPC: to bring the community together in order to exchange knowledge and to drive excellence. Without these events taking place, there was a clear risk that members might abandon the association, especially in times of crises, when tough budget decisions need to be made.

Therefore, AIPC developed a six-pillar platform, designed for maximum value creation on the one hand and a clear focus on the other. These six pillars were: membership, business model, business partners, community outreach & advocacy, research & education and talent management. Each pillar stood for a goal to be achieved. The talent management pillar for instance was about supporting our community in preparing the next generation of convention centre leadership by providing a tailor-made elevated management program to a small group of upcoming leaders.

Looking back, we were able to accomplish most of the things we had in mind, but not necessarily in the way we planned it. Two years ago, we did not imagine the talent program to be a fully-digital one, with 14 participants from across the globe working together on projects without ever having seen each other face-to-face. But they are doing a great job and will finally meet at the AIPC Annual Conference in July, where they will present the results of their hard work. The program also provided an opportunity to “use” these 14 upcoming leaders as ambassadors



for our industry, hopefully convincing other to join the exciting world of events - especially important in a period where a lot of people are reconsidering their professional aspirations.

LESSONS LEARNED

With the successes (and the non-successes) also came a number of lessons learned when it comes to delivering excellence and which are now part of our way of working. It was interesting to learn at the Association Forum mentioned earlier that there is a lot of communality with other associations.

One of the things we have got a lot better at, is asking ourselves hard questions about the activities we do. Why do we do this? What value does it bring? Can we measure it? Is the effort in line with the value it brings? When all is going well, it is something we sometimes forget to do but it provides opportunities to free up resources if we cannot articulate a clear answer to these questions - in which case we might want to re-think or abandon the activity.

A second key area of improvement is "thinking outside the box" and to reach out to "not the usual suspects" to inspire us. One of our research papers on hybrid has an interesting quote from Oscar Cerezales, Chief Strategy Officer at MCI: "*If you want to learn what successful hybrid events look like, check out the gaming industry*". By looking at other industries, we can learn how to create new types of value which we might never have thought

about and at AIPC. We do so by inviting persons from other industries to our event and learn from them. For example: at this year's annual conference, we will have a wine maker talk about successful open innovation in his industry. But we need to do a lot more on this front.

A third key area of improvement are partnerships. A great example is the relationship between AIPC and its business partners, which really transformed from a "sponsorship" relationship into a partnership, exploring different ways of providing value to both the AIPC community and the business partners. For a long time, we did not actively leverage the knowledge our business partners have and put it to use of our members. This has now completely changed, resulting in a true win-win.

These are just three of the elements which will allow us at AIPC to continue to set the bar higher when it comes to delivering excellence to our community. To paraphrase the baseline of a famous French company: because they are worth it.

AIPC represents a global network of over 190 leading centres in 64 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide. www.aipc.org.





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Connecting the World, One Association at a Time

For more than 20 years, multinational organizations from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia have set up headquarters in Dubai. By encouraging foreign business and investment through free-trade zones, no income tax and an attractive corporate taxation policy, Dubai's 'open doors' spirit is enticing more associations to the Emirate who are looking to expand their reach in the Middle East and beyond.

Words Remi Deve, with Lane Nieset

In 2014, Dubai Chambers, Department of Economy and Tourism, and Dubai World Trade Centre launched **Dubai Association Centre (DAC)** to act as a gateway to the world's fastest-growing economies, provide a setting for global associations to build regional membership and offer support to delegates in the UAE and other parts of the world.

DAC opened new offices in 2019 and now offers both the facilities and opportunities for associations to share knowledge, best practices and discuss challenges with others in the community. As members of DAC, associations gain insight to economic trends and target markets from Dubai Chambers; receive insight, toolkits and guidelines on CSR and sustainability issues; and have access to international markets and offices across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the CIS region.

Now, there are more than 80 associations licensed through DAC, which gives the Emirate a "footprint across a wide range of sectors and professions, and, therefore, makes an impact on the economic and knowledge development of Dubai and the wider region," explains Steen Jakobsen, Assistant Vice President, Dubai Business Events. "Importantly, the association ecosystem now



DOWNTOWN DUBAI

exists beyond just DAC itself, with ancillary support from law firms, event organizers and other experts to assist associations in setting up in Dubai and taking full advantage of the platform for growth that it provides.”

GLOBAL GUIDANCE

Since launching nearly eight years ago, DAC has gained a strong voice within the global association sector and has helped engage and form partnerships with international organizations. And, thanks to year-round programming – both in-person and virtual – members have access to fresh knowledge and insights from local and international speakers and experts. *“Being part of the Dubai Association Centre has certainly accelerated our growth in recent years, providing the ideal launchpad for not only increasing our membership locally and regionally, but also expanding the suite of services and offerings we can provide them with,”* agrees Alaa Al Boali, Director, Middle East Facility Management Association (MEFMA). *“Thanks to DAC’s close alignment with the government, we have a strong legal framework and direct access to regulatory and licensing bodies in our field, reducing any hurdles we may face and enabling us to focus on delivering excellent services to our members.”*

DAC has received strong government support since associations play a significant role in boosting Dubai’s reputation as a knowledge hub and help spearhead growth in the Emirate’s strategic sectors (which are pillars of the future economy). As Jakobsen puts it: *“With people being at the heart of associations, Dubai’s attractiveness as a talent hub has also undoubtedly aided the growth of DAC, with international associations able to both relocate staff to the city or find suitable candidates here to drive their operations and achieve their local and regional ambitions.”*

The market potential of the region has been a core driver of success for DAC, and Dubai is seeing that associations are eager to capitalize on this aspect and tap into markets that have a strong respect and understanding of knowledge development, sharing of best practices, and support the growth of various fields of expertise. *“With Dubai’s connectivity, advanced economy and robust business ecosystem, the city provides an ideal platform to achieve this,”* Jakobsen adds.

FUTURE FORWARD

As part of the plan to ensure the competitiveness of the business and tourism sectors in Dubai, [Dubai Economy](#)

and [Dubai Tourism](#) recently merged to form Dubai’s Department of Economy and Tourism. In order to transform Dubai into one of the top five global cities in the main economic indicators, the new department aims to attract 100,000 companies in three years, 400 economic events annually by 2025, and up to the number of visitors by 40% to 25 million visitors by that same year.

These goals fall perfectly in line with the UAE government-approved [National Strategy for Advanced Innovation](#). The new phase plans to shift the focus from vital sectors to goals and development in the following seven areas: exploration, future skills, quality of health, living and life, green power, transport, and harnessing technology to serve humankind.

The hope is that by trying out new models of government for serving society, testing advanced economic patterns, collaborating with international institutions and companies specializing in innovation, and establishing a national platform for innovation, communication, and learning, the UAE will rise to the list of world’s top leaders of innovation, and, ultimately achieve the goals of [UAE Centennial 2071](#).

Throwback to Dubai Association Conference

Themed ‘Associations and the New World: Resilience & Reinvention’, the Dubai Association Conference was organized by Dubai Association Centre (DAC) on the very site of Expo 2020 Dubai last February. Partnering with the American Society of Association Executives, it brought together ISO delegates, including Dubai-based associations and a VIP group of association executives, led by ASAE President and CEO Michelle Mason. The program, which covered the whole spectrum of association management, was designed as a combination of plenary sessions and breakout workshops featuring lively interactivity and plenty of engagement opportunities.



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FRANCE'S FAMOUS FACES

Florence Agostino-Etchetto

Florence Agostino-Etchetto is CEO of Lyonbiopôle, the gateway to healthcare innovation in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. As a leading cluster, it supports ambitious projects and innovative companies in the healthcare & life sciences' sector. For Boardroom's France's Famous Faces series, she explains what makes Lyonbiopôle Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes so special, and how some of its members have been instrumental in attracting conferences to Lyon.

CAN YOU PRESENT LYONBIOPÔLE AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES?

Lyonbiopôle Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes is a competitiveness cluster specialized in the healthcare sector. It federates and facilitates the innovative health ecosystem of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, and represents and promotes this regional network of experts at a local, national and international level.

Today, Lyonbiopôle brings together and hosts more than 275 members. They are large and small companies, academics and hospitals, whose innovation, growth, and internationalization projects are supported every step of the way. We aim to help these highly-trained professionals build the medicine of the future, so that the technologies, products and services of tomorrow they develop are available to patients sooner than later.

YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON THE CREATION OF A EUROPEAN BIOCLUSTER. WHAT WILL BE ITS MISSIONS?

The pandemic has unveiled the vulnerability of our healthcare system as a whole. We now need to be better prepared and rethink the entire healthcare sector, so we are able to overcome potential future health crises more efficiently.

As the place where vaccines and diagnostics were first born, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region boasts all kinds of assets and some major players - both from academia and industry - in the field of human and animal infectiology. It was only natural for us to be at the forefront of the creation of a European biocluster dedicated to immuno-infectiology.

The missions of this cluster will be to structure different kinds of initiatives et gather under one roof, if I may say, all the actors and the tools that have a role to play in terms of prevention, diagnosis and treatment. It will also offer the opportunity to make the 'One Health' concept, this integrated, systemic and unified approach to public health, more concrete.

SOME OF YOUR MEMBERS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY BIDDEN FOR MEDICAL CONGRESSES TO COME TO LYON. IN WHAT WAY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE CITY OF LIGHTS?

The history of Lyon is closely linked to some major - sometimes recent - discoveries in the health field. As a territory which promotes excellence at every level, it has created an ecosystem of academic and clinical skills showcased in the work of some 22.000 life science research professionals, 40 public/private research institutes and internationally renowned academic research institutes and infrastructures such as CNRS or INRIA just to name a few.

In addition, Lyon and its region are recognized as an active and attractive talent pool. It is the first French region with employees in the fields of R&D, and bioproduction for instance. Its large industrial network also brings together major international groups such as Nemera, Roche Diagnostics, Sanofi for example, but smaller companies as well. Last but not least, more than 800 start-ups and SMEs work in the region to create the innovations of tomorrow.

All of these ingredients make Lyon a destination of choice for conferences in the fields of biotech, medtech or digital health. After all, medical events are an opportunity to develop international collaborations and showcase to the world what Lyon is really good at.

Contact

vducaud@lyon-france.com / events.lyon-france.com

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Convention Bureau **Toulouse**

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FRANCE'S FAMOUS FACES

Isabelle Saves-Peccoza

As head of international cooperation, Isabelle Saves-Peccoza develops and implements the strategy of opening up, outreach and international attractiveness of the Centre for Integrative Biology (CBI-Toulouse) and the Institute of Pharmacology and Structural Biology (IPBS-Toulouse). In that regard, she has been instrumental in getting two-high level conferences to Toulouse in 2022. For Boardroom's France's Famous Faces series, she explains how she sees her role as an ambassador and in what ways business events are drivers of change and influence.

YOU WON THE BID TO HOST TWO CONGRESSES. ONE WHICH TOOK PLACE IN FEBRUARY. ANOTHER WHICH WILL BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER. HOW DO THESE EVENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE INTERNATIONAL REACH OF TOULOUSE?

At CBI-Toulouse and IPBS-Toulouse, one of my missions is to give visibility on an international level to the very high-quality research carried out in our laboratories covering a wide disciplinary spectrum, from fundamental biology to its application in several fields of health. This is why I applied for Toulouse to host the 6th World Global Forum on Tuberculosis Vaccines and then the International Plasmid Biology Meeting 2022.

These two events are very different, they are organized by research units which are part the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the University of Toulouse 3, but each in their own way allow Toulouse to shine through the quality of its higher education and research. They also help position Toulouse within the broader French research field, in particular in Biology-Health and biotechnologies.

MORE GENERALLY, WHY IS IT INTERESTING FOR A DESTINATION TO HOST AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS?

Hosting scientific events of this kind has a real impact for Toulouse. The first one is obviously touristic: the delegates usually find the city very charming, and rightly so! The second one might be more interesting as it has to do with knowledge-sharing: the various stakeholders taking part in the congress will often grab the opportunity to initiate or develop cooperation with local actors, and that cooperation will result in best practice exchange, transfer of expertise and sometimes mobility of researchers themselves. It is therefore the visibility of the city that is at stake and all its attractiveness that is reinforced.

WHAT TYPE OF COLLABORATION HAS THERE BEEN WITH TOULOUSE CONVENTION BUREAU?

The collaboration with Toulouse Convention Bureau was of a different nature and importance on each instance.

For the 6th Global Forum on Tuberculosis Vaccines, which was to bring together around 500 participants from more than 30 countries, joint work with the Toulouse Convention Bureau began in June 2019, for a Forum that was in the end held virtually in February 2022. The collaboration with Toulouse Convention Bureau began very early on as they helped us to put together the most solid bid possible.

They actually were by our side throughout the whole process, from getting all the right partners on board to the site inspection. This collaboration lasted until the completion of the Forum in order to ensure the best possible reception and the best promotion of Toulouse despite the impossibility of organizing the Forum face-to-face. And even if the event was organized virtually, we received significant financial support from the Toulouse Métropole Congress Fund.

In the case of the Plasmid Biology Meeting which is expected to bring together around 150 specialists from around the world, the support of Toulouse Convention Bureau has touched on more logistical aspects, including the search of the right partners and sponsors. They will also help with the promotion of Toulouse which will be made during the event, which I'm sure will be a great success.

For more information on Toulouse as a conference destination:
www.meetings-toulouse.com



The Travels of Travel Medicine

The 18th Congress of the International Society of Travel Medicine (CISTM) will be held in Basel from 21 to 25 May 2023. Although Switzerland's third-biggest city has just 200,000 inhabitants and a surface area of only 37 km², it nonetheless boasts a vibrant social and cultural life and has one of the world's most productive economies. The appeal of this region lies both in its unique position at the point where three countries meet – offering direct access to all the key transport routes and the world's oceans – and in its long tradition as a science and research location.

It is thus no wonder that the organizer opted for this city on the Rhine. Despite this, a certain effort was required in order to convince the organiser beforehand and win the bid. Prof. Christoph Hatz of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute has played a major role in ensuring that Basel can now look forward to welcoming up to 1500 specialists from the travel medicine industry. He tells Boardroom how he managed to motivate his association colleagues to come to his hometown.

WHICH ARGUMENTS DID YOU HAVE TO PUT FORWARD TO GET THE CISTM 2023 TO COME TO BASEL?

It was ultimately a range of factors that tipped the scales. On the one hand, our city is located at the heart of Europe and is easy to reach from many places and, on the other hand, Switzerland is regarded as a leader in travel medicine, and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute can look back on a history spanning almost 80 years. The OC also knew that they could rely on professional support if they organized their Congress here. And we were able to convince them that, contrary to popular opinion, staging a congress in Basel does not have to be more expensive than elsewhere, because our trinational region has a wide range of accommodation on offer.

THE DECISION IN FAVOUR OF BASEL AS A VENUE WAS ANNOUNCED IN 2021. YOU HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH THIS TOPIC FOR MUCH LONGER THOUGH. HOW LONG DID THE BIDDING PROCESS ACTUALLY LAST?

We submitted a bid to host the CISTM about ten years ago already, but just missed out. We did, however, succeed in attracting the European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health to Basel in 2015. That was a complete success and has doubtless played a role now in the selection of Basel for the CISTM in 2023. A further key aspect was the major commitment of the local players here who all teamed up to convince the International Society of Travel Medicine to come to our city.

Congress Center & Messe Basel, the Key figures

- Exhibition area (in square metres): 141,000
- Exhibitions (annually): 20 to 25
- Visitors at the exhibition site (annually): up to 1 million
- Rooms at the Congress Center: 25
- Room capacity: 50 to 10,000
- Events (annually): 250
- 10,000 hotel rooms in the Basel metro area
- 1,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the venues
- 4,000 Airbnb spots

WHY DID YOU OPT FOR CONGRESS CENTER BASEL?

The CCB is just the right size for a congress like ours. I also think that, in an international comparison, the venue can be said to be one of the most delightful congress centres of all, if I may put it that way. But what is almost as important: we received an incredible amount of support from the employees of the MCH Group, and also from Basel Tourism. That ultimately made it an easy decision for us.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE SWISS TROPICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE TO HAVE SUCH MAJOR CONGRESSES STAGED IN BASEL?

Congresses like the CISTM help us to make the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute better known throughout the world. This is particularly important for us with regard to our new building in Allschwil. And I personally am delighted that I can introduce an international audience to my home city. This is something that I value greatly, precisely because I have spent so much of my life abroad.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST?

Although it will also be possible to take part virtually, we are expecting a record number of participants in-person. A large number of people are feeling the need to meet up 'physically' again. And I'm not just thinking of us "dinosaurs". Young people, in particular, are seeking direct, face-to-face interaction. But I'm naturally also looking forward to renewing existing contacts and getting to know new people. Something else that I am looking forward to is the cultural programme that I am currently drawing up. My aim here is to make a lasting impression and ensure that the visitors have fond memories of Basel.

For more information

visit www.messe-basel.com or call +41 58 206 28 28

Enlightened & Sustainable: A Venue for the Conference of the Future

With society on the mend after the pandemic, associations and their conferences have found themselves in the centre of it, as governments realize the value of face-to-face meetings and their role in economic growth. Such valuable gatherings require the right setting for attendees to feel inspired and for knowledge to flow. The new CCH – Congress Center Hamburg offers more than a meetings facility; it provides a sustainable, easy-to-be-in venue ready to shed light on new ideas that are stimulated there.

Words Vicky Koffa

The CCH – Congress Center Hamburg is hardly a new addition to the city; it has been around for almost 50 years (celebrating their big anniversary in 2023). But the modernized and upgraded CCH – Congress Center Hamburg, which opened its doors to the first congress in October 2021, combines the experience and values of the old with the innovation and style of the new. The venue prides itself in being part of the industry's united front to promote the mission of business events towards the swift recovery of the economy, which is showcased in the G3 Partners – AIPC, ICCA and UFI – new white paper: 'Business Events are the Fast Track to Recovery'.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Built to host the conference of the future, the facility offers 12,000 square meters of event space; 12,000 square meters of foyer space; and capacity for 12,000 visitors, as well as up to 50 multifunctional halls. What really strikes visitors, though, is the concept of light. CCH partnered with Bartenbach, a lighting design company, to create the perfect lighting throughout the entire complex at all times of day or night. Powerful light control panels, TV studio-type illumination systems as well as various types of effect and ambient lighting are controlled individually for maximum flexibility.

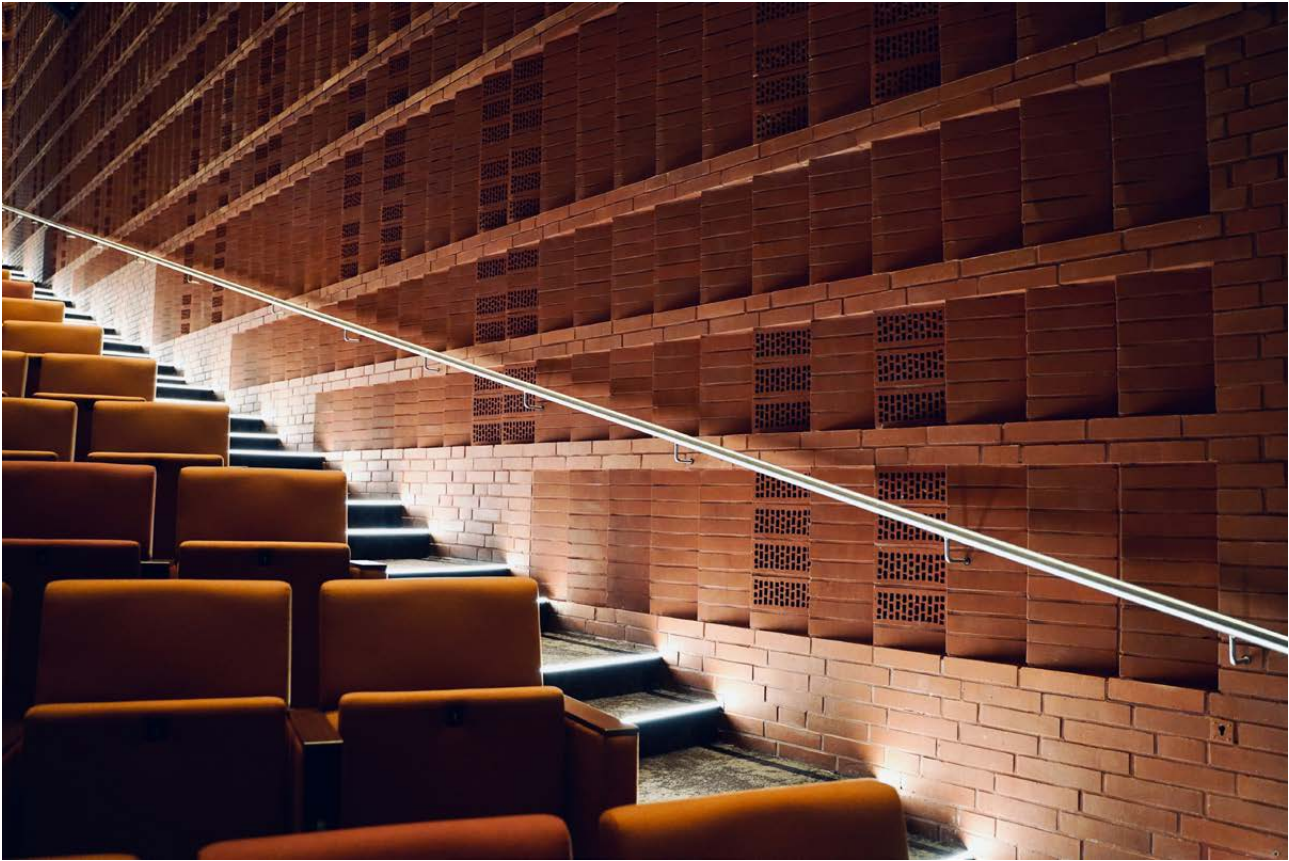
The light temperature changes automatically and smoothly from daylight ambiance to evening/nighttime, for enhanced comfort and reduced stress for the venue's guests by following and

supporting their biorhythm over the day. Historical parts have been preserved in Hall 3 but upgraded with LED technology. All lights are installed in ceiling recesses to avoid glare and architectural features are smartly highlighted. In the entrance area hangs the world's biggest pendant light, setting visitors up for the venue's unique illuminating experience.

AN AT-HOME FEEL

As important as light is to create the right working mood, so is comfort when spending hours in the same seat. It makes more sense for delegates to focus on knowledge exchange rather than feeling uneasy. Italian furniture manufacturer Poltrona Frau has supplied a total of 4,000 custom-made seats for Auditoriums 1 and Z, all upholstered with high-quality fabric. The designer took maximum comfort and practicality into consideration, fitting the seats with writing tablets and power sockets for charging electronic devices.

The same peacefulness emerges from the materials used to renovate the building. The natural stone used in the complex is dominant with attention to detail. This sustainable material has become integral to the identity of the new design of the venue, which combines different spatial settings into a sequence: the arrival area in the east, including the new Entrance Hall, and the Belvedere, located two levels above, with a panoramic view of Planten un Blomen park.



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NOTHING LESS THAN SUSTAINABLE

A conference centre which aims at offering associations a seat at the 'building back better' table cannot but emphasize sustainability. The DGNB system that was used to renovate CCH has implemented a holistic approach of sustainability through its certification system. It revolves not only around ecological aspects but also includes a holistic examination of the entire life cycle of a building or urban district.

Various certification criteria are applied individually to different types of buildings and for all the phases, from planning to demolition. Environmentally friendly materials, sustainable resource extraction, ease of recovery and recycling are all criteria developed for this certification and followed thoroughly when renovating the new CCH. This means that delegates enjoy better indoor air quality, get more informed of the space around them, and become part of a larger plan to help the planet.

The venue is on top on the energy front, as well. The new CCH - Congress Center Hamburg is part of the Net Zero Carbon Pledge for the Events Industry, helping to deliver the goals of

the Paris Agreement and ensuring a just transition. In particular, the commitment is "to support the goal of net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (first reduce total global GHG emissions by 50% by 2030) and actively promote and advocate for industry efforts throughout the value chain."

Sustainability is reinforced also with the location of the complex. Situated in the heart of the city and interconnected with the exhibition campus through Planten un Blomen park, it offers short distances to accommodation and the center of Hamburg without the use of a car. In fact, approximately 8,000 hotel beds are located within a radius of just two kilometers around the CCH. A mainline train station and several other stations and stops of the public transportation system are within a distance of 100 to 500 meters, while the airport is only 25 minutes away.

Contact

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Laying the Foundations of the Future

The capital of the province of Limburg in the Netherlands, Maastricht is perhaps best known for being the place where the Treaty on European Union was signed, back in 1992. But there is definitely much more to a city which promotes knowledge and diversity like no other. Today indeed, Maastricht has become a magnet to international and European associations, thanks to a multitude of international organizations and educational institutes in many areas of endeavours. A brand-new, expanded convention centre as well as a very dynamic convention bureau are also instrumental in putting the destination on the map.

Words Rémi Deve

As innovation and knowledge drive the global economy, great universities, research institutes and competitive clusters are what make a destination stand out. A city characterized by a rich history and culture, but also by a strong international ambience - no less than 25,000 students roam the streets of the city every year,

that's 1 in 6 inhabitants! - Maastricht is where stakeholders across the whole value and supply chain work hand in hand to build a better future. In fact, four major universities, numerous public and private research and competence centres, three medical schools and four university hospitals are located within

a 20-kilometre radius from Maastricht's centre. Besides, the size of the city makes it very human and easy to navigate.

SPEARHEADING LIFE SCIENCES

Maastricht's strengths lie primarily in the field of health and materials. Spearheading the regional economy in life sciences,



the Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus focuses on precision medicine and innovative diagnostics and regenerative medicine. As a centre of excellence, it offers a complete value creation chain using the knowledge gained from research to realize proof of market value, or even market introduction. The disciplines covered vary from molecular genetics, toxicology and neurosciences to human kinetics, epidemiology, health care sciences, and social medicine with priority given to research that involves the use of imaging and cardiovascular-related technologies.

Groundbreaking health research - for example the creation in the laboratory of embryo-like structures from mouse stem cells - is the result of close partnerships between the Maastricht University Medical Centre's (MUMC+), which is internationally recognized for its clinical expertise in myocardial diseases, structural problems, vascular diseases and genetics and relevant hi-res imaging technique, and the Health Campus. Topped with valorization and eventually commercial opportunities for innovative ideas, the area becomes very interesting for hosting any type of international medical conferences.

Last but not least is the Brightlands Chemelot Campus, which forms, together

with the Chemelot Industrial Park, one of the largest research and industrial sites in Europe. Enjoying national status, Brightlands Chemelot Campus is aspiring to become the leading technological and circular hotspot in the field of high-quality materials, chemical and biomedical solutions.

MECC Maastricht, the fast facts

- Total capacity of 5,000 participants
- Up to 4 conferences can be held simultaneously
- Over 55 breakout rooms
- 2 auditoria with up to 1,700 seats
- Multifunctional Expo Foyer of 2,500 sqm and up to 2,000 seats
- 30,000 sqm of exhibition space divided over 3 halls which can be connected

THE UPGRADE

All this knowledge lies a stone's throw from the brand-new MECC Maastricht, a big player in the conference world. Re-opened last year after some extensive renovation and an awe-inspiring expansion, the venue has been made more attractive and functional - the most noticeable change being that glass shell that was built around the already-existing auditorium, making the venue more transparent and inviting thanks to the addition of open spaces and spyholes.

The conference centre has now a more see-through structure, so that visitors can easily find their way around. The interior of the auditorium got a complete facelift. Many new rooms and spaces have been added - there are now 55 breakout rooms! - the Expo Foyer has been enlarged, while the Forum Passage has been adapted

to include multi-functional rooms. The redesigned layout now makes it possible for up to four conferences to be held simultaneously - a competitive advantage for a city which, in the end, doesn't lack any.

Prof. Dr. Michael Jacobs, vascular surgeon and director of the Heart and Vascular Centre, is a frequent user of MECC Maastricht: the European Vascular Course (EVC) - a three-day intense, hands-on workshop for young cardiovascular students which he created - takes place every year at the MECC. In fact, the cardiovascular organization and the venue recently renewed their close collaboration by signing a new contract for the year 2022 through 2026.

"MECC Maastricht has been our familiar venue for thirteen years now, and with the new construction and upgrade we have now even more fantastic opportunities to showcase EVC to the fullest. There are very few convention centres in the world with this type of perfect infrastructure where EVC can organize hundreds of workshops. And we get to do it all in the beautiful city of Maastricht where thousands of participants love to come every year!" stated Prof. Jacobs.

Conferences are great platforms to showcase knowledge and provide opportunities for high-quality networking and the sharing of best practices. Destinations like Maastricht are the ideal places to do just that. Combining the best of meeting infrastructure, easy access and some high-level expertise covering a wide spectrum of fields, it can create a one-of-a-kind experience for delegates and organizers alike. Isn't this what it is all about, after all?

More information:

On Maastricht:
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On MECC Maastricht:
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Adaptability & Collaboration: Added Values for a Conference

The two-year forced pause for our industry is thankfully over and news of in-person events are continuously popping up from around the globe. The role of destinations is becoming more relevant as associations are trying to find the right fit for their conferences. Enhanced digital options, flexibility for the client's needs, close collaboration with the convention bureau and the local stakeholders, all make up Monaco's dynamic comeback.

Words Vicky Koffa



The Principality of Monaco and its Convention Bureau have always been known for their special attentiveness towards association needs when organizing a conference in the country. The slow rhythm and restrictions of the pandemic gave the opportunity to the Monegasque team not just to review their services, but also to demonstrate how the destination can bring additional benefits to any event that crosses their path.

OLD VALUES MEET NEW

Each project is firstly treated with human interaction in mind, creating the right atmosphere and dedication that an association needs to feel in order to plan comfortably an event. Once this basis is set, a dedicated team of professionals makes sure to provide all the essential support and services to meet the unique needs of each association. Flexibility and responsiveness

to unforeseen situations are key in achieving this, but the close cooperation of all business events players in the Principality has forged an ecosystem which provides just that.

These were elements that were already part of the value system of the destination. The new situation imposed by the health crisis brought about the practicality of the digital element for business events. Although Monaco can offer suitable solutions for hybrid events, the new focus is on raising and showcasing the value the destination puts forward during in-person conferences.

Monaco's adaptability is portrayed through this new dimension of the industry. Already a year ago, the Principality had launched the #REENENT digital campaign, an initiative consisting of six visual slogans. Security, service, unity of place and action, and commitment to the environment are the main drivers of the Convention Bureau's efforts to revive business events in the region.

Building on this campaign, the teams are currently looking into developing a business model that will be more content-based and will be able to leave a positive long-term mark to the local community. The idea is to be close and support the visiting association in identifying relevant legacy goals; this will create increased value of the conference for the delegates and, hence, value of the destination. The event's positive contribution to the community guarantees its success; this is central to Monaco's services.

EVENTS ARE BACK..

In fact, Monaco always kept busy all through the pandemic. But since the reopening and the bureau's rethought strategy, conference numbers are booming. Not to mention the recurrence rate relating to events taking place on Monegasque soil, which attests to the confidence organizers place in the Principality.

The year started in a dynamic way with Monaco hosting the 'Biennial Monaco Oncology Conference' (a French-speaking oncology event) on 26-29 January at Grimaldi Forum. The in-person conference was enriched with digital components for more accessibility; 82 hours of streaming and a great number of on-site discussions kept the over 1,000 participants (and another 210 online) interested and educated.

Spring 2022 is a busy one for Monaco, filled with live events. 'One to One Retail Ecommerce' took place mid-March gathering

1800 delegates. The three-day event included the second edition of Village Startups, staging up-and-coming companies with concrete solutions for the retail ecommerce, and was focused on the triptych: HUMANISM, COLLABORATION & CSR. Later the same month - from 31 March to 2 April, Grimaldi Forum hosted the 20th edition of the 'Aesthetic & Anti-aging Medicine World Congress' (AMWC), where over 8,000 participants enjoyed an in-person and live-stream program with opportunities to learn new skills and engage in pivotal scientific debates.

April and May are more IT focused. On 26-27 April, the 'Data Cloud Global Congress' and Data Cloud Global Awards returned to Monaco, welcoming on-site about 1,000 experts across the data center, cloud, edge, digital infrastructure, and AI industries. On the same tech note, the third edition of 'Ready For IT', will take place on 17-19 May. The flagship event for digital transition and security, will offer its 600 participants insights on data security and industrial patterns to tackle today's challenges.

Setting the stage for all the conferences Monaco has lined up for the autumn months, the Rendez-Vous de Septembre (RVS) will be held on 10-14 September. After two years of waiting, players in the insurance and reinsurance market will have the chance to meet up and hold bilateral discussions ahead of the renewals.

...WELCOMED WITH NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

With Grimaldi Forum being so busy with business events, it was only natural that the surrounding area had to follow the success rate. The venue is expanding its exhibition capacity by 50%, with an additional surface of nearly 6,000m². The project, due for completion by 2025, will give Grimaldi Forum the possibility to combine more and larger-scale events, increasing its flexibility and uniqueness. This new space is part of a larger offshore construction of a six-hectare eco-district promoting sustainable development within Monaco.

Contact

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Budapest: A Tale of Three Cities

As we enter a whole new world, it might be time to discover emerging meetings destinations. Hungary is definitely one of them, and combines knowledge and expertise, tradition and modernity, old and new, like maybe only a few of its counterparts.

Words Lane Nieset

The Hungarian capital of **Budapest** was once three separate cities – Buda, Pest, and Óbuda – unfolding along the banks of either side of the Danube. Once the cities united in the 19th century, Budapest started blossoming into the capital we know today, with sprawling parks and squares, baroque buildings, modern structures, coffee houses, and concert halls.

An EU and Schengen Area member, Budapest, as of 2019, offers direct flights to 153 airports in 135 cities in 49 countries. And by rail, the city boasts direct trains to more than 50 destinations. In terms of hotels, Budapest features 20,000 rooms, and there are another 4,400 in the 3-, 4-, and 5-star categories on the way by 2025. Home to the second-largest synagogue in the world, Continental Europe's oldest underground, three World Heritage Sites, and the best airport in the region, it's not hard to see why the blend of history, culture and accessibility is drawing associations to the storied city.

INNOVATION NATION

The first telephone exchange can be traced back to Hungarian scientist Tivadar Puskás, and in the 150 years since, technology has developed at a rapid-fire pace in Hungary. Now, information technology and telecommunication is one of the economy's

strongest sectors, producing almost 5% of gross added value – and the pandemic helped push the sector even further.

When comparing the number of Nobel Laureates with the proportion of the population, Hungary ranks in the top 13 countries in the world with 16 prize holders. Hungary is home to 127 research institutes, 1,333 high education institutes, 1,966 business institutes, and micro, small, and medium-sized companies are on the rise. Areas like civil engineering and transport engineering have quadrupled in terms of R&D expenditure over the last decade, and Hungary has the highest R&D expenditure at the moment in the fields of vehicle manufacturing, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and information and communication sectors.

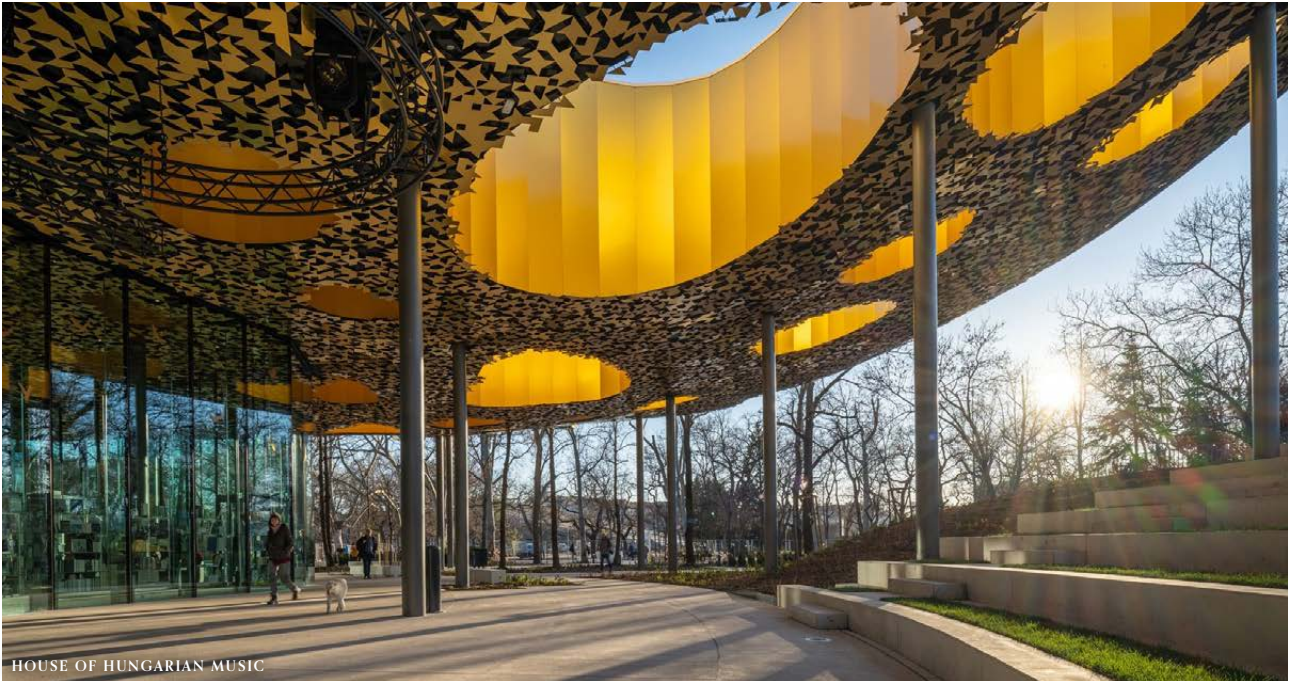
The National Research, Development and Innovation Office helps drive new products, knowledge, services and technologies by building on its network of public research institutes and creating university-centric innovative ecosystems. In addition to outposts of institutions like **ELI (Extreme Light Infrastructure)**, the world's leading laser-based research infrastructure, Hungary is home to **ZalaZONE**, an incubator and accelerator for SMEs and startups, where testing for autonomous and electric vehicles is performed. The automotive industry, in fact, features outposts for companies like Audi, Mercedes and Bosch, whose sites are responsible for 4% of total employment and encompass more than 700 suppliers. Hungary was also the first country in Central Eastern Europe to incorporate an e-mobility concept, and it's now becoming an electric battery-producing superpower.

BIRTHPLACE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

Hungary is where the word "biotechnology" was created by researcher Károly Ereky, who wrote the first publication on the topic, and the country today excels in areas like therapy, molecular diagnostics, research technologies, and active ingredient production. The sector got its start in the 1980s at research base MTA (Biological Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), and now organizations like the **Hungarian Biotechnology Association (HBA)** bring together nearly 100 life



HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA



sciences companies that develop pharmaceuticals for tumorous and viral diseases, therapeutics, medical equipment, and diagnostic procedures.

In Hungary, health spending on both inpatient care (31%) and pharmaceuticals (31%) is above the EU average. And, as a way to combat the workforce shortage, the government has raised salaries and is investing a significant amount of EU funding in the modernization of health infrastructure and services.

IN & AROUND BUDAPEST

With varying types of venues like the recently expanded **HUNGEXPO Budapest Congress and Exhibition Center** to Belle Epoque spaces like **Anantara New York Palace**, **Matild Palace**, a **Luxury Collection Hotel**, **Budapest** and **Parisi Udvar Hotel Budapest** – as well as well-known brands like **Budapest Marriott Hotel** (on the Pest side of the Danube), **Kempinski Hotel Corvinus Budapest** in downtown, and **Hilton Budapest** (a 16th-century property near Buda Castle) – the city gives planners plenty of options in terms of style and spaces accommodating groups of up to 15,000 people. HUNGEXPO features a new conference centre hosting up to 2,000 people, as well as seven large exhibition halls and a rooftop terrace, while **Budapest Congress Center**, in the Buda Hills neighbourhood, accommodates mid-size conferences. In the centre of the city, **Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace** is an Art Nouveau palace with over two million mosaic tiles that looks out at the Danube River and Buda skyline.

After a five-year closure, the renovated **Hungarian State Opera House** on Budapest’s “Champs-Élysées,” **Andrássy Avenue**, has reopened and offers groups private tours and, occasionally, event space, which can be paired with an opera or ballet performance. In Heroes’ Square, the **Museum of Fine Arts**, a World Heritage Site home to international and Hungarian art from ancient times to the end of the 18th century, can fit up to 900 people, while the architecturally stunning **House of Music Hungary** is one of the city’s newer venues. The Sou Fujimoto-designed structure features concert halls, an open-air stage, and a 1,000-sqm exhibition space dedicated to some of the country’s celebrated composers, like Zoltán Kodály.

Around Budapest, groups can even explore the countryside by steam train, boat up the Danube Bend, or host an event at the **Royal Palace in Gödöllő**, a favourite recreational residence of Empress Elizabeth and Queen of Hungary in the 19th century. Combining a rich history with modern design and a state-of-the-art congress centre, the capital city is full of venues, experiences, and resources to help association planners design a meaningful event sure to leave an impact on the ground and abroad.

Contact

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When Stars Align

We now know that when a crisis hits, things evolve rapidly; measures are put in place almost daily and industries like ours need to adapt in order to keep up. For the ever-active and dynamic Business Events Sarawak (BESarawak), the region's convention bureau, merely adapting is not enough; the primary goal continues to support the hosting of conferences that will have a positive lasting impact on communities. This is fully backed up by governments, at local and national level, which just announced the prolongation of financial incentives for association planners.

Words Remi Deve



KUCHING. FLOATING MOSQUE

An emerging destination on the island of Borneo, Sarawak is as diverse as it gets; distinctive languages, culture and lifestyles from almost thirty quite different ethnic groups blend harmoniously together to create this diverse yet closely united hospitable community. This is the region's uniqueness and why the meetings industry globally became so interested in the last decade, making the state a top destination choice for associations worldwide, starting with ICCA which organized its 2016 congress there, and chose Sarawak again as its Asia Pacific Regional Hub for the 2020 edition of its annual event.

AT THE FOREFRONT

As the borders open again - those of Sarawak did on 1st April - there might be a need for planners to go to locations that offer something different to the more 'traditional' ones. The last two years have forced us to reevaluate how we treat and managed the world at large and Sarawak is in good place to put legacy and sustainability at the forefront, as it was rightly promoted recently.

In fact, if Sarawak clearly understands the impact of meetings - and the fact that they hugely boost regional economies - they want to focus on maximizing the 'legacy impact' of the meetings they host.

"Legacy impacts of business events are one of the key strategies to help achieve the Post COVID Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030 goals under the tourism sector," said Sarawak's Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts and Minister of Youth, Sports and Entrepreneur Development, The Honourable Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah. *"We strive to secure at least 50 per cent of the total bid wins from now until 2030 to be*

legacy-driven and beneficial to our sectors, economies, communities, environment, and policy transformations."

GOOD NEWS

But there's more. Together with the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) Business Events Sarawak launched BEimpactful, a package by both bureaus (the only collaboration of this kind in the world?) for meeting planners to cushion the aftermath of COVID-19 on business events planning. The aim is to provide extended financial and in-kind incentives to conference organizers in general, and the good news is it is applicable for physical, hybrid, and homegrown national and international convention and exhibitions.

Speaking at the last BESarawak's Tribal Gathering, which serves as a platform for BESarawak to discuss and share the latest strategic plans for the months and years to come with the state's industry partners, The Honourable Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, said: *"BESarawak and MyCEB are working closer than ever at higher levels of collaboration to drive Malaysia's economic transformation and social development through business events. As our borders open again and given the high probability of international business events making their way back, we have decided to continue the Business Events Planners Incentivised Packages for this year - and this year only."*

Under Sarawak's Post COVID-19 Development Strategy 2030, which was launched by the Premier of Sarawak in 2021, the business events sector has long been identified as a catalyst that can empower communities and conserve heritage, culture and biodiversity and

development in all sectors. It's no wonder, then, that the Business Events Planners Incentivised Packages have been prolonged for 2022 to give business events a much-deserved boost.

Last month's Tribal Gathering was also the occasion for BESarawak to announce a few bid wins. Four major national and international conferences will soon make their way to Sarawak, including the Malaysian Institute of Food Technology, the Malaysian Society of Radiographers, IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics (Malaysia) Society and the Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists (MSA) and the College of Anaesthesiologists, Academy of Medicine Malaysia.

These conferences are expected to attract an estimated 4,000 delegates to Sarawak; auguring well for Sarawak's efforts to align with international objectives and standards in measuring the intangible benefit of business events known as legacy impact.

As Amelia Roziman, CEO of BESarawak, concludes: *"We see associations as our tribal ally; integral to the global tribes of business events. We explore many possibilities when we align ourselves with various associations. In addition to bring out the best in each association's internal goals, we connect and facilitate associations with government agencies and local partners in an effort to create sustainable impact beyond the immediate economic one."*

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New Zealand's Centres of Attention

With its borders now reopened, New Zealand is unveiling what it has been building while international conferences were paused: three new-generation, city-centre convention centres.

The purpose-built venues in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland will showcase the capability and increase the capacity of New Zealand to host exceptional business events.

Tourism New Zealand General Manager New Zealand and Business Events Bjoern Spreitzer says: *"This growth in business events infrastructure underlines both the importance of this industry to New Zealand's economy and recognition of the wider knowledge, networking and business benefits international conferences and events bring."*

TE PAE

The first new venue, Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre, opened its doors in December. It will welcome a solid roster of

more than 100 events in 2022, bringing nearly 70,000 people and an economic impact of \$37.2m to the city. This includes 63 conventions, eight of which are international.

Te Pae Christchurch General Manager Ross Steele said while there was a strong contingent of domestic bookings in the first year, it had been pleasing to see the return of interest and bookings from international markets, particularly Australia: *"We can see that people are missing that connection that only comes with being face-to-face, and we know there is pent up demand for New Zealand, in particular Christchurch, so it's been great to see interest translate to bookings for later in 2022 and beyond."*

The centre's name, 'Te Pae' draws inspiration from several phrases in New Zealand's indigenous language, te reo Māori.



TE PAE CHRISTCHURCH CONVENTION CENTRE



TAKINA, THE NEW WELLINGTON CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Te Pae Maunga means our mountain views, and Te Pae Whenua means the vast plains we inhabit. These iconic elements of the region's landscape are echoed in the building's design, where shapes and lines represent the contours of the Southern Alps and braided rivers of Canterbury. Te Pae Tangata means a place to meet and converse, highlighting Te Pae Christchurch's role as a gathering place for the city.

As part of ASM Global, Te Pae Christchurch is already leveraging the knowledge and experience of the worldwide venue management company, while delivering New Zealand's famed local welcome and hospitality.

Close relationships with ChristchurchNZ Business Events, the University of Canterbury, Lincoln University and Te Papa Hauora Health Precinct are driving a targeted bidding strategy drawing on the city's knowledge strengths, which range from earth sciences to aerospace and future transport, food, fibre and agritech, health tech and high-tech services, construction technology, social enterprise, and international education.

Te Pae Christchurch's 28,000 sqm of flexible space includes a 1,400-seat tiered auditorium, divisible into two 700-seat venues; a 1,000-seat banquet space overlooking the beautiful Avon River; plus extensive meeting space and expandable exhibition halls. State-of-the-art technology comes built-in, with leading hybrid and virtual meeting capability and an in-house AV and production team.

Te Pae Christchurch has received a Gold Sustainable Tourism Business Award from Qualmark, underlining its commitment to safe and sustainable operations and events.

It is also part of ASM Global VenueShield programme, ensuring that facilities are clean and certified at the highest standards of health and safety to alleviate delegate concerns in a post-Covid environment.

TĀKINA

Next in the pipeline for New Zealand is Tākina, the new Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre, on track to open in 2023 in the middle of the capital city.

Tākina means 'to invoke, to summon, to connect, to bring forth' in te reo Māori. The building's concept draws on the summoning of Wellington's wind as a means of expressing the shift of knowledge, moving things forward, and carrying ideas. It will be a place of welcoming, thinking, learning, and sharing, with its sculptural exterior housing modern, light-filled, flexible event spaces.

Tākina can be customised to accommodate a plenary of up to 1,600 delegates, with two divisible plenary halls on separate levels which can be easily combined; plus a 1,800sqm exhibition hall with adjacent space to boost capacity; stand-alone meeting rooms, and fully integrated best-in-class AV and ICT systems.

IN AUCKLAND

Meanwhile, construction continues on the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) in the heart of Auckland city.

This vertically stacked building features a glazed façade and adjacent laneways, providing delegates with a connection to the vibrancy of the city, while allowing views of Auckland's natural beauty, from the Waitakere Ranges to the Waitematā Harbour.

Its flexible convention and event space can cater for up to 4,000 people across 32,500 sqm. The configurable spaces over four levels present opportunities for a wide range of events including theatre capacity for 2,850 and up to 33 meeting rooms.

Tourism New Zealand's Bjoern Spreitzer adds: *"We look forward to welcoming international conference delegates back to New Zealand, with new venues and new opportunities for learning and collaboration."*



For information on holding your next conference in New Zealand, head to: businessevents.newzealand.com

Putting People & Experiences First

Adelaide, Australia is an innovative destination known for putting people and experiences at the centre of business events. The Adelaide Convention Centre is playing a key role in helping associations planners enrich their conference programs through facilitating valuable connections.

Over recent years, Adelaide has witnessed an investment explosion in innovation and infrastructure across a broad range of industries, enabling clients to leverage the Adelaide Convention Centre's extensive local networks to provide market leading delegate experiences.

"The Adelaide Convention Centre team proactively identifies conferences with potential links to local innovation neighbourhoods as a way of assisting associations enhance their conference programs," says Melissa Reilly, Head of Sales, Adelaide Convention Centre. *"Adelaide is home to many global thought leaders and decisions makers. Our team creates meaningful connections with these*

subject matter experts and business leaders to leverage incredibly exciting opportunities for conference organizers and delegates alike. It's all about creating a unique value proposition."

The emergence of Adelaide's innovation hub, Lot Fourteen, is but one of many examples of the opportunities available. Lot Fourteen is home to the Australian Space Agency and countless global tech companies dedicated to showcasing some of the world's future industries, including artificial intelligence and cyber security.

Adelaide's thriving space ecosystem comprises more than 80 space-related organizations, many of which are based at Lot Fourteen. The burgeoning space sector provides conference planners a realm of potential collaboration opportunities.

Hand-in-hand with the growth of the space industry in Adelaide has been the evolution of the Australian Space Forum, a bi-annual event at the Adelaide Convention Centre which brings together the best from Australia's space industry and around the world. Starting out as a one day seminar for 130 people in 2016, the latest forum (now managed by The Andy Thomas Space Foundation), included a full-day plenary and sold out 2,000sqm exhibition featuring 65 industry exhibitors and drawing 900+ in-person and virtual participants. The next scheduled

event - the 14th Australian Space Forum slated for October 2022 - will again grow, this time incorporating an industry dinner to welcome national and international delegates.

According to the Chair of the Andy Thomas Space Foundation and former Chair of the Space Industry Association of Australia, Michael Davis AO, *"The Adelaide Convention Centre has played a key role in supporting the space sector in Australia, and will continue to do so by providing the perfect venue for bringing together the key players in our internationally-recognized industry."*

"Over the past five years, the collaborations that were first discussed at the International Astronautical Congress and across the thirteen editions of the Australian Space Forum are now providing careers and economic opportunities for an increasing number of professionals and businesses throughout Australia. In addition, the Adelaide Convention Centre's proximity to Lot Fourteen allows our delegates to easily connect with space industry stakeholders to further enable the all-important networking and business exchange outside of the conference formalities."



ADELAIDE RIVERBANK

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MIKE CANNON-BROOKES
Atlassian Co-founder

A HOME FOR TECH GIANTS

For Mike Cannon-Brookes, billionaire tech co-founder and VC investor, Sydney has played an important role in his mission to help the world collaborate. Co-founding Atlassian in 2002 with a \$10K credit card and a very basic office in the backstreets of Sydney's CBD, Mike was able to tap into Sydney's innovative culture to propel his software company into the billions.

Now he plans to continue championing a start-up culture in the heart of Sydney with Atlassian's new HQ in Tech Central, which puts Sydney on the map as a global technology hub.

If you're looking for an event location where you can be inspired with the same 'have a go' attitude, it's got to be Sydney.

Visit besydney.com.au to plan your next business event.

