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AI & the Curation of Association Knowledge

The exponential rise of ChatGPT has opened up a vast array of possibilities for associations. Since its release in 2020, it has garnered significant attention and success, owing to its capacity of 175 billion parameters, making it the largest publicly available language model in existence. With its remarkable capabilities, including text generation, machine translation, and question answering, it has emerged as a valuable tool for organizations of all sizes and types.

As AI chatbots continue to evolve and become more widespread, they are likely to impact labor market outcomes. Depending on the industries and job roles, algorithms may complement workers' competencies and increase their productivity or significantly decrease the employability of humans.

Understanding these trends is critical for policymakers, executives, and individuals, as they are likely to shape the types of jobs that will be in high demand, the nature of tasks that individuals will have to perform, and the skills required to succeed in the labor market.

On the associations' front, AI has the potential to revolutionize their operations, making them more efficient, effective, and impactful. The most significant advantage is the potential to automate repetitive and mundane tasks, freeing up staff time for higher-value activities like developing new programs and services or engaging with members.

Furthermore, AI algorithms can analyze data on member behavior and preferences, enabling associations to offer

personalized content, services, and recommendations, thereby increasing member engagement and loyalty. Predictive analytics can also assist associations with decision-making, leading to better outcomes and a more strategic approach to association management.

While these developments mark only the beginning, they call for AI ethics, accuracy, inclusivity, and regulation. Democratization of AI is a commendable idea; however, it is increasingly challenging to determine the authenticity of information and differentiate between fake and real news for instance.

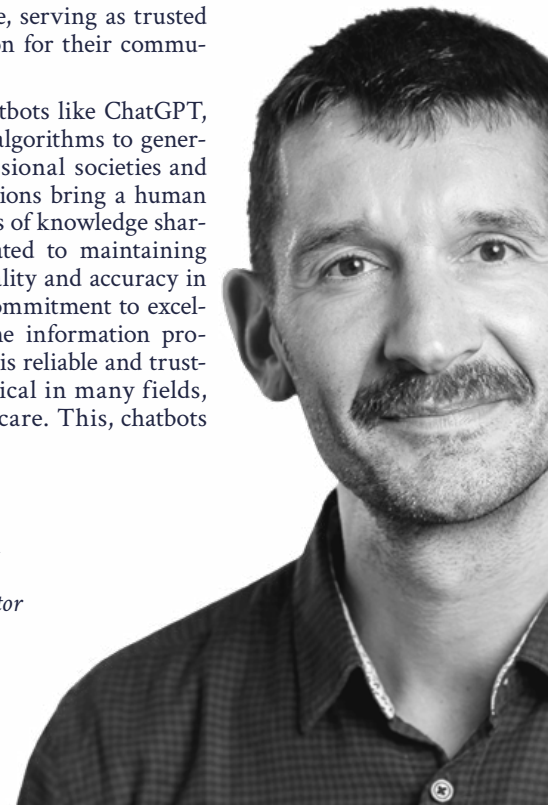
Associations, by their very nature, are communities of individuals who share a common interest or profession. This shared interest leads to the accumulation of knowledge and expertise over time, as members collaborate, share insights, and build upon each other's contributions. As a result, associations become curators and creators of knowledge, serving as trusted sources of information for their community and beyond.

Unlike automatic chatbots like ChatGPT, which rely solely on algorithms to generate responses, professional societies and non-profits organizations bring a human element to the process of knowledge sharing. They are dedicated to maintaining high standards of quality and accuracy in their content. This commitment to excellence ensures that the information provided by associations is reliable and trustworthy, which is critical in many fields, starting with healthcare. This, chatbots simply can't match.



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Establishing a clear revenue strategy is crucial for associations. Nonetheless, generating profits raises a debate among many of them, as they question whether it aligns with their fundamental values, write Kadrant law firm's Giulia Mauri and Andréa Petemba.



Building Back Better Series

Embracing Equity with a Female Touch

In this chapter of our Building Back Better series, the story we share is about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) seen through the eyes of female leaders, trailblazers, and change-makers of the international association community. In the framework of Boardroom's new partnership with the 'Women Who Advance Associations' initiative, this article takes a closer look at common principles and challenges and tailor-made solutions voiced by female association executives working in the medical field.

Words Vicky Kaffa

In their unique role as gatherers of diverse people and organizations from different ages, backgrounds and professional experience, associations are the best advocates for the importance of DEI practices in driving transformation for a more sustainable world. Even more so when the champions of this transformation are determined women who know all too well what it means to fight for the right of equity, both on a personal and on a professional level.

A COMMON APPROACH

The 'DEI trend' is actually a fundamental shift in our approach to life and work without which societies cannot move forward (at least not in the right sustainable direction). Looking into the medical sector, the equity is key to research and patient treatment. The objective is the same in all sub-sectors of medicine: equal, accessible and advanced healthcare for all by means of engaging the whole care eco-system.

"RDI's end goal is the delivery of high-quality health and social care to everybody around the world, across all countries and across all rare diseases. Equity facilitates equal opportunity to attain the greatest level of health and well-being - Leaving No One Behind," says Flaminia Macchia, Former Executive Director, Rare Diseases International (RDI).

This common target is the guiding light for medical associations to empower patients and provoke political change. *"Our approach is truly holistic and totally embracing equity: by raising the voice of patients from the grassroots and reaching healthcare professionals and high-level policymakers, we enable evidence-based policymaking and subsequently the improvement of healthcare services provided to patients. As a result, patients live longer and better,"* says Androulla Eleftheriou, Executive Director, Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF).

Inclusion in medical cases is more than just equal treatment. Sharon Ashton, Open Academy & Events Director, EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe, says: *"We strive to give people living with a rare disease more than a voice, we give them a seat at the table, as equal peers alongside healthcare professionals, companies and policymakers, to design solutions and make informed decisions about how research is shaped, data is collected, how medicines are developed, and care pathways are designed."*

NOT A SIMPLE TASK

Even though the heart of these advocates is in the right place, the obstacles to reach the desired goal are many. Some are unforeseen and hard to overcome as they have nothing to do with the sector itself. *"Being international naturally means advocating for equity, but it also means we face challenges that affect the globe. They are linked to the economy hit by external elements, such as COVID19 and the war in Ukraine: costs of services and interest of policymakers in EU health are a few examples,"* says Catherine Hartmann, Executive Director, Medical Nutrition International Industry.

Others have to do with lack of awareness and limited funds, as Eleftheriou explains: *"One of the major challenges we face is the lack of political will or financial resources to develop the infrastructure*

needed for service improvement, including disease-specific registries. Another major issue is the absence of patient associations in countries affected by the disease. This weakens the patients' voice in those countries and hinders the work of TIF."

RESULTS COME FROM DRIVEN WOMEN

Overcoming such hurdles is what these women have set out to do in ways that differ from one organization to another, depending on the needs and the resources available, but always with an open mind. Ariane Brusselmans, Director of Conferences, International AIDS Society, *"the first thing to do is to set the DEI criteria for your organization, try measure where you stand and where you want to be. It will be very different depending on the sector that you are working in."*

In fact, change starts from within one's own organization in order to then be able to help others. Ashton describes their own actions: *"We recently undertook a literature review and produced an internal report with recommendations on how to make our events, both in-person and online, more accessible for neurodiverse people and those living with disabilities."*

As always, collaboration and dialogue are essential. *"I have included in our DEI initiatives people from around the world of a wide range of age groups and both men and women, so that we in Asia can benefit from not only regional but also global perspectives. I have developed partnerships with organizations from within the region, but also global bodies like the UN and WHO. We encourage and promote other organizations too, and that openness has added strength to our organization,"* says Ruby Panwankar, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Association of Allergy Asthma and Clinical Immunology (APAAACI).

Collaboration opens the door for larger-scale actions like the campaign Macchia took part in. *"RDI led the international campaign towards the first-ever United Nations General Assembly Resolution on PLWRD and their families which recognizes that PLWRD may require specific action and support to enjoy equal access to benefits and services in education, employment, and health, and to promote their full, equal, and meaningful participation in society."*

Listed here is but a mere sample of the ambitious actions undertaken by Women Who Advance Associations. The wave of diversity, equity, and inclusion is only getting bigger and the female touch is doing wonders to get society the perspective it needs for a more sustainable future.

This article features women who were chosen as part of the 'Women Who Advance' initiative, an effort that recognizes the exceptional talents of women in the international association community. These women were announced on International Women's Day and were selected based on their leadership, innovative thinking, and efforts towards promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. To learn more about this initiative, please visit womenwhoadvance.eu.



Building Self-Discipline in Today's Workplace

Special Boardroom contributor **Ole Petter Anfinssen**, Executive Director of EDBAC and DBA Research Associate at Henley Business School, UK, explains why self-discipline is key to reaching one's desired goals.



It could be argued that the current societal environment, along with technological advancements and generational changes, has led to a detrimental level of co-dependency, resulting in individuals lacking in self-discipline. This, in turn, has led to the creation and support of individuals with a "snowflake" mentality, who struggle to cope with changes in the

workplace such as increased workloads, faster pace of work, and heightened levels of stress, which are influenced by financial and political instability.

In that regard, self-discipline is an invaluable skill, but which is often overlooked. Self-discipline builds character while supporting the ability to achieve goals, and it

helps to manage the accumulative pressure to deliver on targets.

Self-discipline is crucial to any working environment, maybe now more than ever as the complexity presented by thousands of daily impulses are challenging our focus and ability to concentrate - decreasing our capability to manoeuvre

our behaviour to reach desired goals. For instance, many people are increasingly lacking the ability to avoid cravings, and self-discipline can definitely help in that area.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Case in point: the concept of New Year's resolutions, where every year we make sincere pledges to change our lives and reinvent ourselves when the clock strikes midnight. Each time around we convince ourselves that we will be able to completely change our (bad) routines and habits overnight - with the underpinning belief that a fresh start will get us there.

The same pattern drags throughout the year. When we realize, we won't be able to stick to our resolution we start with "Next Monday". But as we know... the right Monday never comes. We hit Monday, fail to follow through, and instead of trying for Tuesday, we say to ourselves "Wait and see... next Monday will be the right Monday, then we will start." This goes on until the following year again where we start over. Sounds familiar?

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT

Hence, it is crucial to comprehend the notion of self-discipline, when it comes to attaining personal objectives - and not the ones of other people. It involves regulating one's feelings, thoughts, and emotions, and directing one's actions towards accomplishing self-set objectives. Assessing self-discipline in this manner enables us to anticipate diverse results.

But the question remains: "How can we develop and strengthen self-discipline?"

Firstly, focus is crucial when trying to accomplish your goals. To begin with, make it a priority to avoid distractions that might disrupt your focus. Secondly, concentrate on the goal you have set for yourself and not the obstacles along the way, otherwise a collision is to be expected. Thirdly, stick to the strategies and plans you have made for yourself - and by doing so, practice self-discipline while avoiding side-tracks.

Improving self-discipline is a necessity in achieving your goals, especially when managing the constant barrage of decisions we face daily. The never-ending cycle of deciding between alternatives, such as A or B, implementing a plan, or choosing between strategies X and Y, can be a mentally draining and overwhelming experience for many. The key to success lies in exercising self-discipline and following through on necessary actions even when it feels challenging. This concept is known as "*The Pain Paradox of Decision-Making*" (Vaden, 2012, p. 9), which "*is the idea that short-term easy leads to long-term difficulty, while the short-term difficulty leads to long-term easy*" (Vaden, 2012, p. 9).

Think of developing self-discipline like training a muscle - you will become fitter and stronger!

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8 tips to strengthen and cultivate self-discipline.

1. Work on your focus and try to increase concentration on the tasks at hand.
2. Eliminate temptations, work on your ability to resist cravings.
3. Familiarise yourself with your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Engage in physical activity and adopt a healthy diet.
5. Do not wait for the moment to be perfect, as it never will be.
6. Make sure to take breaks and switch off, so you get time to rest.
7. Remember to treat yourself, but do not overindulge, and celebrate your wins.
8. Do not be too hard on yourself and remember that it is human to make mistakes. Just put it behind you and move forward.

By working on these 8 habits and routines you can develop and strengthen your own self-discipline, and, in the end, achieve your desired goals. In short, make success a habit.

Financial Support That Works

Over the last three years associations learned the hard way that nothing is written in stone and that they need to be prepared for all scenarios, good and bad. The ability to adapt to different situations is not acquired easily, but having a stable financial basis definitely helps the process. That is when the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC)'s special Fund for associations becomes an indispensable tool for the carefree organization of conferences.

Words Vicky Koffa

As Paul Gruijthuijsen, Project Manager of the Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF), explained to Boardroom some time ago, *"the VGF is an independent foundation set up in the late 1980s. Our aim is to take away or reduce any financial concerns conference organizers might have when starting the initial preparations of an international conference in the Netherlands. In order to support them, we've founded the VGF in which you will find two schemes, the Pre-financing scheme and the Guarantee scheme, with the option to apply for one or for both of them."*

In practice, the Pre-financing scheme offers some financial support in the beginning of the organization of the conference when invoices need to be paid in order to start off the conference, but the income from registration has not yet kicked in. With the second option, Guarantee scheme offers a sort of financial insurance, up to €90,000 in case the conference ends up having fewer delegates than anticipated, resulting in a financial deficit for the association. Both services come free of charge for the organizer (regardless of the size of the conference) as long as the event is held in the Netherlands for more than one day and the organizer applies for them eight months before the conference.



VGF IN ACTION

The special fund gives the Netherlands a strong selling point when it comes to choosing the next conference destination. Russel Hale, General Manager at Excellence in Pediatrics Institute, says: *“When discussing with the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions in February 2020 about organizing our Excellence in Pediatrics Conference (EIP), right from the*



beginning it was clear that the VGF scheme placed the Netherlands above other destinations in terms of the partnership and support offered by the host city/country.”

At the time, the association was planning their 12th conference in Amsterdam in December 2020, but with onsite meetings cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID pandemic (the 12th and the 13th conferences took place virtually in 2020 and 2021), the application was moved to the 14th Excellence in Pediatrics conference in 2022.

The competitive edge the Netherlands have against other destinations with this unique initiative is obvious for associations looking to alleviate their financial burden. Hale confirms: *“The scheme’s existence was factored in when we decided to host the conference in Amsterdam. We were impressed by the city’s confidence in hosting meetings, and the VGF scheme demonstrates the city’s commitment to organizing and supporting successful conferences. Even more, it meant EIP were determined to organize the conference in Amsterdam in 2022 instead of moving to another city, even if we had already announced Amsterdam as the host city for the cancelled meetings in 2020 and 2021.”*

The association opted to apply for both schemes as this seemed most beneficial for the annual event. *“Both schemes are well-targeted to cover the different needs of conference organizers and associations. As always, when organizing a conference, many of the production costs occur early in the process while the revenues are collected later on and closer to the dates the meeting takes place. The Pre-financing scheme is a brilliant idea to help the organizers overcome the financial gaps early in the production process. It was also offered at zero interest, meaning no additional costs were incurred.*

Similarly, the Guarantee scheme is also an excellent idea since it gives the organizers confidence to select Amsterdam as the hosting city, not just as a destination, but as a partner throughout the whole process of hosting a live face-to-face meeting,” continues Hale.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

The financial security the Dutch idea provides becomes even more invaluable considering the ease of access associations have to it. The application process is as smooth, transparent and straightforward as it gets, with an experienced and willing to help team supporting interested clients every step of the way.

Benefiting from the fund gives associations a boost on a psychological, financial and practical level to go on with their event no matter the difficulties. *“For a conference organizer to have this kind of support is highly reassuring by bridging the financial gaps and minimizing the economic risks even when the environment is stable. As it happened, it gave us, in addition, the confidence to go through the extreme challenges posed by face-to-face meetings during the COVID pandemic, with the end result being the successful hosting of the meeting in Amsterdam in December 2022,”* says Hale.

At no extra cost, the VGF seems too good to be true, but the thought behind it is simple: the more international business visitors come to the Netherlands the better it is for the economy. *“Hosting international conferences in the Netherlands creates jobs and generates a great economic impact,”* concludes Gruijthuisen.

To know more about the Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF) get in touch with paul@cgfiholland.nl



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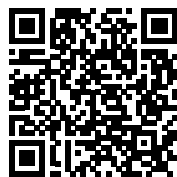
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IMEX Frankfurt Set to Power Planners in Creating Experiences

With 3,000 buyers registered so far, buyer demand for IMEX Frankfurt in May continues to track upwards. This is a clear indication of the industry's appetite to come together at the show, taking place 23 – 25 May, to address challenges and build forwards.

GLOBAL EXHIBITORS ANNOUNCE MAJOR LAUNCHES

The wide variety of suppliers lined up to exhibit span the world and include: Europe – Germany, France, Spain and Croatia; North & South America – Peru along with Boston and Georgia; Asia – Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and Malaysia. Sarawak, for instance, will have its own stand for the first time and will also be joined by the region's Tourism Minister.

Despite bumpy economic headwinds, demand for in-person events is strong and many parts of the global market have responded with new investments and enhanced attendee experiences. IMEX Frankfurt will be the stage for several important news announcements including Cairns Convention Centre, which is set to re-open soon following a major refurbishment and expansion.

EVERGREEN MEETS HUMAN NATURE

Education programming centres on IMEX's 2023 Talking Point – 'Human Nature' – which gives attendees the chance to learn and embrace skills such as public speaking, experiential design, emotional intelligence as a leadership skill, focused attention and more.

An extensive, free programme of 150 educational and networking events starts with education for specialist audiences the day before the show, on Monday 22 May, followed by six tracks of general learning that run Tuesday to Thursday on the show floor's Inspiration Hub.

1. Technology and innovation: Here attendees can delve into new technologies or learn how to increase their use and variety of technology to enhance, measure and improve their events.

2. Trends and research: Industry-leading organizations and associations – including SITE, EIC, MMGY and AMEX – are set to release new or updated research and offer guidance on what it means for the future of events.

3. People and planet: IMEX's People & Planet Village is home to best practice, activations and advice from those at the forefront of sustainability. Education and discovery sessions include a close look at UN Sustainable Development Goal no 6: water.

4. Business practices: Planners currently need fresh insights and ideas for navigating change including how to manage inflationary pressures, attract new talent and motivate remote teams. According to Eszter Mattiasich-Aszody from Siemens Healthineers and international crisis leader Thomas Lahnthaler, these leadership and life lessons can come from surprising sources, such as children.

5. Experience design: Creating an enduring sense of belonging or engaging a dispersed community ranks high on list for many event planners. In his case study presentation, Brian Allan, founder of Rock Your Business, will

reveal what it took to bring together Ukrainian refugee children through his Choral Singing Workshops.

6. Event marketing: *"We live in a neuroscience-based world where understanding the values participants bring to an event can power its success,"* says David Allison. Allison will be joined by Google's Megan Henshall and founder of Storycraft Lab, Naomi Clare, in *How to measure and manifest belonging for events: A collaboration between Valuegraphics and the Google Experience Institute (Xi).*

"While doing business and powering industry growth sit at the heart of our forthcoming show, IMEX Frankfurt is designed to deliver an enriching, broad experience that ripples further than the eye can see. We recognise that creating experiences, not events, is more important than ever," sums up Carina Bauer, CEO of the IMEX Group.

Association Focus, taking place on Monday 22 May at KAP Europa, is divided into two streams. One is designed for association leaders, the other for association event professionals. Event design, membership growth, equity and commercial strategy all top the agenda of the topical and interactive programme.

IMEX Frankfurt takes place 23 – 25 May 2023. To register go to imex-frankfurt.com

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FEATURE

Rethinking Your Business Models

The pandemic has affected the business operations of associations, especially those that heavily relied on revenue from in-person events and sponsorships. To adapt and become more crisis-resistant, European and international organizations are exploring new ways of generating income. Boardroom's Special Feature delves into this topic, with numerous contributors offering insights into how associations can diversify their revenue streams.

Pivoting for Resilience: Understanding Member Motivations for Better Business Models

Nicole Kaijser, AC Forum's Education Officer, explores the transition from a membership-based model to a product-based model, the importance of identifying the needs and motivations of members, and the potential pitfalls of alienating certain members in the process.

In response to the many challenges brought by the pandemic, associations are being forced to take a closer look at their business models in order to explore new, more crisis-resistant revenue streams. It could be a challenge to find an association willing to say that they have (or rather haven't) 'cracked it' and subsequently now have the blueprints for a perfect model that doesn't rely in-part on event-driven revenue, but it's worth considering some of the key components of pivoting slightly from a membership-based model to a product-based model.

Carefully identifying the needs and interests of members and non-members alike must be top of the agenda in order to develop products that are relevant, marketable and profitable. This transition however requires careful planning and execution, and organizations must ensure that any new revenue streams align with the organization's mission and values, and their commitment to serving their members and the wider community.

The most important consideration is the motivations of one's members - who can be classified into three categories: *joiners*, *buyers*, and *status-seekers*.

Joiners are motivated by a sense of belonging and community. They join associations primarily to connect with like-minded individuals and participate in activities and events that align with their interests. For these members, the traditional membership model may be more attractive, as it provides a sense of belonging and access to exclusive events and resources.

Buyers, on the other hand, are motivated by the value of the products and services that an association provides. They are less interested in community and more interested in what the association can offer them in terms of tangible products and services. These members may be more likely to be attracted to a product-based model that provides access to products and services that meet their ongoing needs.

Finally, *status-seekers* are motivated by the prestige and exclusivity of an association. They are attracted to associations that offer a certain level of status and prestige, and are willing to pay a premium for exclusive access to events and resources. For these members, the traditional membership model may be more attractive, as it provides access to

exclusive events and resources that are not available to non-members, but there may also be interest in exclusive products and services.

When considering a pivot towards product-based model, it is extremely important to avoid alienating one's joiners and status-seeker members. However, by carefully identifying and mapping the needs and motivations of their members, product offerings that appeal to a broad range of members can be created. For example, an association may offer a premium membership tier that provides access to exclusive events and resources for the joiners and status seekers, while also offering a range of products and services that meet the needs of buyers.

In conclusion, when considering any kind of shift in revenue streams, it's important to do the ground work by mapping out your member base, analysing its needs and motivations and always staying true to your association's mission and values.

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

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Putting the Business in Your Business Model

Many association executives have been embracing reactionary thinking in the past few years. As they adapt their business models to deal with multiple crises, they have realized that stagnant cycles are dangerous, and they need to adopt "crisis-proof" strategies to manage their association activities. However, implementing such strategies is not an easy task. In this article, **Dianna Steinbach**, Board Member and Programming Chair of ESAE, explores some ways that associations can become future-proof.

MANAGE LIKE A FOR-PROFIT

One forward thinking association executive recently said, *"You can't make a bunch of value and then hope members will pay for it. You need to plan to make money so you can expand the value."* This translates into evaluating what your members would need regardless of what economic, political or professional climate they face, and recognizing that offering multiple "all-weather" value items will increase the chances that, in good or bad times, you will capture enough of the market share to remain relevant and hopefully grow revenue.

Evaluate your customer mix today and the larger industry mix that you may not yet have captured. Who makes up most of the profession or industry you serve? What do they have in common? Given the Boomer generation demographics, do you have a significant number of business owners who will need a succession plan soon? Is there about to be a brain-drain of knowledge leaving the field? Is there a shortage of people entering your industry? Is there legislation that can change the playing field?

BUILD A CULTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

Then, what would it take to build an eventual toolkit of programs, events or resources to address the top three items that you identify?

It may not require brand new programs either. Where can you strengthen your existing offering or freshen up benefits to meet challenges anew? Your ultimate goal is to surround your member or potential member within a solution bubble so, as they flip through their top challenges, your organization keeps popping up from all sides.

This means constantly having something in update or development stages. Today's instant gratification world makes the need for fresh solutions even more necessary to remain valuable. That alone can be a business model shift for organizations that have traditionally had a routine value proposition of a conference, an accreditation, regular reports. To move to an ongoing R&D model, you'll need to strategically carve out time and resources to weave new projects into your existing responsibilities. Take a page from the product development world by considering how you can implement a stage-gate process to put structure to your development. This is the project management approach with five phases: idea, scoping, business case, development and launch.

PLANT THE RIGHT LEADERSHIP

While evaluating your customer and needs mix, also evaluate your association leadership mix. Do you have business-minded

and innovative thinkers on your board? Do you have representation from today's majority and tomorrow's? This goes beyond today's drive for diversity, equity and inclusion and strikes at the heart of solid business practice - you need people who can help you run your association as wisely as they do their own businesses.

If you have successful or innovative for-profit companies in your industry, but may not be able to invite them onto your board, how are you tapping them for more than their sponsorship and exhibition funds? Whether informally through one-on-one conversations or through a supplier council, tap these business leaders to see where they are planning next and to learn the tactics they have used to fortify, diversify and grow their operations.

Not only will you strengthen your strategic support for key decisions, you also may find your next program partner.

FIND THE BLUE OCEAN

A timeless approach to business model shifts is the Blue Ocean Strategy, which proposes to create an uncontested market space that creates and captures new demand, among other things. In 2022, the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors created a blue ocean. We recognized members

have a difficult time recruiting labor and profit margins are razor thin. Technology would need to be part of the solution to these issues. Yet, the broader industry lags on many innovation curves and there is a big gap between the technological advancements of large and publicly traded companies, and the rest of the industry. Rather than leverage the usual answer of conference panels sharing how members improved, while chasing tech providers to sponsor existing business events, we partnered with a tech investment and consulting firm to offer a unique matching event between forward-thinking companies of various sizes and unique tech providers.

Tech firms paid to present rotating pitch sessions and attendees could set up one-on-one private meetings with them to discuss mutual opportunities. Some attendees were large enough to possibly invest in this new tech, while others might become new customers. The overall result was a first-ever industry tech incubator that made larger margins than anticipated and will grow significantly in year two.

MAKE OR BUY

Buying can mean multiple things in the association world: merging two associations together, purchasing a publication or event, investing in a third party's certification or program concept or purchasing existing research capabilities instead of building your own. Key to building internal confidence in a buy strategy is having a few board members who have done this in their own businesses. They are more apt to encourage it within the association and can be valuable resources in understanding how to accomplish the negotiations and integrations required.

Right now is an optimal time for many associations, societies, publishers and event providers to consider selling or merging. After the last few years of instability and surprises, there is security in combining forces to weather future economic storms. If the right combination is found, both parties can increase their audience or value portfolio while also gaining the expertise to manage and expand it.

Such deals can focus on a single program, event or item or can be a larger merging of two organizations, based on what makes the most sense for both parties. They also can involve a partnership buy-in for a percentage ownership of the item desired. This allows flexibility of funding and can be a first step for an association into the world of buying solutions.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

To determine how to structure a merger or purchase, look at what both parties value most. The biggest obstacle in the association world to mergers is the fear of losing identity, revenue, value and more. When leadership focuses on preserving points of critical value with an open mind, the fear of losing is overtaken by an excitement about gaining.

In one example, an educational conference with a small exhibition was growing smaller and needed to align with a larger industry event in their market. But their leadership still wanted to maintain their revenue stream from exhibitors and attendees. The larger group wanted to expand the audience they could offer their exhibitors and found value in mingling the different attendees into one main industry event. Their biggest mutual concern was losing exhibitor revenue to one another.

The solution was to co-locate the smaller event during the time of the larger, in a way that allowed the smaller event to have a pavilion of exhibitors within the larger exhibition. They identified which exhibitors each had brought in for the last three years. The original owner of those relationships would keep that revenue. A few mutual exhibitors were identified and they agreed on a profit split. Anyone new would go into the new pavilion. For every pavilion exhibitor the smaller group brought in, they received a percentage of the profit margin. Any sponsorships they sold to the smaller conference they kept. On the attendee side, the smaller group could leverage the larger group's meeting space and hotel block, continue to charge for their niche education to their followers, and only pay for services such as speakers, A/V and food

and beverage. Those niche attendees also received free access to the larger group's education, which was strategically staggered so participants could attend both.

The smaller group was able to maintain their community's legacy value and revenue stream, without as much overhead expense or minimums risk. The larger group gained more visitors for their exhibitors, the prestige of strengthening their reputation as "the" event for their profession and reduced the number of events it had to compete with for participant time and investment.

LAY THE RIGHT FOUNDATION FOR A WEATHER-PROOF PLAN

Critical in any business model shift, diversification strategy or acquisition approach is to start with the right decision makers who can think innovatively for the association and create a culture of ongoing development through gradual steps that can gain trust through success. Then your team can gain the consideration they need for solid business cases and work to reduce the common fears or misconceptions those business moves might spark. Working from the belief that there can always be a solution allows you to avoid the many pitfalls that keep plans from even getting started.

With these elements as the base, you can cultivate creative ideas, greater organizational flexibility and take manageable risks, all as you maintain ongoing services members value. Before you know it, you'll be closer to "crisis-proof."

Dianna Steinbach is Board Member and Programming Chair of the European Society of Association Executives and Chief Operating Officer for the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors. For more information about ESAE, with which Boardroom has an exclusive partnership, visit www.esae.eu

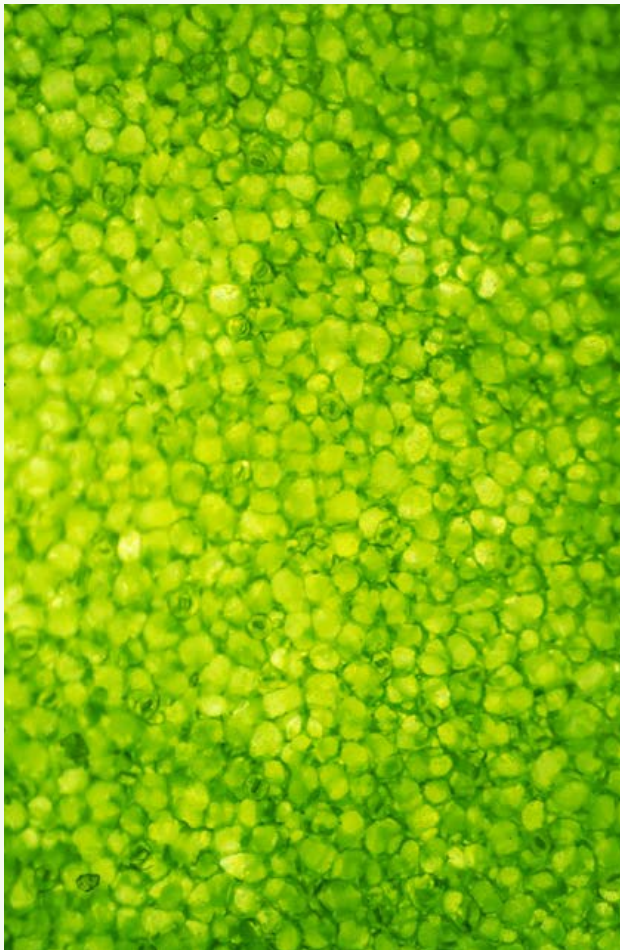


Scan this QR code to read the unedited version of Dianna's article

Six Steps to Building a Successful Business Model

A business model is a blueprint for success. Knowing who your target audience is, what they want, and what your value proposition is are essential. Here are six tips to turn a business model into reality.

Words Mark Frissora



Now more than ever, leaders are looking for ways to succeed and they're looking at business models for guidance. However, many leaders mistakenly believe business models are meant to serve as a one-size-fits-all template. Based on my professional experience, I know that a business model is nothing more than a fancier way of saying "business strategy."

There are hundreds of different business model approaches and strategies. A successful business model will often include a detailed description of the audiences you are targeting; what goods, services, or products you are offering; and the cost of production of those goods and services.

The following factors are important to consider when developing an appropriate business model and strategy.

FOCUS ON THE CONSUMER (OR MEMBER) BASE

Before committing to any business model, it is critical for leaders to evaluate their target audience. The overall goal is to spawn innovation within an organization by adding value to the consumer experience while boosting or changing the consumer's purchasing patterns.

To better understand a consumer (or member) base or a target audience, leaders must decide who their target audience is—and then separate those individuals based on demographic, geographic, or psychographic characteristics and purchasing behaviors. Next, business leaders must ask themselves what this audience needs, and how their product or service will solve this problem.

For instance, a company may recognize a specific audience that they can target with a sub-company dedicated specifically to

that demographic. For example, there was a rising trend among millennials and Gen Z members who were showing interest in food-delivery services. Companies that noticed this assessed problems that prevented consumers from selecting dine-in options over delivery and to-go options. Companies that were already in the ride-sharing space combined their ride-share ideas with the ability to allow consumers to place mobile pickup or delivery orders from their favorite local restaurants.

DEVELOP A FOUNDATION IN COMPANY CULTURE

Regardless of how big or small an association is, showing employees that upper management cares about their employees is key to creating a great organizational culture. Taking the time to stop in various locations to speak with managers and employees of all levels makes them feel heard and supported.

Take note of the association's needs and get a feel for the current culture. If there is a lack of communication, then make that an area to improve by increasing reviews and include time to talk about employees' concerns in their role, or what they believe could use improvement.

When employees see high-level executives taking the time to develop the association across all aspects, it inspires a better organizational culture and encourages employees to work together to overcome challenges. Addressing the culture generates a feeling of togetherness and cultivates a strong organizational foundation.

CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH

If your target consumer or member base seems interested in buying your potential product or service, your next move should be to study the competitors within the marketplace. Take note of your competitors' past implementation of strategies and tactics they have used to remain competitive and relevant. Next, brainstorm different strategies your organization could execute to compete against, or even outperform, the competitor.

DETERMINE VALUE PROPOSITION

A value proposition tells your stakeholders why they should do business with your organization, instead of going to your competitors, and clearly highlights the benefits of your product or service compared to other groups.

It is important for value propositions to be flexible and allow for future innovations. For example, search engines initially aimed to create value for their customers by creating a free space for the public to research topics using coded information placed in software to make the endless stream of data and information found on the internet more accessible.

Two decades later, these same search engine companies have made endless innovations and improvements to their value proposition by adding advertising, marketing, business tools, operating systems, internet browsers, and technological gadgets.

It's critical for leaders to decide whether or not their business model will focus entirely on creating more revenue from its organization's value proposition, and whether or not the products, ideas, or services will benefit consumers in the long run.

APPROACH EXPENSES AND COSTS REALISTICALLY

Expenses are usually related to costs, which can be monetary or nonmonetary depending on a business strategy. Popular subscription services are an expensive offering, but these companies also recognized that younger people who did not have disposable income were still attracted to the services they were offering.

That allowed the subscription companies to offer members the option to pay for membership in smaller, monthly installments. Moreover, they also provide certain eligible members with discounted memberships and services to make their company's various services available to multiple consumer bases.

MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH CONSUMER BASE

Any business, regardless of its size or purpose, relies on the satisfaction of its customers, stakeholders, and members. That means it's essential to keep conducting market research to better understand future growth opportunities, such as maintaining retention rates, positive experiences, and new acquisition strategies.

While approaching members with transparency and empathy may help improve these relationships, it is also crucial to implement post-sale tactics such as membership rewards, discounts, and perks—or exclusive benefits to keep them satisfied, or to recruit future members.

Overall, a business model serves many different purposes depending on an organizations' size, purpose, and niche. Ensuring that your association has an accurate and up-to-date business model will create the maximum potential for long-term, tangible success.

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All Models Are Wrong (but some are useful)

Statistician George E.P. Box coined this aphorism in relation to his own discipline, but it's since been appropriated by almost every field of human endeavour. International Advisor to Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** explores how it applies to association business models, with a little help from his new AI assistant.

The world is a complicated place: we can only make sense of it through heuristics (mental short-cuts) and simplifications, and our perceptions are designed to ignore the vast majority of sensory data in order to build workable hypotheses about what's going on around us. Model-making is what we humans do, both consciously and automatically, *all the time*. It takes a shock to the system - a dramatic optical illusion, for example - to remind us that our models are inherently untrustworthy, and need to be carefully interrogated to identify whether, and in what way, they are genuinely useful!

When it comes to describing organizations and the way they function, we need to employ even greater scepticism about models' accuracy and usefulness. Models can fail by being over-simplistic or overly-complicated, by underestimating decision-making complexity, by lacking diversity. They may focus on the wrong variables, ignore critical external factors outside the model, or be overly static in nature.

Every time models are used, it's vital to remember what can go wrong and to

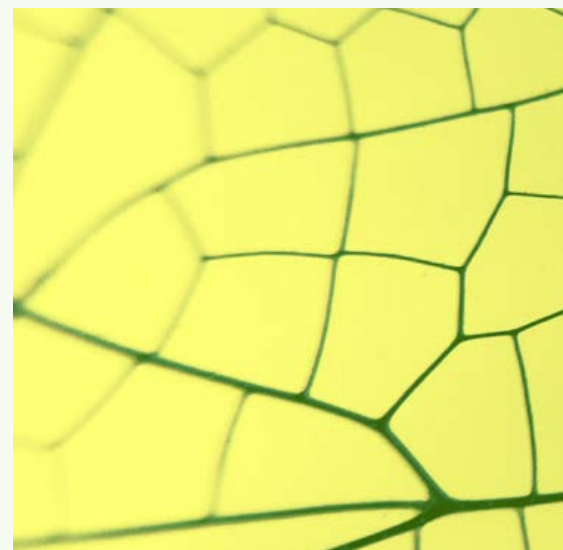
put in safeguards to prevent them being used to generate over-confident conclusions. It's also essential to be really clear about what questions a model is designed to answer: questions about efficiency or competitiveness are likely to require very different frameworks than those about engagement, creativity or inclusion. And at all times, we need to remind ourselves that "useful" doesn't necessarily mean "correct"!

ASSOCIATION BUSINESS MODELS & CHATGPT

The traditional starting point for discussions about our sector's business models appears to be "primary sources of revenue". That's certainly the case if you ask ChatGPT to generate a list of "association business models"! Alongside "membership dues and fees" as the default option, my AI assistant came up with nine different models that were actually categories or sources of revenue, from "events and conferences" to "consulting and professional services" to "certification and training". Many association CEOs will be reminded of Board strategy sessions on business models that evolved (dissolved?) into transactional

arguments about pricing and share of revenue by category of activity.

We need to do better than this to find genuinely useful models that will help us reinvent the future of our associations, and ChatGPT is an incredible source of inspiration if asked the right questions! A short exercise with some lateral thinking generated 57 additional models*, with many providing



unique starting points for analysis, fresh perspectives, previously unimagined opportunities, potential restructuring or novel relationships between stakeholders, and ideas for experimentation. Here are some of my favourite suggestions:

A query about international company business models included the options “strategic alliances”, “franchising” and “licensing”. Innovative business models and those for high uncertainty environments came up with “subscription-based models”, “freemium”, “contingency”, “employee well-being”, and - something every association could consider - “outcome-based models”. University business models included “continuing education” and “consulting-based”, whilst taking slightly more eccentric perspectives, why not consider nature-based business models such as “ecosystem services”, “biomimicry”, and “co-creation”, or even sci-fi business models such as “reputation-based” or “AI-driven”.

All of these responses are focused on activities and methodologies, and don't really address how the association is actually structured and the inter-relationships within the model. Asking ChatGPT for “business structures” rather

than “business models” overcomes this very neatly: choose from hierarchical, flat, matrix, network, team-based, functional or even holocratic (defined as where authority is distributed throughout an organization, with decisions being made collaboratively). Another query about “business philosophies” elicited “six-sigma”, “total quality management” and even “servant leadership”, adding interesting new flavours to the smorgasbord of appetizing choices.

EXPANDING THE UNIVERSE

Using an AI tool in this way doesn't help an association identify a single “correct” model, instead it dramatically expands the universe of potential models that can be creatively applied to analyze an association's current situation, to imagine its desired future reality, and to chart a range of options for moving from the former to the latter. Viewing an association and its ecosystem through multiple, widely-divergent prisms is an ideal way to gain new insights, identify new pathways, and encourage a dynamic mindset.

This avoids a major problem highlighted by Magda Mook, CEO of International

Coaching Federation: *“The concept of “static model” is just wrong on arrival. We had to change many dimensions of how we financially sustain the organization during the pandemic, and we did this very successfully.”*

An even greater challenge is to encourage all the association's stakeholders, and especially the board, to embrace a model-based way of thinking about their organization and its place in the world. Tom Reiser, CEO of the International Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasis expresses this well: *“You may have the best and most sophisticated models but if you cannot bring the board, committees, members along it may not be sustainable and may actually risk that board and staff are not working hand and glove. You need to know your audience and to bring it along on the journey.”*

This is especially true when thinking about global development issues, where traditional business models frequently fail to identify critical variables, especially with regard to cultural factors and unexpected sources of competition or collaboration.

That is when it's important to work closely with partners who have the expertise to help you build customized models that incorporate the most useful local, regional and global dimensions, such as the partner destinations that make up Global Association Hubs - Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC!

*The full listing of ChatGPT's responses to 10 ten prompts on “business models” is available on www.boardroom.global. Just scan this QR code:



Martin Sirk is International Advisor to Global Association Hubs, a partnership between Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC, which is committed to promoting the societal value of international associations, and to stimulating the discussion of important issues through events and articles such as this, which appears as part of a collaborative partnership with Boardroom.

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From Live to Bite-Sized Programmes in Emerging Markets

For IAPCO, **Marcel Ewals**, MCI's Director of Association Solutions in APAC, discusses the challenges that associations face as they emerge from the pandemic and need to diversify their revenue streams, emphasizing the importance of digital engagement.

The association industry is one of longstanding traditions. Some associations have been around for decades, some even for centuries, and therefore have seen the age of technology become an enabler changing the way associations interact and deal with members. Most have transitioned successfully from paper to paperless and have enhanced their style and means of communication. Slowly over the last few years associations have realized that there are important gaps between the way of communicating with and engaging the young generation. Some associations have deliberately brought younger members into strategic planning and future leader programs have become very popular.

A few years back association leaders started to talk about creating communities and the need to proactively engage the younger generation, whilst industry partners and exhibitors explained that marketing money was shifting to digital, and that more data was needed to justify live event spending.

Online communities sprung up to focus on online membership engagement and provide a new additional place for members to interact. Plans were made and committees were formed to address these.

Associations recognized that there were online communities appearing, mostly of a commercial nature, that started to threaten the association model as they provided a lot of value to our members, often free of charge! We saw the appearance of WebMD.com (known primarily as an online publisher of news and information pertaining to human health and well-being) and similar ones in many other sectors. But for the majority of associations the focus

remained as always on the events, which, as per tradition, had been the steadfast annual member value and cash cow of the organization.

DIVERSIFICATION OF REVENUES

As we all know, the pandemic put a halt to live event and impacted many organizations. Coming out of the pandemic, these associations need to be focused on diversification of revenues.

Let's start with an overview of the challenges that come with this to date.

- Live events are back! Associations need to focus on more than recovery, they need to embrace the new way of engaging and delivering value. Across the meetings and hospitality industries there was a loss of event talents, taking time and focus away from other aspects of association life.
- The marketplace has changed. New digital community platforms that were emerging pre-pandemic have strengthened and eaten part of the associations' pie.
- Industry sponsors started, out of sheer need during the pandemic, experimenting with their own activities. Now they want to retain the momentum and continue moving to live, free (sponsored) activities.
- A declining membership continues to pressure the budget and limit capacity.



With the above and more challenges, associations need to dive head on into making investments into transitioning the organization. On the positive side, digital acceptance has increased dramatically, as long as it is short and precise.

According to MCI's 2022 Association Engagement Index, a global benchmark study of 50+ associations across the world, we learn that members are asking for choice. Choice in communication, multiple channels and choice in engagement. The more choice the more engagement is increasing. It's all about the right channel for the right activity, often referred to as O2O2O - Online to Offline to Online... where the objective is that learning, conversations and engagement should continue 365/24/7 instead of only the traditional event - from start to finish.

NECESSARY STEPS

With the above in mind associations can determine the necessary steps to achieve this. But before you conclude that the solution is technology, let's determine "how" the members want, to interact before the "what" question. What we know is that the digital attention span is set by the likes of TikTok, that we have about 7 seconds before a user decides if he/she wants to engage in

the content or not. We also know that the majority of content is consumed on mobile devices, and only a small group consumes information on work-based devices.

With the digital acceptance being at an all-time high, now is the time to utilize the digital content in your store rooms and recycle it to good use. It will require time and money to cut down to bite-sized bits to ensure retention of the viewers. One thing that the pandemic taught us is that our digital content needs to be TV Show quality. Short, fast and to the point. New content from live events can be structured in a way it can easily be converted to this.

As we then move to the monetization question, two big factors will need to be addressed. Will there be a major segment of the data openly accessible to the community, aside from members and, what data can we extract to back this up? As community engagement stretches beyond members, paid and/or free, so does the data and the value of the communities. The end game is to commercialize this community with quality data that justifies the advertisers investment. But as associations compete with the likes of Google, the data needs to be solid. A key way of covering the investment is to look at sponsors who will support the program rollout.

A good example on one of these strategies is a small, regional association that I manage, that rolled out several series of webinars post-pandemic, open for all, hosted on YouTube Live and then available for members for a period of time, before opening it up to the public. The content itself has 3 rounds of engagement: Live, members, then non-members before reaching its shelf life. Sponsors receive lasting value as the content becomes public domain whilst the association still earns as a YouTube partner. Building on the O2O2O concept, discussion groups are created to continue the topic discussion and plug further activities.

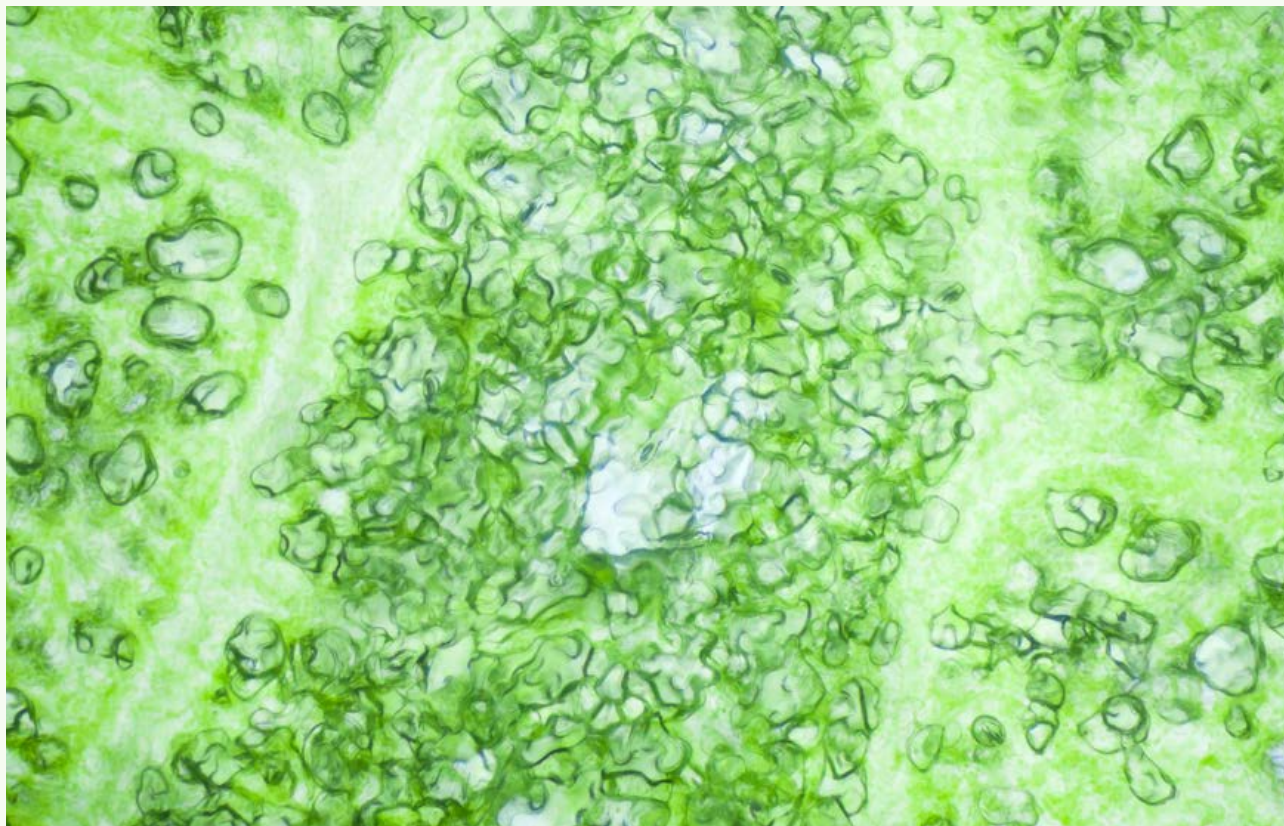
By focusing on the online engagement and the associated data, packaged properly for the sponsors to validate, you can create a substantial new revenue stream with existing content and new activities.

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



New Business Models for Associations: Mission vs. Margins?

Establishing a clear revenue strategy is widely considered crucial for associations. Nonetheless, generating profits raises a debate among many associations, as they question whether it aligns with their fundamental values of pursuing a not-for-profit goal and mission. In this article, Brussels-based Kadrant law firm's **Giulia Mauri** and **Andréa Petemba** explore the emerging business models that associations are embracing, along with the factors driving the diversification of their financing sources.



FROM TRADITIONAL FINANCING MODELS TO DIVERSIFICATION

Boardroom dedicated an entire edition to the new business models being implemented by associations, which was published in May 2019. On this occasion, various experts shared their expertise and perspectives on the changing landscape of associations' financing.

What emerged then was that associations have traditionally financed their activities thorough membership fees and, to some extent, the organization of sectorial events for their members. As correctly pointed out by Alfons Westgeest, at the time managing partner at Kellen, in his contribution, members were (and to a large extent still are) at the same time "customers" of the association and owners. Indeed, members are willing to pay membership fees to benefit from the value that the association may deliver, but they are often also the "owners" of the association since they sit on the relevant boards and may take decisions as to the financing of their association.

This business model is now being challenged by new entrants and, to a lesser extent, by some traditional associations. First and foremost, associations no longer solely rely on their core members. Their network is more and more expanding to include various stakeholders beyond their membership. The use of social media and online communication allows associations to reach audiences that may have an interest in their activities and may be willing to pay in order to benefit from some type of value proposition created by the association on purpose for such new audiences.

In addition to attracting new participants and stakeholders and deriving revenues from such new cooperation, many associations have traditionally been heavily investing in the organization of events, conferences, meetings and trade shows. According to Jeroen van Limp, Director Engagement,

Associations & Communities, MCI Benelux, this stream of revenue, in associations which are not primarily focused on advocacy, "may account for up to one third of the overall financing of the association."

Aside membership fees and similar value propositions for other stakeholders, the remaining two-thirds of an association's revenues are often generated by (i) the sale of products and programs including trainings and (ii) the creation of industry's guidelines or certifications and standards.

Furthermore, many associations now engage in project-based work. With their specialized knowledge in the particular industry they represent, organizations can serve as a valuable partner to other ventures seeking to form a consortium and participate in targeted calls for proposals. Given the wealth of knowledge about a specific sector, some associations are therefore now joining forces with the industry and acting as special advisors or consultants in European or international projects. This is an extra-source of financing that is also an important recognition of that association's work and know-how in its specific sector of competence.

ARE ASSOCIATIONS BECOMING COMMERCIAL COMPANIES?

Notwithstanding the large possibilities now open to associations to increase their revenues and diversify their sources of revenue, it appears that the sector as such remains generally shy and proper investment and financing plans continue to revolve around activities that could largely be considered as ancillary or somewhat linked to the purpose of the relevant association.

However, we believe that there is no contradiction between the pursuit of the mission of an association and the creation of investment and financing plans allowing the association to generate profits. Would the fact that associations invest in sectors that are not linked to their purpose mean

that these associations have become commercial organizations?

The answer to this query is: yes and no.

Yes, associations may now commercially behave like companies. But no, they are not and will not become commercial organizations because the revenues that they generate are used to pursue a not-for-profit goal.

In that respect, Belgium is a country that could be used as a good example of the evolution of the associative model and its financing. Until fairly recently, an association could not conduct commercial activities unless they were ancillary to its mission. Things have changed and the legislator now considers that, provided that the profits generated by such activities are used to pursue the mission and goals for which the association was created, an association is now free to carry out all sorts of commercial activities, including investing in the stock exchange or in businesses that have nothing to do with its purpose!

However, although commercial activities in a company aim to generate profits for shareholders, in an association, any profits obtained from such activities must be directed towards achieving the association's objectives.

The answer to the query we asked ourselves at the beginning of this article is therefore that commercial organizations and associations are fundamentally different and will remain so even if associations invest as companies. The DNA of associations and companies is indeed deeply different: commercial companies generate profits to distribute them to their shareholders whilst associations use profits to pursue a not-for-profit purpose.

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.

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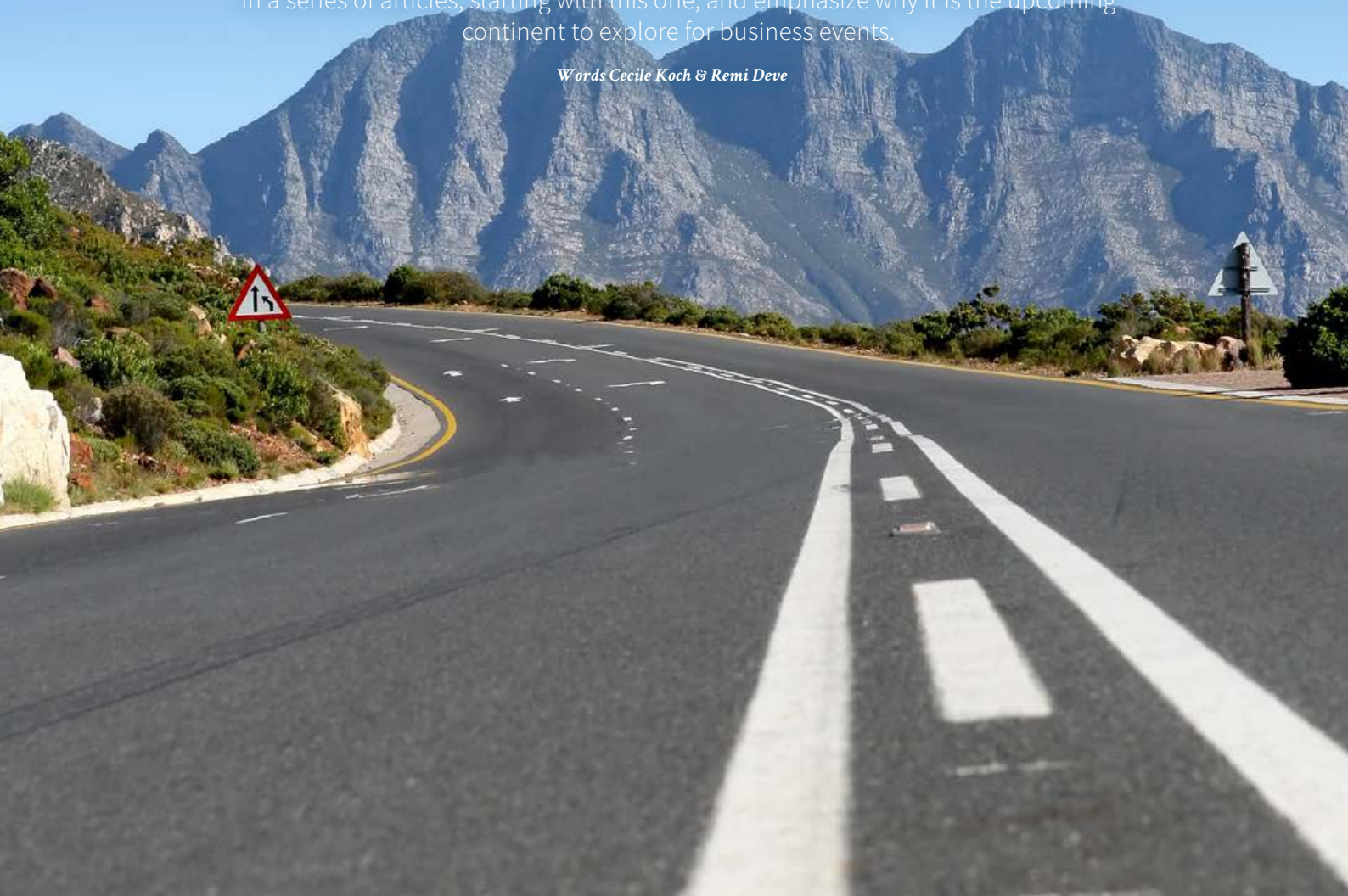
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Africa, A Continent of Opportunities for International Associations

Although you may have encountered various portrayals of Africa over the past few decades, such as - a continent in need of development, a rapidly growing economic force, a looming danger, a hub of poverty and forced migration, you name it - the reality is, as usual, more intricate. However, one fact is undeniable: the progress that Africa has achieved in recent years is remarkable. The continent is forging its own path and the potential of Africa is steadily expanding. As publishers, we aim to shed light on Africa in a series of articles, starting with this one, and emphasize why it is the upcoming continent to explore for business events.

Words Cecile Koch & Remi Deve



But why exactly turning our attention to Africa? The answer lies in two reasons: firstly, Rick Taylor from The Business Tourism Company in South Africa introduced us to the "Corridor of Africa" during an international meetings industry fair last year, which opened our eyes. Whereas previously, South Africa was the dominant African destination present at these trade shows, other African countries are now also emerging and proudly presenting themselves to international planners. This Corridor of African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and more, demonstrates that the MICE African industry is evolving into a more sophisticated state.

Rick Taylor added: *"The strategy Africa plans to pursue going forward can be summed up in the phrase 'Concentrate and dominate' - one step and one country at a time. As the African continent moves towards a state of maturity (predicted for 2030) and becomes the next supercontinent for business events, those countries with established Convention Bureau presence will be in a better position to sell to a thriving market. With 54 countries and a burgeoning array of institutions such as tourism boards, bureaux, universities, hotel groups, associations, and more, there is no shortage of potential in Africa. However, the challenge lies in building credentials, and this will require purpose, time, and focus."*

Secondly, as publishers, we have started to get requests from international associations to get more information on the congress possibilities that African countries have to offer. In fact, one of our own Boardroom Advisory Board Members, Ariane Brusselmans, Director, Conferences, International AIDS Society, even said to us: *"We just introduced a regional rotation pattern for our conferences that will enable us to be intentionally present in all regions of the world in a 5-year timespan. Africa is an important region for us as it remains the epicentre of the HIV epidemic, accounting for almost two thirds of global new HIV infections. At IAS we believe that progress happens when science, policy and activism come together, and therefore we must come to Africa to unite the global HIV response."*

Hence, our decision to initiate a series of articles that delve into various aspects of Africa such as the economy, future projects, and the development of academic, scientific, social and cultural life on an international level, along with the infrastructure available to support them. This first article in this series provides a broad overview, followed by four articles that will focus on the specific details of the four main regions of Africa, namely Southern, Northern, Western, and Eastern Africa.

AFRICAN OPPORTUNITY

Africa is shaping its own destiny and can be the "African opportunity" for international associations.

This huge continent has routinely been touted to become a future economic powerhouse as its demographic dividend pays off in the next few decades. (1,4 billion in 2023 - 2,5 billion by 2050,

i.e. 26% of the world population). However, its biggest challenge will be developing its economic and social infrastructure. In comparison to the US and Europe the forecast for GDP growth in Africa is relatively positive for 2023 (3,2% on average), but inflation (10%) in some African countries can be worrisome, mainly due the rise in food prices (IMF October 2022).

Overall many African countries will continue to fare well, despite the odds. Medium-sized economies, such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Kenya, will drive much of this growth—with predicted growth rates of 5 to 7 percent in the year ahead. On the other hand, the region's economic powerhouses (South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt) are expected to record slower growth.

There are several other reasons to look positively at the future in Africa. In 2002 the 'African Union' (AU) was founded by the 55 African countries. It developed its 'Agenda 2063' which indicated 15 'flagship projects,' identifying 15 keys to accelerate Africa's economic growth and development. Areas that have been selected are (just to name a few): the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Integrated High Speed Train Network, the African Passport, the establishment of a Single African Air-Transport Market (SAATM) and an African Virtual and E-University to increase access to continuing education, are all good signs that things are on the rise.

In fact, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA - read AIPC's take on it, right after this article) aims to promote economic integration and remove barriers to trade and movement of people across the continent, and though the African Union's Agenda 2063 hasn't yet achieved its aim of visa-free travel for all African citizens by 2023 it is a project that is still very much a stated and popular goal.

PROMISING FOR THE CONFERENCE SECTOR

This is promising for the conference sector in Africa as it offers many opportunities, but the sector also faces several challenges. These include limited infrastructure in some areas, and security concerns in some regions.

While most African capital cities can be reached more or less directly from Europe, it isn't always possible to travel from every African country to every other African country. In fact, in some cases the only way to travel from one country to another is by transiting via European hubs, which obviously means longer travel times, less economically priced flights, and added greenhouse gas emissions.

Complicating matters further, cumbersome visa restrictions can sometimes make it international travel challenging for people travelling from both within the African continent and from further afield.



Having said that, Ethiopia, with its strategic location, is a significant African hub with Addis Ababa Bole International Airport being a vital gateway to the continent. Ethiopian Airlines, the country's national carrier, has a vast network connecting the airport to 40 countries across Africa. The airport has undergone significant expansion, with modern facilities that can handle millions of passengers annually.

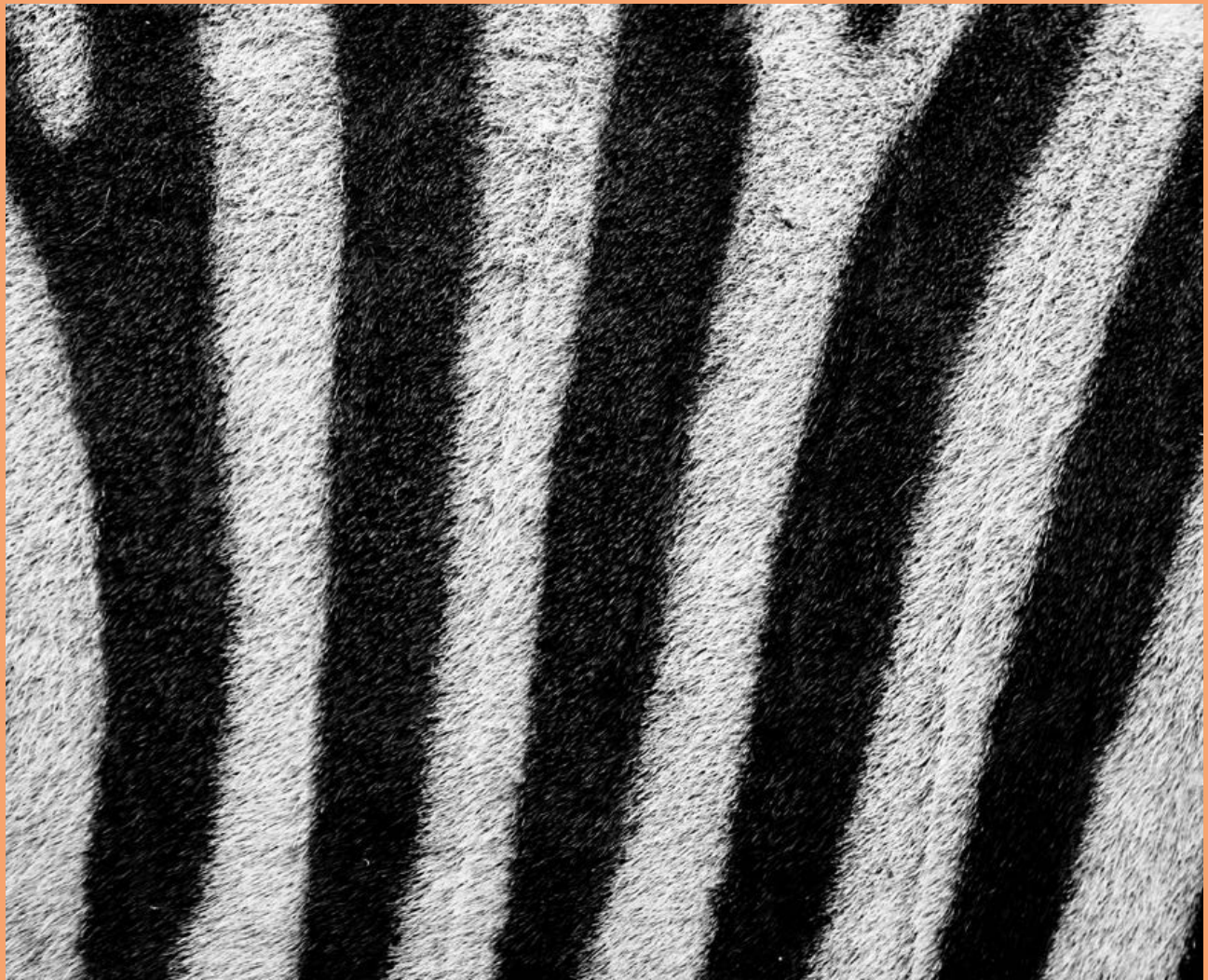
This definitely shows many solutions and proposals are on the table as to how to improve and facilitate travel to and within Africa. In that regard, several countries have already taken steps to address this issue by introducing visa-free travel for citizens of other African countries. For example, Rwanda, Ghana, and Mauritius have introduced visa-free travel policies for citizens of all African countries, while others, such as Kenya and Uganda, have introduced e-visa systems to make it easier for visitors to apply for visas online.

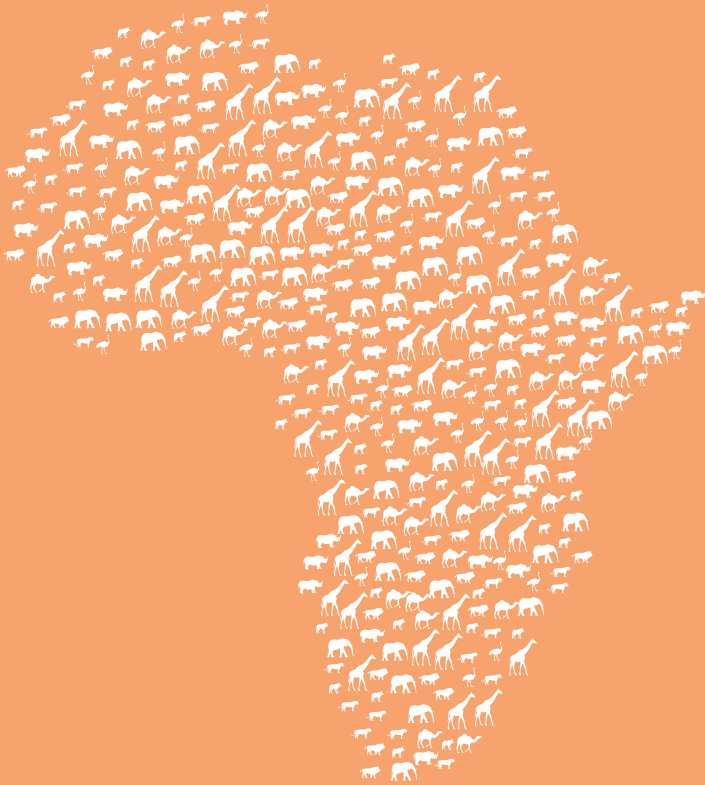
Africa's population is roughly on a par with that of India or China (1.4 billion), but even though China and India have regionally devolved power in regions and states, they still have the advantage of having centralized governments and a single currency, which

allow them to turn their huge populations into both domestic markets and economic manpower. Africa's fragmented structure, largely a result of a complicated colonial history that still has repercussions today, make things more complicated.

Saying the quiet bit out loud, one challenge facing the conference sector in Africa is the perception, often distorted by media, of the continent as an unstable and unsafe region, which can deter potential delegates from attending events. However, many countries have made significant progress in addressing security concerns and improving infrastructure, like Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya, making them more attractive destinations for conferences.

As of now, Vickie Muyanga, Regional Director of Sales Africa at Radisson Hotel Group, presents a positive picture of business events. *"Extending beyond South Africa, trends within the MICE industry on the continent indicate a return of meetings from the government, oil and gas, healthcare and sports industries, which has also given rise to smaller events as a result. In addition, climate change and food-related meetings have seen a noticeable increase"* she said.





Echoing her comment, Mungai Nfi, President of the African Society of Association Executives (AFSAE), continues: *“At AFSAE we see a very exciting and promising future of Africa as a congress destination with more and more countries taking greater interest in developing their MICE industry to international standards. We have witnessed the development of requisite supporting institutional and policy frameworks in countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia and Ghana, and the building and expansion of infrastructure such as convention centres, airports, roads, and the likes. This buoyed by the coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that promises a more connected Africa doing business with each other- can only be the icing on the cake of the continent’s potential as a congress destination.”*

In upcoming articles, we will delve into the situation of each region and provide a comprehensive overview of the MICE industry in Africa. Our focus will shift to East Africa, where we’ll take a closer look at Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya. Meanwhile, Southern Africa will encompass South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. West Africa will feature Senegal and Ghana, and North Africa will highlight Egypt Tunisia and Morocco as key destinations.

Compelling Africa

If Africa’s challenges are real, they’re not insurmountable. There are in fact many compelling reasons to give serious consideration to organizing or attending a conference in Africa.

Here are just a few:

Business opportunities: Africa is home to several rapidly growing economies, presenting a vast potential market for associations looking to expand. Holding a conference in Africa can provide an opportunity to meet with local associations and explore potential partnerships.

Support for sustainable development: Numerous African nations have taken noteworthy steps towards promoting sustainable development, such as allocating resources towards renewable energy, conservation initiatives, and eco-tourism. Notably, Rwanda and Tanzania have implemented a complete ban on plastic bags, and major hotel chains have pledged to adopt the Hotel Sustainability Basics. Additionally, governments are actively promoting eco-tourism, with Kenya leading the way. Organizing a conference in Africa presents a chance to highlight these sustainable practices and encourage their adoption within the event industry.

Legacy impacts: With the association business events industry in its development stage in Africa, there is the opportunity to establish meaningful legacy programs as a key part of hosting a conference on the continent.

Professional development: Attending a conference in Africa can provide an opportunity for professional development, including networking with professionals from across the continent, attending industry-specific workshops, and gaining insight into regional business practices.

Unique cultural experiences: Africa is a continent with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, including traditional music, dance, and food. Holding a conference in Africa can provide an opportunity for attendees to experience this diversity first-hand.

Lower costs: Compared to other regions, the cost of hosting a conference in Africa is often lower, making it an attractive destination for cost-conscious event planners. Lower costs can translate to more affordable registration fees and more significant profit margins for event organizers.

African Society of Association Executives (AFSAE): Established in 2015, this organization has as its mission to build and advance the importance and effectiveness of associations in Africa.



The Future is African: How Events Can Drive Trade, Collaboration & Innovation

Dr. Geoffrey Manyara, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa – Economic Affairs Officer at the Subregional Office for East Africa, Taubie Motlhabane, CEO of Cape Town ICC and AIPC Board Member, and Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, discuss the potential impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on the event industry.

By 2030, Africa will be home to 1.7 billion people and will have a combined business and consumer spending reaching over 6.7 trillion USD, making it the continent of the future. It is also expected that by 2035, intra-African exports will be up by 109% and international export by 32%. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will boost this development by creating a single market, increasing international and intra-Africa trade. It is, therefore, anticipated that organized events will play a crucial role in this transformation, providing the platforms for stakeholders to connect, learn and share and by doing so stimulate trade, collaboration and innovation.

As outlined in a recently published World Economic Forum (WEF) report, AfCFTA indeed offers the potential for a new era for global business and investment in Africa. While the figures above are already impressive, the projections for 2050 are simply breathtaking: a population of 2.5 billion people and a total spending of 16.12 trillion USD.

The increase in trade and the related industrialization will result in increased manufacturing, which in turn will lead to high-skill job creation, bringing better educational training and the development and retention of local talent. This will also lead to thriving local businesses that can partner with global leaders to the benefit of African and international companies alike.

MASSIVE IMPACT

If these projections become reality, they will of course also have a massive impact on the African event industry, both in terms of number of events and business visitors, considering

that currently, Africa only accounts for 3% of the global MICE industry and just 1% business travel spending worldwide. Just as an illustration to demonstrate the potential: in 2019, France – ranked 5th in terms of expenditure of business tourists of the G20 countries¹ - welcomed 76.8 million business visitors, with half of them participating in one of the 595 corporate and institutional events taking place in the country and spending a whopping 32 billion USD. As a comparison: in that same year, business travelers in African spent USD 43 billion with South-Africa leading at 8 billion USD.

Looking at these figures, it is also important to know that the vast majority of the business travelers going to France originate from its key trade partners such as the UK, Germany or Spain. Furthermore, there appears to be a positive correlation between tourism and MICE, given leading destinations are also leading hosts of business events. So, if the intra-Africa trade grows as predicted (109% by 2035!), the need for organized events such as conferences and exhibitions will grow dramatically, as these are the platforms eminently used to bring people together to discuss trade, collaboration and innovation between trading countries. It also means that the target audiences are not the long-haul business travelers from Europe or the US, but rather the African business traveler coming from one of the 54 African countries who are signatories to the AfCFTA.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Indeed, a study entitled 'Tourism and Trade Nexus in Africa: A Gravity Model Approach' revealed that boosting tourism in the continent will lead to an increase in trade. Turning this vision of



a booming number of business events into reality will, however, require tackling a number of hurdles. The first set of challenges is related to intra-Africa air connectivity. The region's air transport infrastructure – defined by a weak domestic airline industry and a lack of airport density – greatly undermines the ability of local economies to facilitate business travel, which is already hampered by the vast size and geographical barriers of Africa. This is now being addressed: according to the CAPA Airport Construction Database, there are 37 new airport projects under construction or planned in Africa, with an estimated value of \$16.6bn.

A second set of challenges is related to energy and infrastructure. As Africa's overall development continues, the long-term hope is that infrastructure spend and construction related to energy, transport, airports, ICT infrastructure and health facilities will be key spurs for economic growth. The short-term reality is, however, that workarounds need to be found (e.g. the use of diesel generators by convention centres to produce electricity).

Thirdly, there are the conference and exhibitions centres hosting business events which are as varied as the continent's unique historical, cultural and natural experiences and will serve as platforms for Africa's economic potential to be fully realized.

Here, the challenge is double: ensuring the delivery of excellence, and obtaining the international recognition that this excellence is being delivered. Both are work in progress, with new centres being built – like the one in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire – existing centres being revamped and an increasing number of African convention centres becoming part of the global community of convention centres through initiatives such as AIPC, allowing to exchange best practices and obtaining a globally recognized quality label.

Evidently, therefore, Africa is the continent of the future and that boosting organized business events will play a crucial role in this journey. The African Continental Free Trade Area has provided the continent with wings, and it is time now for to soar.

1. www.statista.com/statistics/1194899/g20-business-travel-spending/

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

AIPC
EXCELLENCE IN
CONVENTION CENTRE
MANAGEMENT

Inspiration & Creativity With a Sustainable Mind

Long history, liberal ideas, thought-provoking people. A winning combination of elements which have led Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, to become today's open-minded, sustainable, and welcoming city. Focused on creativity and quality of service, the city comes together as a team to offer associations and event planners the inspiration and assistance to overcome challenges and hold impactful events driven by innovation.

Words Vicky Koffa

Under the tagline 'Inspiration For Good', Amsterdam is eager to walk the extra mile when it comes to leveraging the power of conferences for the greater good. Bringing a conference to Amsterdam, associations can gain a lot more than just finding the right venue for their event. The city has turned a leaf from its industrial period and is now an innovative service-oriented European capital with blooming economy in sectors like life sciences and health, technology, artificial intelligence, finance, sustainability (energy, mobility, fashion), and creative industries. These

sectors, combined with the city's physical and digital connectivity, create an intriguing business destination ready to activate all stakeholders for the creation of value-added events.

INSPIRING KNOWLEDGE FOR INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Amsterdam's advanced knowledge ecosystem is a true inspiration for enlightened meetings and conventions aiming to create a better future. Among the canals and bikes, associations can find a high concentration of prestigious universities and research centres. Bright example is the Amsterdam Science Park. Part of the University of Amsterdam, the Faculty of Science is surrounded by numerable knowledge institutes and spin-off companies with their roots in science research forming a hub of high-quality research and education and knowledge intensive companies. In fact, the city ranked third for highest impact on scientific research world-wide, according to a comparative research report by Elsevier of 20 global destinations.

The city's brightest minds have teamed up to find the best way to lead Amsterdam into the future in a sustainable way. Innovation

is an integral part of the city's operations in most sectors, using technology and data to create a healthier city. Amsterdam Smart City (a community that consists of more than 8,000 innovators) is one of the many open innovation platforms available for companies, knowledge institutions, governments, and active residents to come together, interact and collaborate to increase the quality of life in urban areas.

Collaboration between all these elements and seamless connection the city's business community of over 4,000 international companies and dynamic start-up and scale-up scene are driving further knowledge and innovation. Tapping into the city's diverse and forward-thinking mentality of working towards collective solutions for today's challenges, associations and meeting planners find a wealth of progressive ideas to meet their event's needs.

SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTS THE CITY

Accessing this knowledge network is easy on many levels. Amsterdam offers numerous services by high-speed train to London, Paris, Brussels, and Berlin, for delegates travelling within Europe, making the trip there fast and sustainable.



To serve longer distances, the Amsterdam Airport Schiphol connects over 300 direct global destinations and is only a 15-minute ride to the city centre by public transport.

Once in the city, conference venues, nearby hotels and restaurants are easily accessible by metro, bus, tram, ferry, bike, and of course on foot. The city's compactness facilitates sustainability and reassures participants of greener mobility during an event. Besides green-electricity-generated public transport, the city has more bikes than people. Amsterdam's efforts on the matter received global recognition as it was ranked 6th for Urban Mobility Readiness, and 2nd for Sustainable Mobility in the 2022 Urban Mobility Readiness Index.

Innovation and cutting-edge technology are used as a tool for the development of out-of-the-box event design meant to drive positive impact. On a digital level, Amsterdam also boasts a high-speed internet infrastructure. The city's innovative tech hub houses one of the largest data exchanges in the world, the Amsterdam Internet Exchange (AMS-IX), making it the second largest internet exchange point in Europe. Advanced digital connectivity brings Amsterdam in the advantageous position to be able to offer event organizers online options (hybrid or virtual) for sustainable meetings.

Fast 4G city-wide internet coverage ensures that delegates are well-connected even when attending a hybrid event or virtual programs. Again, Amsterdam got 5th place for digital growth in the Global Interconnection Index (GXI).

CONGRESSES TELL AMSTERDAM'S STORY

Apart from high rankings in sustainability and connectivity indexes, Amsterdam receives international credit for its efforts by being the destination of choice for various change-making conferences. Last year, Bloomberg CityLab 2022 gathered over 500 delegates, including 40 global mayors, as well as city innovators,



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activists, and artists to discover solutions for cities' most pressing challenges.

Hosted at Anantara Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, the 2022 conference programming included unique off-site excursions around Amsterdam where attendees witnessed first-hand how Amsterdam is effectively facing the challenge of rising waters in the city, setting an example for other cities with similar problems to follow. Key part in the success of the congress was the collaboration of municipal representatives, local artists, and speakers, as well as support from the Amsterdam Convention Bureau which acted as an enabler to bring all the stakeholders together for a successful event of this size. Amsterdam's commitment to creating livable cities and looking for open-minded solutions creates the ideal platform for such major events on sustainability issues.

Leveraging on its dynamic tech ecosystem, Amsterdam hosted World Summit AI 2022 (WSAI 2022) in October last year for its sixth edition. More than 3,000 experts, innovators, and business leaders in the field of AI gathered at the Taets Art and Events Park for two days of discussions around automation, creativity, diversity, innovation, responsibility, and optimization.

The Amsterdam Convention Bureau worked directly with organizers InspiredMinds! to find the best options available for the needs of the summit. City officials, academics, businesses, future thought-leaders, and the city's startup scene all worked together to support the event and bring the city's AI ecosystem's ambitions to life.

As Shirry Liram, Former Group Director of InspiredMinds! affirmed: *"For the 6th year, major international players in AI gather in Amsterdam for the world's leading AI summit, cementing the city as THE centre for AI globally. This is the place where headlines are made and deals are forged. Most importantly, this is the place where real change happens."*

These are but a few of many case-studies Amsterdam has to offer which solidify its position as a global business events destination. The city's dedication to motivate stakeholders to overcome obstacles and find sustainable solutions for its inhabitants by means of city-wide collaboration and use of technology and innovation is what makes Amsterdam an 'Inspiration for Good'.

Contact

meetings@iamsterdam.com / or scan this QR code



Connecting Minds & Ideas in Wellington

A trip 'down under' is a singular experience in itself, but an expedition to the capital city of New Zealand, Wellington, situated on the southern extremity of the North Island, can be truly captivating. Boardroom embarked on a journey to this vibrant city in early March, discovering its unique allure, which has recently been bolstered by the unveiling of Tākina, the city's brand-new purpose-built convention centre, adding to the growing appeal of Wellington.

Words Rémi Deve



With a population of around 210,000 people - the second-most populous city in New Zealand - Wellington is a destination with a lot of heart. Known for its exuberant arts and culture scene, awe-inspiring harbor, and picturesque views of the surrounding hills, the bustling metropolis is also home to a myriad of industry associations and government agencies, including the New Zealand Parliament and the offices of many ministries. With its unassuming yet lively atmosphere and creative vibe, Wellington is ranked as one of 21 'Places of the Future' by US technology giant Cognizant and is a highly sought-after destination for locals and tourists alike.

Wellington's business community has lofty aspirations, and the city offers effortless opportunities for intersectoral collaborations. As a hub for creative technologies, scientific research, and public and professional services, it provides a sophisticated blend of industry and culture.

Taking a forward-thinking approach to business meetings, Wellington strategically leverages its key sectors to attract relevant association conferences. By hosting international conferences, the city supports New Zealand in achieving its ambitious goals related to research, science, environment, and innovation, all of which flourish within the thriving metropolis.

AMBASSADOR NETWORK

Wellington has a network of ambassadors who tirelessly promote the city's high-quality work and research to the world. Among them are Dr. Swee Tan, the Executive Director of the Gillies McIndoe Research Institute (GMRI), and Professor Neil Dodgson, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research at the Victoria University of Wellington.

Dr. Tan is a highly accomplished physician-scientist who has made significant contributions to the field of cancer research, particularly in the area of vascular birthmarks and tumors. His work has led to the development of a novel treatment for strawberry birthmarks,

known as "Sirolimus therapy," which has transformed the lives of many children with this condition. Under his leadership, the GMRI has become a leading cancer research institute in New Zealand, attracting talented scientists and researchers from around the world.

Meanwhile, Professor Dodgson leads the largest computer graphics research group in the Southern Hemisphere, encompassing the graphics research teams in the School of Engineering and Computer Science and the Computational Media Innovation Centre at the Victoria University of Wellington. The university is recognized as New Zealand's top university for the intensity of its high-quality research, bringing together expertise from across the university to tackle local, national, and global challenges. It has achieved excellence in numerous fields, including Advanced Materials, Organic Chemistry & Innovative Physics, Digital Health, Artificial Intelligence, Clinical Psychology, Applied Linguistics, and Antarctic and climate change studies.



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ON THE WAY TO WELLINGTON'S BEEHIVE





According to Professor Dodgson, conferences offer an excellent opportunity for professionals and experts from various fields to come together and exchange knowledge and ideas. He recognizes the value that such events bring to Wellington, saying, *"This collaboration can result in new concepts and partnerships that can benefit the city in the long run. Wellington is home to a wealth of expertise that the city is eager to share with the world. Despite being small in absolute terms, we pride ourselves on our innovation and research. Additionally, the new convention centre now provides a competitive edge. Furthermore, New Zealand is on the bucket list of pretty much everybody around the world, which undoubtedly aids in attracting visitors."*

The innovation in Wellington is evident in organizations such as Creative HQ, which helps entrepreneurs and startups turn their ideas into successful businesses. The organization provides training, mentorship, and networking opportunities to help innovators develop their products and services. According to Creative HQ's CEO Catherine Jones, *"We believe that startups have the power to change the world, and we exist to support founders to make that happen. We have a thriving startup ecosystem in Wellington, and we're passionate about helping entrepreneurs grow their businesses here."* With a proven track record of success, Creative HQ has helped numerous startups launch and grow over the years.

The scope of the organization's efforts extends, however, beyond startups, as evidenced by the introduction of its GovTech Accelerator program. This initiative offers a distinctive chance for entrepreneurs and governmental agencies to work together in addressing pressing social and environmental issues. Its aim is to assist local and central governments in utilizing creativity and innovation to overcome challenges.

TĀKINA WELLINGTON CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Boardroom travelled halfway across the globe for Tākina, the new Wellington convention centre, which is set to open in May 2023 in the heart of the city. The centre's name is derived from te reo Māori, meaning 'to invoke, to summon, to connect, to bring forth.' Its design reflects the summoning of Wellington's wind and symbolizes the transfer of knowledge, progress, and innovation. The venue will serve as a welcoming space for thinking, learning, and sharing ideas, featuring a sculptural

exterior and modern, light-filled, flexible event spaces.

Tākina offers two divisible plenary halls accommodating up to 700 and 1,600 delegates respectively. Additionally, the venue boasts a 1,800sqm exhibition hall with adjacent space to increase capacity, stand-alone meeting rooms, and top-of-the-line AV and ICT systems, making it highly customizable for any event.

More information:

www.WellingtonNZ.com/Meet

Infrastructure update

A trip to Wellington would not be complete without a few site inspections of key venues and locations. The four places below provide, of course, only a snapshot of what Wellington can offer.

The **Beehive**, also known as the Executive Wing, is the home of New Zealand's government in Wellington. Completed in 1981, the building houses the offices of the prime minister, cabinet ministers, and members of parliament. In addition to its political functions, the Beehive is also a popular venue for events, featuring a range of spaces, from intimate meeting rooms to large conference halls. The Legislative Council Chamber, for example, can accommodate up to 120 people, while the Banquet Hall can seat up to 280 guests for a dinner or up to 1,000 for a cocktail reception.

The **St James Theatre** is a historic performing arts venue located in the city centre. Originally opened in 1912 as a cinema, it has since been refurbished and hosts theatre, music, and films with an auditorium for up to 1,552 guests. It also offers event spaces for meetings and conferences, such as the First Floor Gallery (up to 350 people theatre-style or 289 for banquets) and Hospitality Suite (80 guests).

Also known as the Museum of New Zealand, **Te Papa Tongarewa** is a world-famous cultural institution located on Wellington's harbour. The museum's extensive collection showcases the natural history, art, and culture of New Zealand, and features a range of interactive exhibits and immersive experiences. The venue also houses some event spaces. Among them, let's mention Te Marae, a traditional Māori meeting house that can accommodate up to 250 people, or the Wellington Foyer that can host up to 1,000 guests for a cocktail reception.

Last but not least is **Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne**, a wildlife sanctuary and conservation project, which was established in 1999 with the aim of protecting and restoring the natural ecosystem of the region, and is now home to a range of native flora and fauna, including some of New Zealand's rarest and most endangered species. It operates as a fenced eco-sanctuary, with a predator-proof fence surrounding 225 hectares of native forest and wetland habitats. Zealandia is also a popular venue for events, with a range of indoor and outdoor spaces available for hire.

NEW ZEALAND'S VIBRANT CAPITAL

Well-known for its beautiful landscapes and friendly locals, New Zealand has a reputation as a progressive, ambitious nation.

New Zealand's **connected and creative capital, Wellington**, is home to world-class venues and services, more than 4,000 hotel rooms within walking distance to major venues, and access to high profile speakers.



Tākina,
New Zealand's newest
convention centre



Top 10 safest city
in the world*

*Safe Cities Index 2021



30-min compact
and walkable city



Home to
New Zealand
Government



Connect in Wellington
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Business
Events
Wellington

Singapore's Financial Sector: A Hub of Innovation & Sustainability

Singapore is now a globally renowned financial hub and of the most important ones in Asia. In the short 50 years since its independence, the city-state has established itself as a leading global financial centre. The government's proactive measures to be one step ahead in case of crises and the focus on sustainable finance and FinTech have set the country apart from other destinations. Associations with an interest in the sector can only benefit by organizing an event there.

Words Vicky Koffa

Climbing up the financial ladder was only natural for a country like Singapore. Given its strategic geographical location, Singapore quickly became a major trade epicentre and this created the need for an advanced financial sector to support the trading activities. The government quickly seized the opportunity and provided the right conditions for this development.

SINGAPORE'S PULL FACTORS

Underpinned by a stable political status and effective regulatory landscape, skilled and experienced workforce, extensive network of free trade agreements and international connectivity, Singapore is an attractive hub for finance and FinTech. Measures against crime and money laundering and favorable legal and tax policies create a platform of integrity and safety that few can resist. Business-friendly regulations help to protect employers and employees alike and to maintain a risk-free environment for investment and operations.

In fact, Singapore is home to many top financial institutions, including Singapore-based DBS which has been named "Best Bank in the World" by renowned financial publications. Major tech firms such as Google and Facebook have also set up regional headquarters on the island. The most recent addition in 2020 was the Banque de France, which opened its first Asian office in Singapore and second overseas after New York. The office's role is to bring the bank closer to central banks and financial authorities in the Asia-Oceania region and monitor Asian economies.

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

The presence of important banks, wealth management firms, insurance corporations, commodities traders and treasury-related companies is why the financial and insurance sector is a

major contributor to Singapore's economy. After manufacturing, it is the second highest driver of GDP growth, comprising over 3,413 financial institutions with key sub-sectors including Financial Technology, Banking, Insurance, Asset Management and Capital Markets.

In September 2021, the London-based think tank Z/Yen and the China Development Institute published the 30th Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI) survey, where Singapore ranks 4th in competitiveness as a global financial centre. Similarly, it was ranked 2nd in PriceWaterHouseCooper's City of Opportunity index and 6th largest wealth management centre in the world by Deloitte. As far as safety goes, Singapore was ranked 11th in the world and top in Asia for having the best IP protection in the U.S. Chamber International IP Index 2020.

FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

In order to keep up with the ever-changing rules of finance, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) presented last year the refreshed Financial Services Industry Transformation Map (ITM) 2025. The Map outlines growth strategies, training programs, and an agenda for continuous innovation and technology adoption. Its vision is to anchor Singapore as a leading international financial centre in Asia that connects global markets, supports Asia's development and serves Singapore's economy.

In this framework, the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Programme in Finance was adopted to strengthen customer service, risk management, and business competitiveness. As innovation has a central role in the development, Sandbox



Plus (which provides effective one-stop assistance to firms) was created to strengthen FinTech.

To solidify its position as a player in the blockchain technology, the government launched the Singapore Blockchain Innovation Programme. Regulations have also been updated to focus more on an activity basis rather than an entity-based approach. This allows room for innovation and the expansion of blockchain technologies.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

The evolution of the sector is here to stay and be beneficial for the country and its people. In 2019, MAS launched its Green Finance Action Plan to support a sustainable Singapore and strengthen the sector's resilience to environmental risks. One of its initiatives are the green and sustainability-linked loans, which support companies by defraying the expenses of engaging independent service providers to validate the green and sustainability credentials of the loan.

Furthermore, the use of environmental, social and governance (ESG) guidelines and transparent reporting are becoming mandatory for companies (e.g., for the ones listed in Singapore Exchange). The government has also issued green bonds to fund public infrastructure projects, including Singapore's first integrated water and waste treatment facility, Tuas Nexus.

NO PLACE BETTER FOR AN EVENT

In this advanced 'smart' and sustainable financial environment, businesses and thought-leaders have more opportunities for collaboration. The attraction of association conferences is

inevitable as Singapore offers easy access to a pool of financial minds and ample inter-sectoral connections.

In November 2022, more than 62,000 participants (a record turnout for the event) from over 115 countries came together to engage and collaborate on issues relating to the development of financial services, public policy, and technology. The Singapore FinTech Festival (SFF) 2022 took place at Singapore EXPO featuring more than 850 speakers from the private and public sectors. As a result, the government announced Project Orchid that explores the use of purpose-bound money.

Singapore Blockchain Week 2022 brought 10,000 participants together to build a clear image of digital evolution and develop Singapore as a premier Blockchain hub. Hosted by Blockchain Association of Singapore, the meeting was one of the biggest government-supported hybrid blockchain events in Asia. The world's largest gathering of insurance leaders and innovators, InsureTech Connect Asia, is also coming to Sands Expo & Convention Centre on 30 May-1 June 2023. Over the course of three days, the industry will convene to showcase new innovations, to learn how to increase productivity and reduce costs.

All in all, Singapore's commitment to taking proactive measures to anticipate crises, and its emphasis on sustainable finance and FinTech, distinguish it from other destinations and make it an appealing hub for associations interested in these topics.

More information

www.visitsingapore.com/mice



Culture Enhances the Darwin Experience

When considering Australia for your next event, Darwin Convention Centre in the Northern Territory offers delegates a unique experience to engage with the region's ancient Aboriginal culture while enjoying its relaxed lifestyle and great accessibility.

Words Anna Stewart

The Darwin Convention Centre is located in the lush Top End region of Australia's expansive Northern Territory (NT) which in total encompasses an area of more than 1.35 million square kilometres, the combined equivalent of France, Italy and Spain.

Its wide-open spaces and uncrowded, leisurely lifestyle complement the Convention Centre's positioning of "Space to Think", with delegates able to relax and achieve their desired professional outcomes when attending a conference. While this tropical waterfront city offers all the amenities of a modern metropolis, what sets it apart is its ability to deliver genuine enrichment through engagement with an ancient Aboriginal culture that dates back over 65,000 years.

A MULTICULTURAL CITY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up over 25 percent of the NT's population, with the city of Darwin's estimated 147,000 residents also comprising more than 60 different nationalities. Culture is subsequently a key feature of the region and is reflected in every aspect of life, from diverse cuisine to local attractions, activities and experiences.

The custodians of the Darwin region are the Larrakia (saltwater) people and the Darwin Convention Centre is situated upon their land, with stunning views across the harbour.

The Centre's close relationship with the Larrakia, who are renowned for the strengths they bring to cultural performance, music and art, enables access to a range of experiences. These can provide memorable enhancement to a business event, whilst also offering potential to deliver a legacy that extends well beyond the event itself.

The Darwin Convention Centre's location in the extensive Darwin Waterfront Precinct, surrounded by lagoons and parkland, provides a stunning backdrop for a range of cultural engagement activities, all within easy access of the Centre's meeting rooms and exhibition halls.

ENGAGE WITH THE LARRAKIA PEOPLE

Conference planners can open their events with a moving 'Welcome to Country' ceremony delivered on the lawns just adjacent to the Convention Centre or alternatively, in the Centre's auditorium. Larrakia representatives of local youth organisation, The Youth Mill, present the moving ceremony in words, songs and dance performances.

The Youth Mill supports young people in creative environments and encourages preservation of culture and identity. It also provides them with a range of up-skilling activities, from creative arts and recreation to the development of practical skills and employment pathways. The benefits of their association with a business event goes back into their community, enabling development of ongoing educational programs for disadvantaged youth. Delegates greatly value their involvement in an event that can make a real difference to the host destination and its community.



WELCOME TO COUNTRY'
PERFORMED BY THE YOUTH MILL



Conference delegates might also engage in a Larrakia Saltwater Ceremony in the nearby Darwin Waterfront Precinct Lagoon. Participants are invited to step into ankle-deep water on the lagoon shoreline, with a Larrakia Aboriginal Elder extending a special welcome and establishing a meaningful connection to the land and greater cultural understanding.

An exciting new development planned for the Darwin Waterfront Precinct is the AUD\$40 million Larrakia Cultural Centre to be established at Stokes Hill Wharf, next door to the Convention Centre. When completed, the Centre will create a place for the Larrakia people to share, celebrate and showcase their rich Larrakia Country language, culture and knowledge, enabling seamless integration of cultural experiences into a conference program.

SEVEN MEMORABLE TASTES OF UNIQUE CULTURAL CUISINE

The Darwin Convention Centre is one of very few global convention centres which has established a signature dining experience as part of their cultural event offering for conferences.

The 'Seven Seasons' menu is inspired by the seasons of the Gulumoerrgin (Larrakia) seasonal calendar, incorporating local tastes such as lemon myrtle, wattle-seed, finger lime, river mint, Kakadu plums, beach bananas, mud crab and the renowned NT barramundi fish.

Participation in a 'Seven Seasons' dinner provides delegates with an immersive cultural experience that delights the senses as each course is introduced by accompanying sound and vision elements that explain the Larrakia's seven seasons and what they represent. The cultural tone can be further enhanced with live music and dance performances delivered by local organisations such as the NT Dance Company and The Youth Mill.

ACCESSIBILITY & SUPPORT A KEY TO DARWIN'S SUCCESS

International conference delegates coming to Darwin can enjoy direct international flights via Darwin International Airport - with a flight time of just 4 ¾ hours. Darwin is the closest Australian city to the important aviation hub of Singapore, which offers seamless connections to destinations well beyond.

The Northern Territory Business Events Support Fund continues to provide funding assistance to organisers of qualified meetings and conferences coming to Darwin. Fund support operates on a seasonal scale, commencing from a minimum AUD\$100 per delegate up to AUD\$200 per delegate. Priority consideration is given to business events which align with the Northern Territory's economic and social strengths.

"Our Seven Seasons dining experience, a meaningful 'Welcome to Country' and the Saltwater Ceremony at the Darwin Waterfront Lagoon, all provide a wonderful Indigenous cultural connection for business event visitors to the Darwin Convention Centre," said Peter Savoff, General Manager of the Darwin Convention Centre.

"When combined with the award-winning facilities of our world-class Convention Centre, the excellent Northern Territory Government support and funding and our amazing landscapes and experiences, it's no wonder we've established an impressive track record for hosting highly successful international conferences and will continue to do so."

For further information
visit www.darwinconvention.com.au



Hear stories



Youth Mill Aboriginal
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**NORTHERN
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BUSINESS EVENTS

Engaging With Canada's AI Ecosystem

In recent months Chat GPT's ability to generate coherent responses to human input has raised general public awareness about AI's potentially transformative and disruptive capabilities, with some pundits predicting that the impact of AI will be at least equal to the mass adoption of television, the internet, or the use of smart phones. Canada is a leader in the AI space, making it a prime event destination for associations looking to host conferences focused on AI.

Words Marc de Faoite



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LEADERSHIP IN AI

On a national level, Canada has long established its dedication to leading the world in the development of this exciting new technology.

The Canadian government has committed over \$1 billion to support the development of AI and technology-related research and initiatives in Canada. Between 2015 and 2018, it produced the most AI patents per capita among G7 nations and China, while in 2017 Canada became the first country to

release a national AI strategy, the \$125M Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy, which identifies three major AI centres: Toronto, Montréal, and Edmonton.

The AI expertise of these cities, combined with their accessibility, cosmopolitan feel, natural settings, and focus on responsible event planning, make them ideal event destinations for associations interested in hosting events focused on the near-endless potential of AI.

EDMONTON: A HOTBED OF AI RESEARCH

For the past 25 years, the University of Alberta has ranked in the top three in the world for AI research, while Edmonton is also home to the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (AMII) and the Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS). Two Edmonton-based AI companies (AltaML and Trust Science) featured on a list of Canada's Top Growing Companies in 2022.

Edmonton's AI community includes prominent figures in research, academia, and industry, which has facilitated the attraction of corporate labs and research partners from major companies like Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and IBM. This, in turn, makes it easier for event organizers to access local keynote speakers and arrange site tours of ground breaking facilities. Additionally, the size and diversity of the industry in Edmonton make it easy to access potential and relevant sponsors.

Edmonton has a track record of hosting successful AI events, including the 2022 AI Week, which welcomed over 2,000 people from 38 countries, over 100 speakers and consisted of 50 different events. In May 2023, Edmonton will host Upper Bound 2023, poised to be Canada's largest convergence of applied AI professionals and researchers.

MONTRÉAL: A HUB FOR CANADA'S AI LEADERS

There are more than 27,000 workers with AI skills in Montréal. The city is first in Canada for university funding research, with nearly \$2bn per year, and over 14,000 university students enrolled in AI-related programs. Google, Microsoft, and Meta, have made Montréal their AI R&D centre, while MILA, with over 1,000 researchers, is the world's largest academic research lab in deep learning and reinforcement learning.

Scale AI - Canada's AI supply chain supercluster - and the Montréal AI Ethics Institute are also operating here, while Montréal-based companies like Korbit Technologies are leading the AI space globally. This concentration of intellectual capital offers event planners vast opportunities for collaboration, networking, and learning at events.

Montréal is also a trailblazer when it comes to integrating technology into events. At the Palais de Congrès de Montréal for instance, event planners can collaborate with RE-AK Technologies to measure participant satisfaction and emotions generated by events using biometric data.

It's no wonder, therefore, that the city has successfully hosted various AI-related conferences, including the World Summit AI Americas, the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Law, and the Annual Conference on Neural Information Process Systems. Meanwhile the 36th Canadian Conference on

Artificial Intelligence (CANAI) will take place in-person at McGill University from June 5 to 9, 2023.

Montréal's strengths in deep learning expertise and its experience in hosting AI related events make it a compelling destination for event planners looking to create impactful events..

TORONTO: A RISING GLOBAL HUB FOR AI EVENTS

With the world's highest concentration of AI start-ups, Toronto is the third-largest technology hub in North America and is rapidly becoming a global centre of excellence for AI.

The Vector Institute, a non-profit research institute that partners with top companies such as Google, Shopify, Uber, and all five major Canadian banks, is based in Toronto, as is Google, while tech giant Meta has chosen the city as the base for its Canadian Reality Labs and AI research teams.

Toronto has hosted several events related to AI, including Collision - which brought over 30,000 attendees to the city in 2022, and Big Data and AI Toronto, with more events planned for 2023 including the Advanced Research Society for Science and Sociology's International Conference on Artificial Intelligence, and the 4th International Conference on Big Data, Machine Learning and Applications (BIGML).

Toronto's multiculturalism and safety - the city was ranked the second safest city in the world by the Economist's Safe Cities Index 2021 - combined with local and leverageable expertise and excellent conference infrastructure make it an ideal place for hosting AI events.

ELSEWHERE IN CANADA

Edmonton, Montréal and Toronto are just three Canadian cities with thriving AI ecosystems. There are many more destinations from coast-to-coast-to-coast in Canada that also excel in this space.

Canada's reputation as a leader in AI innovation make it an attractive destination for hosting AI and technology events, while its commitment to sustainability, combined with its scenic beauty, multiculturalism, safety, and world-class venues and accommodation, make it is a destination that your attendees will want to visit time and time again.

Event planners can rely on Destination Canada Business Events, with a sector specific specialist available to provide insight, support, and guidance in organizing successful events. To get in touch with Destination Canada's team, contact Virginie De Visscher (Senior Director, Business Events, Destination Canada Business Events) at devisscher.virginie@destinationcanada.com or visit businesseventscanada.ca



AERIAL VIEW MESSEPLATZ



BIO Europe Spring in Basel: A Conference With a Sustainable Impact

From 20 to 22 March 2023, the global biotech industry held the largest of its European spring congresses at Messe Basel. Some 3,200 decision-makers from all over the world were welcomed to Switzerland's third largest city on this occasion and a further 300 took part online. The event additionally constituted a prime example of sustainability.

The conference offered outstanding networking opportunities and an extensive exhibition, together with a series of exciting panel discussions, fireside chats, company presentations and a great deal more. Participants were also able to arrange short partnering meetings. These proved to be enormously efficient – all in all, some 17,500 meetings of this type were held in the course of the three days.

The organizers at EBD Group chose Basel as the venue since this city on the Rhine has long been regarded as the leading location for industry, innovation and research in the biosciences. Other reasons included the city's environmental friendliness and the efforts it is undertaking in this respect. Silvia Decker, Head of Marketing & Communications at MCH Exhibitions & Events, explains: *"We are also intensively addressing the topic of sustainability and are delighted that BIO Europe Spring has given us the opportunity to press ahead with the implementation of a number of our ideas."*

Together with the organizer, a package of measures was worked out with the aim of improving the ecological, social and economic impact of the event. These included a *"bring your own bottle"* initiative, the donation of leftover food to the *"Basler Tafeln"*, a communication campaign for low-emission travel to the venue and a digital event guide that considerably reduced the amount of printed material required.

It was not only environmental protection that featured in the foreground, however, but the physical and mental health of the visitors too. Attendees were able to take time out as required and make use of the relaxation options on offer. *"The cooperation between the deliverers and the venue representatives was exemplary"*, reports Manuela Hildebrand, Regional Delivery Director at EBD Group. *"We are, of course, hoping that some of what we have achieved can be transferred to future events as well."*

To make a contribution from the social angle too, the organizers engaged in cooperation with the Basel Cancer League. *"For all these reasons, we are expecting BIO Europe Spring to have a true signal effect"*, says Jonas Scharf, Managing Director MCH Exhibitions & Events. *"This conference has given us the opportunity to try out our existing resource-saving endeavours at an industry event for the life sciences – which are such an important sector for Basel."*

More info

MCH Swiss Exhibition (Basel) Ltd. \ www.messe-basel.com \ +41 58 206 28 28

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

myriam.winnepeninckx@switzerland.com \ www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings

Geneva: Pioneering the Medical Field

Geneva has various monikers – some refer to it as the world's tiniest metropolis, while others know it as the city of peace. Regardless of the label, Geneva has always been a sought-after destination. With a significant foreign population of around 40% and being a hub for international organizations and businesses, the city has earned its reputation as a global hotspot. In recent years, Geneva has reaffirmed its commitment to associations by capitalizing on its centres of expertise, starting with the medical field.

Words Remi Deve



PALAIS DES NATIONS

Known throughout the world as the UN's European headquarters and the head office of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva every year attracts thousands of people to conferences and meetings. Due to its international nature and multicultural tradition - there are 190 different nationalities represented in the city, making it a truly, diverse, tolerant and inclusive destination - Geneva offers a privileged location for globalized companies: over 140 multinationals are

established in the city and around, not to mention 36 international organizations, over 300 NGOs and 200 diplomatic missions.

MEDICAL EXCELLENCE

Geneva's reputation for excellence extends across a broad range of fields. The city boasts world-renowned clusters in banking and finance, fragrances, Cleantech, and ICT, as well as in the areas of watchmaking, microtechnologies,

BioTech, and MedTech. The city is also widely recognized as a leading global medical hub: home to numerous world-class hospitals, research institutions, and medical universities. Geneva has a long history of medical excellence.

In fact, one of Geneva's key strengths is its expertise in the field of medical research. The city houses several world-renowned research institutions, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Geneva University

Hospitals (HUG), which are leaders in the fields of global health and medical research.

The HUG is the first university hospital in Switzerland - the national referral centre for childhood liver disease and paediatric liver transplantation, as well as for influenza and emerging viral infections. The hospital leads the way in medical imaging, robot-assisted and minimally-invasive surgery, and has the only high-security diagnostic laboratory in Switzerland. It has been awarded by the WHO the referral centre status in six areas, including e-Health and Telemedicine, Patient Safety and Prevention of Infection, and Humanitarian Medicine and Disaster Management.

In addition to its strong research capabilities, Geneva is also known for its expertise in several medical specialties. The city is particularly renowned for its expertise in the areas of oncology, neurology, and cardiology, with many of its hospitals and medical centres recognized as among the best in the world in these fields.

No wonder the city is home to many international medical organizations, including the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS), and Doctors Without Borders. The city also boasts the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF), the International Society of Geriatric Oncology (SIOG), and the Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER), just to name a few.

Meanwhile, the University of Geneva (UNIGE), ranked among the top 100 universities globally, enjoys a strong international reputation for the quality of its research and education. UNIGE works closely with the HUG in research and education, creating a seamless integration between the medical and academic sectors.

Geneva's expertise extends beyond medicine, as the city has a high level of competence in sciences and physics. In 2023, the new CERN Science Gateway will open, enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in the discoveries, science, and technologies of CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research.

Geneva is also known for its commitment to sustainable development. The city has implemented various initiatives to reduce its environmental impact, such as investing in renewable energy, promoting sustainable transportation, and encouraging waste reduction and recycling. In fact, Geneva's commitment to sustainability extends beyond the city itself, as it is home to numerous international organizations focused on environmental protection and sustainable development.

Case in point: the Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation approved, back in 2020, a strategy for sustainable urban tourism in alignment with the UN's SDGs. The strategy is based on five pillars, which include accelerating the transition to a circular and post-carbon economy, promoting local initiatives, fostering a social and collective impact on the destination, and strengthening collaboration among tourism stakeholders.

KEY ASSETS FOR A CONFERENCE

"Geneva's international renown and proficiency in diverse fields make it an optimal location for European and global medical associations to organize their events," remarks Hervé Ney, Head of Sterilization at HUG and Treasurer of the World Federation for Hospital Sterilization sciences (WFHSS), who played a pivotal role in bringing the WFHSS 2021 conference to the city. According to Ney, the international standing of the University of Geneva, Geneva

University Hospitals (HUG), and local clinics have contributed to the city's status as a 'medical knowledge hub'. He asserts, "*We have key opinion leaders recognized internationally, integrated into the executive committees of professional associations covering numerous disciplines.*"

Ney highlights several advantages to holding conferences in Geneva. The city's central location in Europe and its proximity to numerous international organizations make it an ideal destination. Moreover, he suggests that hosting conferences in Geneva reinforces the city's international influence, allows visitors to experience the art of living in Geneva and the Lake Geneva region, and enriches the cultural diversity of the city.

According to Ney, Geneva has several additional benefits for conference organizers, including its convenient location in Europe, an international airport close to the city centre, complimentary (and high quality!) transportation during the conference, superior hotel options, favorable past conference experiences, safety, and cleanliness. One of the main meeting venues in the city, the CICG, has well-equipped facilities for language translation.

Furthermore, the Geneva Convention Bureau provides valuable support to conference organizers. "*They have extensive experience in conference planning and demonstrate a desire to find win-win solutions.*" Ney notes. "*They really made a difference in terms of ensuring a seamless experience.*"

More info

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On Switzerland as a convention destination:
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Montréal, Where Creative Minds & Business Leaders Meet

Montréal is a city built on contrasts: It's both old and new, boasting more than 375 years of history but very much looking ahead to its future. This forward-focused mentality is what drives the city's creativity and innovation, attracting 67 international associations who have made Montréal their base — including 10 in the sustainability sector. And now, Montréal is gaining global attention for its dynamic startup ecosystem, earning accolades like Canada's top City of the Future by *fDi Magazine* and ranking among the hottest startup cities on the globe, according to *Fast Company* and Startup Genome.

Words Lane Niesett

STARTUP CITY

On the island of Montréal, there are an estimated 2,500 active startups, which provide nearly 8,000 jobs, primarily in the fields of fintech and artificial intelligence (AI). Named one of the world's 100 most innovative cities in the 2021 Innovation Cities Index, Montréal's Innovation District (Quartier de l'innovation, or QI) is home to dozens of incubators and accelerators. This is, after all, where innovations like inflight streaming, bus tracking software, Plexiglass, and custom-fit wireless earphones were developed. It's also where the search engine (before the birth of Google in the mid-1990s), reverse engineering malware, and the intraoperative laser probe for detecting cancer cells were created.

Both the number and the quality of incubators have helped Montréal rank among the top startup ecosystems in the world, according to the 2021 Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking, and make it to the top 15 funding ecosystems worldwide based on early-stage funding and investor activity.

Montréal has also gained a presence as a global gaming hub — ranked fifth in the world, in fact — thanks to its post-secondary institutions fostering fresh talent and workers, whose skills include VR/AR and gamification in video games, health care and education.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Business Events Montréal is a one-stop-shop that believes in making planning easier, by facilitating and strengthening these connections and providing associations with content partners, local industry champions, and identifies local challenges and social impact so events can generate a legacy.



© STÉPHAN POULIN

Montréal's success is a result of the city's strong infrastructure that stimulates economic development, creating a space where business leaders, academics, visionaries and creative thinkers can come together and share knowledge. The city's strong reputation as a hotbed of innovation across a variety of sectors has attracted key decision-makers, researchers, entrepreneurs, artists, and highly qualified workers.

One of the best examples of seeing this in action is **C2 Montréal**, Canada's creative-business event, which will host its 12th edition in May. The annual event attracts 5,000 attendees from more than 50 countries to the three-day immersive "playground", which is described as "part conference, part festival and part participatory experience."

More than 100 speakers and personalities considered experts, innovators and change-makers in their fields will come together to inspire and share ideas with participants from more than 1,000 companies worldwide, ranging from startups to multinational conglomerates. The goal: open the doors to the next generation of Montréal's business leaders and provoke conversations and experiences that will inspire change.

CULINARY CAPITAL

Innovation isn't limited to sectors like AI in Montréal – it extends across all aspects of the city's culture, including one of the strongest areas: gastronomy. Emerging as a leading culinary destination in North America, this sector is transforming into a driver of economic, social, environmental and cultural development, as well as a hub for creation and innovation.

In 2021, Tourisme Montréal launched the **Office montréalais de la gastronomie** (OMG, or Montréal Gastronomy Bureau) to help mobilize the city's culinary and food-related communities. The goal is to drive business opportunities and promote artisanal products, chefs, markets, and the cultural heritage and identity of Montréal and the province of Québec, offering another layer for associations to enrich their stay.

GREEN FUTURE

In 2020, Montréal became the first city in Canada to join the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index, the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for destinations around the world. It's fitting, then, that last year the city hosted the **15th Conference of the Parties (COP15)** to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an international meeting bringing together governments from around the world new goals and develop an action plan for nature over the next decade.

The event, originally planned for Kunming, China, was moved given the resurgence of COVID19, and Montréal was selected as the new locale. COP15 attracted 10,000 delegates – 70% of which were from outside Québec – from 196 countries, and



the conference was planned in less than four months, as opposed to the usual two years.

The city continues expanding its sustainability efforts: Last year, Montréal was deemed North America's most sustainable destination on the **Global Destinations Sustainability Index 2022**, whose winners were announced at the 61st ICCA Congress in Krakow, Poland.

A large factor pushing Montréal to the forefront is the city's **new sustainable tourism strategy**, which is making changes on economic, social, cultural and environmental levels. One example is Tourisme Montréal's partnership with Aéroports de Montréal (ADM) and **Carbone boréal**, a research infrastructure at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC), which has resulted in the creation of a tool to help calculate the carbon footprint of a visit to Montréal. Using this tool, associations can estimate and understand everything from the greenhouse gas emissions from the plane to meals and accommodations – and help offset it through donations to restore the boreal forest.

Event planners can also incorporate ideas into conferences by taking a cue from Montréal's new **Guide to Best Practices for Sustainable Business Events**, which offers guidelines and recommendations for planning and hosting sustainable events, such as waste management tips and tricks. They can also make a positive social and environmental impact in the city during their event by using Montréal's two new directories which list volunteering opportunities as well as organizations collecting donations. With these new initiatives, Montréal is showing how it does business differently – and how the city can help associations with a shared mission for a more sustainable present and future.

Contact

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Monaco Goes Green: A Positive Impact for Associations

Monaco is taking its commitment to sustainability seriously. In recent years, the local meetings industry stakeholders have been ramping up their green commitments and efforts to reduce their impact on the environment – and this can definitely benefit associations organizing their conferences in the country.

Words Remi Deve

The small sovereign city-state located on the French Riviera has been making efforts towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in recent years. Under the leadership of HSH Prince Albert II, the country's government, businesses and individuals have recognized the importance of social and environmental responsibility, and taken steps to implement sustainable practices and contribute to the greater good.

Monaco's focus on CSR includes initiatives to promote clean energy, reduce waste, and support local communities. Additionally, the government has introduced legislation to encourage businesses to adopt more sustainable practices and to hold them accountable for their impact on society and the environment. In that regard, the Principality aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and the Mission for Energy Transition is in place to help achieve these

goals by limiting emissions and developing renewable energy through large-scale projects.

No wonder the Principality's latest campaign, aptly titled 'Like Nowhere Else,' emphasizes the *"prospect of a low-carbon future"* in a place where *"business, leisure, and respect for the environment go hand in hand."*

EMBRACED BY ALL

The tourism sector in Monaco has embraced the principles of eco-friendliness and CSR at all levels, and it's the Direction du Tourisme et des Congrès de Monaco (DTC) who has been leading the way in these efforts. In October 2022, the DTC signed the Glasgow Declaration in Madrid, affirming its commitment to work with partners on the five intervention pillars of the Declaration: measurement, decarbonization, regeneration, collaboration, and financing. The DTC has also developed a comprehensive long-term work program to implement effective measures that support the environment and achieve sustainability goals.

To this end, the DTC has released a White Paper on Sustainable Tourism in Monaco that draws on surveys, benchmarks, and dialogue with stakeholders. The paper aims to provide a better understanding of tourism in Monaco, identify its strengths and weaknesses, lay the foundations for sustainable tourism in the future, and draw inspiration from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Principality's own Energy Transition targets. Following its release, a CSR unit was established within the DTC in 2022, and a three-year CSR action plan was developed.

Among several ongoing initiatives, let's mention two educational tools that have been launched to aid in the measurement and improvement of one's impact on the environment while staying



in the area. These tools, called 'carbon calculators,' are tailored to professional event organizers and individual visitors. By utilizing them, visitors can gain a better understanding of their carbon footprint and receive suggestions on how to decrease it. This promotes sustainable tourism practices and supports the Principality's efforts towards environmental conservation.

Furthermore, the Monaco Convention Bureau has committed to the Ethical and Responsible Charter by Linkeus (the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Convention Bureau), which emphasizes the significance of responsible tourism practices. Along with the CSR Unit, it is presently working on creating a Guide for the Organizer of Responsible Events, set to be released in the summer. This guide will offer direction to professionals dedicated to producing socially responsible events and assist them in finding all the solutions they require in the Principality of Monaco.

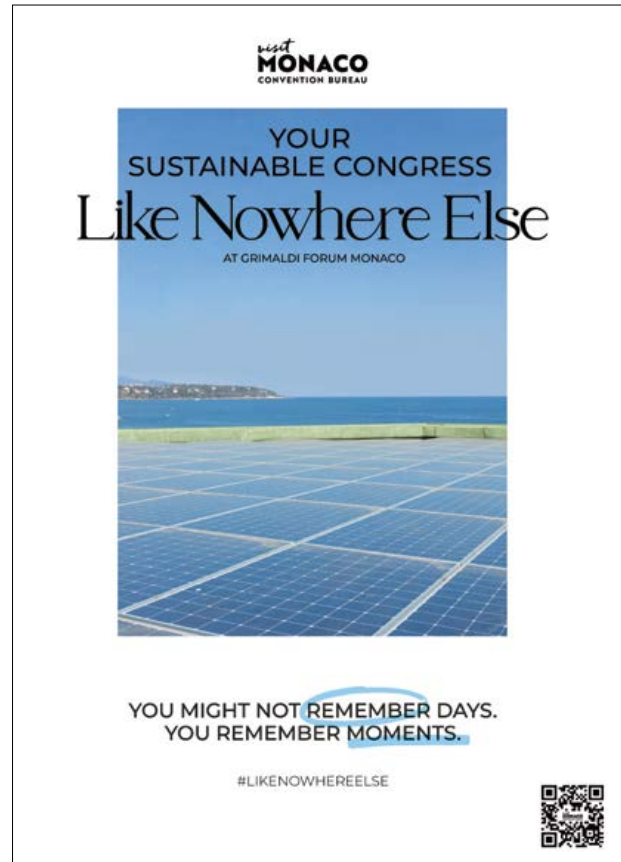
GRIMALDI FORUM & HOTELS PLAY THEIR PARTS

As one of Monaco's premier event venues, the Grimaldi Forum has made significant strides towards reducing its environmental impact. In recognition of its efforts, the venue has been awarded ISO 14001 certification for its comprehensive environmental management system. The system includes measures such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and responsible water usage, and the Forum is currently preparing for its 6th recertification, due in July of this year.

The venue is leading by example: it has embraced eco-friendly materials and technologies, such as LED lighting and energy-efficient air conditioning systems. It also works closely with local suppliers to source organic and fair-trade products for its catering services.

The Grimaldi Forum's commitment to sustainable transportation is in line with that of the Principality and its green mobility policies, which encourages visitors to utilize public transportation, and provides bike racks and electric car charging stations. Additionally, it is in the process of becoming compliant with the ISO 20121 event management standard, further solidifying its dedication to responsible and sustainable operations. Last but not least is the recent creation of a Director of CSR position, filled by Françoise Rossi, bolstering the Forum's commitment to sustainability.

Meanwhile, Monaco's hotels have shown their commitment to CSR through the formation of "Green Teams" within their establishments. These teams work to develop and implement concrete solutions to reduce the hotels' ecological impact, focusing on major areas of improvement such as water conservation, energy savings, and recycling. Overall, over 88% of the rooms in the Principality have earned some environmental certifications and labels.



MONACO CONVENTION BUREAU RECENTLY LAUNCHED A NEW CAMPAIGN.

In particular, the Clé Verte certification has been awarded to hotels such as Méridien Beach Plaza and Métropole Monte-Carlo, while Planet 21, the environmental certification of the Accor Group, has been granted to Novotel Monte-Carlo and Fairmont Monte-Carlo. Additionally, the Monte-Carlo Beach Hotel, Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel and Resort, Hotel de Paris and the Hermitage have all been awarded the Green Globe certification, which takes social conditions into consideration.

Last but not least is the Pacte pour la Transition Énergétique ('Pact for Energy transition'): it promotes the adoption of sustainable practices, and has been signed by several hotels in Monaco, representing 96% of the Principality's rooms.

Contact

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BOARDROOM ADVISORY BOARD



Peter Van Daele

Secretary General
International Union of Radio
Science (URSI)

Peter was elected as Secretary General of URSI in 2017. He is also professor at Ghent University and permanent member of staff from IMEC (Interuniversity MicroElectronics Center) in Belgium and more specifically with the IDLab (Internet Technology and Data Science Lab). He is directly responsible for several EU-funded research projects both on a technological level as well as on a more coordinating level e.g. as project coordinator of projects in the field of microelectronics and later in the area of Future Internet and Next Generation Internet.



Ariane Brusselmans

Director of Conferences
International AIDS Society

Ariane has more than fifteen years of professional experience in associations' management, including complex educational and event programming, project management, business development, strategic planning, and team leadership with international exposure. She worked for the International Society of Nephrology, the International Society of Endocrinology, and the European Society of Organ Transplantation.



Carlos Lee

Director General
European Photonics Industry
Consortium (EPIC)

As part of the EPIC mission, Carlos works closely with industrial photonic companies to ensure a vibrant and competitive ecosystem by maintaining a strong international network and acting as a catalyst and facilitator for technological and commercial advancement. He brings with him a strong background in microelectronics which was acquired through several management positions held at the international association SEMI.



Susan de Bievre

Association Consultant
& Advisor

Susan has worked in the medical association field for over 15 years. She was External Relations and Strategic Business Manager at the European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care where she led and built the strategic partnership with industry stakeholders. She moved to the International Society of Nephrology in a similar position in 2019. She today holds senior consultancy and advisory roles for several medical associations.



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