



BOARDROOM

THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

PIONEERING PARTNERSHIPS FOR ASSOCIATION GROWTH

— VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | VOLUME 3 | **2023 VOLUME 4** —



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Should Associations Take a (Political) Stand?

Associations, by their very nature, are often at the forefront of addressing critical societal and industry challenges. They serve as platforms for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. Yet, the question of whether associations should delve into political matters or take a stand on global conflicts remains a topic of intense debate and reflection.

Amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, as well as Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine, associations may face the need to take a position. Some have felt pressure from their members to do so, leading them to define their stances on these global issues. Social media is the place where some of your stakeholders may express their views, potentially bringing your organization into the spotlight, whether for positive or negative reasons.

At the heart of this debate lies a delicate balance. Associations must consider whether engaging with political issues aligns with their fundamental objectives. If an issue is inextricably linked to their purpose, it may be not only justifiable but imperative for them to take a stand.

However, associations also usually house diverse memberships, encompassing a wide spectrum of political views and affiliations. Deciding to wade into the political arena can pose the risk of alienating members and

fostering internal divisions. The potential impact on membership unity cannot be underestimated.

The decision to engage in political matters also hinges on whether the association possesses the requisite expertise and authority to contribute meaningfully to the discourse. In some cases, associations can offer unique insights, foster constructive dialogue, or provide essential resources. When their involvement can truly make a difference, taking a stand may be the right course of action.

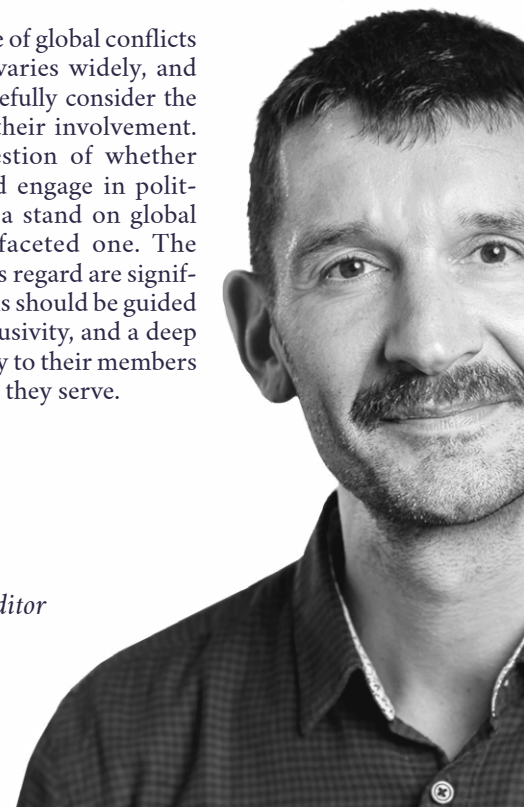
Involving members and stakeholders in the decision-making process is an essential step. Associations can seek their input through surveys, meetings, or open dialogues. Engaging the wider audience in shaping the association's stance can foster a sense of ownership and inclusivity.

By essence, the nature of global conflicts and political issues varies widely, and associations must carefully consider the potential impact of their involvement. Conversely, the question of whether organizations should engage in political matters or take a stand on global conflicts is a multifaceted one. The decisions made in this regard are significant, and associations should be guided by transparency, inclusivity, and a deep sense of responsibility to their members and the communities they serve.



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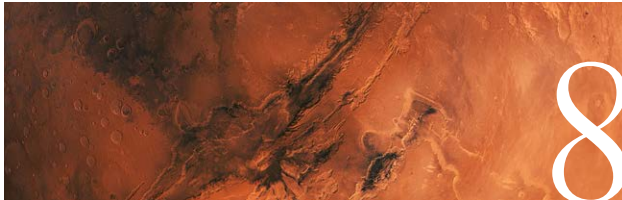
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Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, the international association of convention centres, contends that strategic partnerships enable organizations, even if they're small, to 'punch above their weight'.



Building Back Better Series

Artificial Intelligence: A Viral Sensation or A Revolutionary Tool?

As we strive towards a more sustainable future, the integration of AI into association operations can be a game-changer. It not only enhances the efficiency of organizations but also contributes significantly to building a more sustainable world. This article, part of our Building Back Better series, explores the ways in which AI benefits associations and how this, in turn, promotes sustainability.

Words Vicky Koffa

AI and its 'magical' powers have been around for a while, mostly used though by IT experts. Its popularity in the meetings industry started rising after the pandemic to become a widespread tool assisting all kinds of organizations with their day-to-day activities. *"At the beginning of 2023 the global business events industry was barely talking about AI. Nine months later, 68% of business event professionals are telling us that they see AI as a crucial tool for their business,"* says Sherrif Karamat, President and CEO of PCMA.

The Professional Convention Management Association has already integrated Project Spark in its tasks and for its members. The AI tool for eventprofs, by eventprofs aims to help their members jump-start routine event planning tasks, complementing human skills and expertise. *"According to a recent PCMA survey, nearly 70% of meeting planners see AI as crucial for their business. To meet this demand, PCMA launched Project Spark, an AI platform tailored for meetings and events. After garnering over 3,500 users since its spring launch, Spark is unveiling expanded paid versions for both individual users and enterprise clients,"* says Karamat.

THE MAGIC WAND OF ASSOCIATIONS

The fuss over AI has moved beyond ChatGPT and its powerful text output abilities to countless other applications able to generate images, videos, music, notes, speech... any task you can think of really. The technology offered (mostly for free, with advanced options available on payment) has unleashed endless possibilities for associations to tap into.

Personalizing member experiences by sifting through large amounts of content within the association to determine what is of greatest value to the individual; 24/7 member support through chatbots; streamlining membership workflows like automating finances, generating invoices, and accepting applications; predicting membership dissatisfaction by evaluating member feedback, surveys, and social media conversations; creating engaging content; the list is endless.

"The meetings industry is on the cusp of an AI revolution. As artificial intelligence capabilities rapidly advance, business event professionals are exploring how to harness these tools to enhance productivity and performance," states Karamat.

Associations are starting to catch up, but with caution. As the possibilities are overwhelming most choose to start small. Jimena Gómez de la Flor, Communications Director at the European Flavour Association, uses AI for summarizing PDFs, brainstorming event ideas and generating invitations: *"It's very helpful for the little things, the little processes that can be optimized, especially for the more simple, tedious, time-consuming things that can really save you a lot of time. It allows you to be more focused on what's important for your members."*

Besides improving their services to their members, associations have the opportunity to grow from within. Through AI, employees find the right tools to unfold their potential, as Loredana Bucseanu, Project Manager for AI at DIGITAL SME Alliance, claims from experience. *"AI-driven insights personalize professional development, helping employees tailor their skill enhancement journey. This not only empowers individuals to thrive in their current roles but also prepares them for the evolving demands of the future workplace,"* she says.

SUSTAINABILITY ACCELERATED

The integration of AI into association operations has a broader impact on global sustainability efforts. Optimization of resource allocation, minimizing waste and promoting eco-friendly practices (by collecting and analyzing data from a wide variety of municipal smart meters), comes to mind first. AI-driven solutions are also actively engaged in monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while supporting the growth of clean energy solutions. AI can optimize energy consumption in buildings, factories, and transportation systems by analyzing patterns and large-scale data

(from solar panels, for instance) to identify areas where energy is being wasted and suggesting improvements.

Moreover, AI's contribution extends to education and awareness campaigns on pressing global issues. By facilitating the creation of informative resources, AI plays a vital role in driving positive change. Additionally, its language translation capabilities enable associations to connect with a global audience, fostering international cooperation and understanding.

CHALLENGES & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

However, many have treated this opportunity as a threat. Could these new 'robotic' skills take over the human factor? Are current jobs in jeopardy? Is AI replacing human creativity? Can it be used unsupervised? Karamat reassures: *"While AI shows immense promise, striking the right balance between human creativity and machine efficiency will be key. AI is ready to revolutionize meetings - but human oversight is still essential."*

From practical day-to-day experience, Gómez de la Flor shares: *"It's like having a new colleague for free. You have to train your colleague, obviously, and you might have to double-check what your new colleague does, but you don't have to do it physically and start from scratch. It's a valuable tool, especially for small secretariats."*

Privacy concerns and the perpetuation of biases are other key issues that need careful consideration regarding the extensive use of AI. These challenges require organizations to prioritize ethical AI development and governance to ensure AI's positive impact on both associations and the world. *"Incorporating AI in our workflows also emphasizes the importance of ethical decision-making. As project managers, we navigate the responsible use of AI to ensure that our technological advancements align with our values, contributing to a society that thrives on fairness and integrity,"* argues Bucseanu.

For once, legislation is not playing catchup, but is a step ahead. *"In April 2021, the European Commission proposed the first EU regulatory framework for AI, emphasizing the need to analyze and classify AI systems based on the risks they pose to users. These regulatory measures will serve as a precedent and guide for the responsible development and deployment of AI systems worldwide,"* the European Parliament informs. The priority is to make sure that AI systems used in the EU are safe, transparent, traceable, non-discriminatory and environmentally friendly. The EU AI Act is expected to be adopted by the end of 2023.

In conclusion, the integration of AI into association functions and services is not only a boon for these organizations and their members but also a significant step towards a more sustainable and inclusive world. As Bucseanu states, *"AI can be a force multiplier for collaboration. This synergy of human intelligence and artificial intelligence creates an environment where teams can achieve more together, and this will be reflected in global sustainability."*

The Importance of Adaptability in Fortifying Performance

Boardroom contributor **Dr Ole Petter Anfinssen**, Executive Director of EDBAC, explains why adaptability is key to thriving and driving success.

As I step out for work today, I can't help but notice how dramatically the world has changed in the past four years. In the not-so-distant past, our work environment was heavily influenced by lengthy commutes, frequent travels, and traditional office setups. Our choices regarding how and where we worked were primarily dictated by our proximity to home and the associated transportation expenses.

That is not to say this was a negative - it was a different way of working.

Nevertheless, the pandemic introduced a multitude of challenges in our work and daily problem-solving approaches. It underscored the growing urgency for new technology adoption while intensifying the pressure to adapt.

If technology was not developing rapidly enough prior to the pandemic, its growth has unquestionably accelerated in the aftermath. This surge of technological advancement has been met with a greater degree of enthusiasm and a reduced resistance to change compared to the pre-pandemic era. This shift is largely attributed to our collective eagerness to navigate our way back to what was once considered "normal."

In these turbulences, adaptability has emerged as a crucial skill, determining

how we manoeuvre adversity, overcome challenges, and remain focused, while still performing at a satisfactory level.

ADAPTABILITY - CRUCIAL TO PERFORMANCE

Adaptability is best explained as how we change or evolve to cope with new environments, climates, and/or conditions, and/or how we develop to fit a new purpose and/or overcome challenges. It's evident in the words "adapt" and "ability," which together encapsulate our capacity to adjust to changes. Given the perpetual fluctuations in our environment and climate, embracing adaptability has become imperative.

This is of course applicable to work as how we work is constantly shifting due to financial instability and technological advancements for instance, as life within associations has changed due to hybrid and flexible working. This is interlinked with organisational culture and how associations create and fortify energizing working environments, supporting performance, where employees can thrive.

BEING LEFT BEHIND

If it has not already, adaptability will determine the winners of this new "world" moving forward. Those who cannot develop new skill sets, find a new purpose,

or reinvent themselves will be left behind by those who will, as the world is developing more rapidly than before.

This is also worrying, as we can now see clear parallels to the predetermined instincts - survival of the fittest. This is the new reality we all have to come to terms with, which will challenge how we see ourselves, our strengths, and our weaknesses.

It compels us to attain a heightened level of self-awareness, encouraging us to perceive the world beyond the boundaries of our individual consciousness. It offers a unique perspective through an interdimensional lens, fostering a universal comprehension of our own existence. This is the undeniable reality!

EMBRACING CHANGE & ENSURING SUCCESS

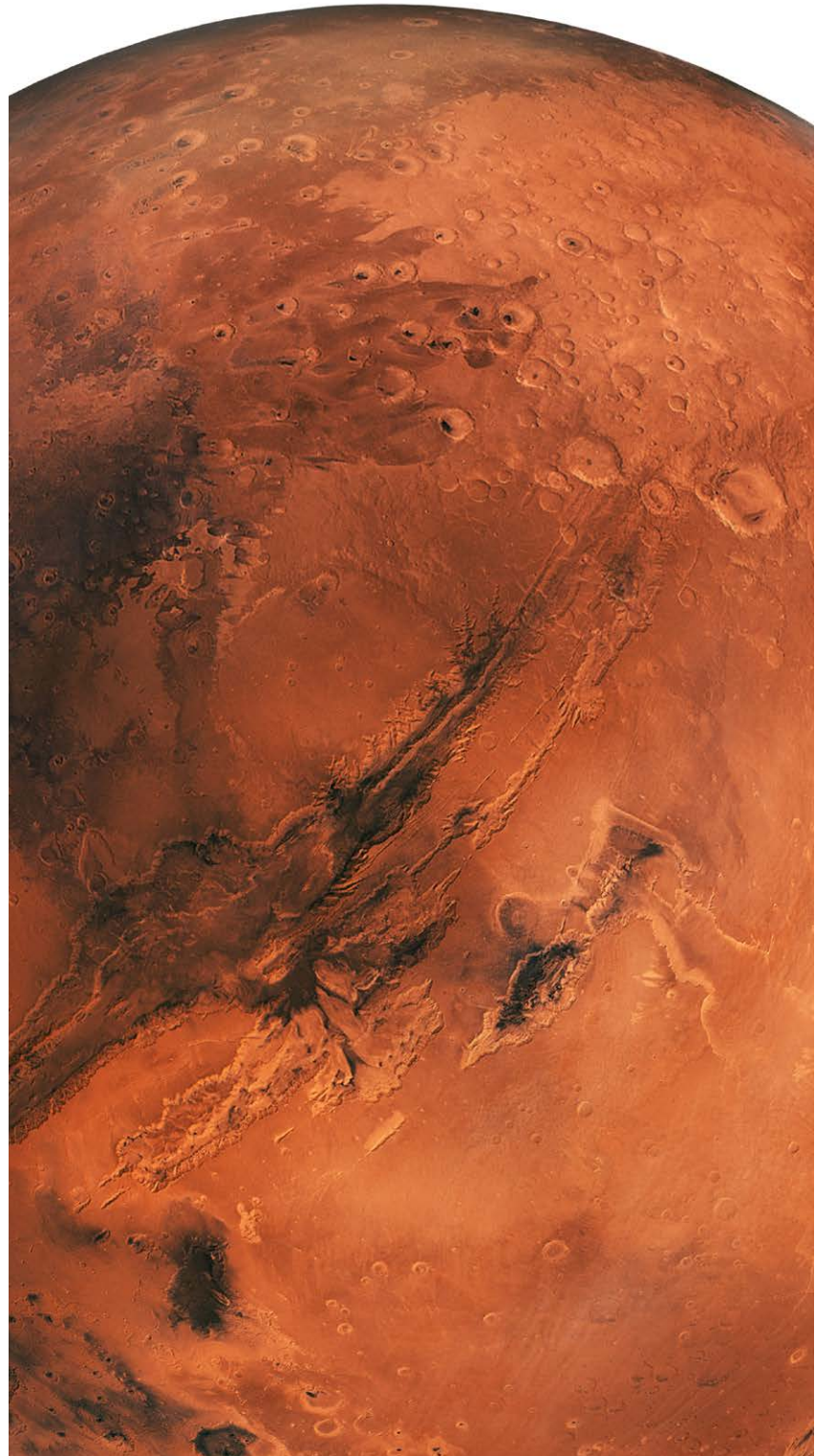
Being able to adapt to changes is not a new concept, but the need for adaptability has been accelerated by the pandemic. Hence, how we approach challenges and learn new skills to fit a new purpose has rarely been more important. Now, we need to look at how we can create the best foundation for ourselves, and if not already, how we can become more adaptable and increase our chances for success.

The good news is that it is possible to train yourself to become more adaptable, in the same way as you can train yourself to develop other skills as discussed in my previous articles. But we need to challenge ourselves and practice self-discipline as it requires effort - like anything else you want to become good at.

In order to become more adaptable, you can start by working on the 12 practices below and add these to your daily routine. It might seem like a lot, but when you get into it this will become an integrated part of everyday life, ultimately making you more adaptable.

1. Make sure you get enough quality sleep.
2. Be physically active and engage in regular exercise, while maintaining a balanced and healthy diet.
3. Be curious and open to different ways of doing things.
4. Set new goals for yourself.
5. Work when you are most concentrated, focus on the goal and not the obstacles
6. Provide structure to your life - and work life
7. Make clear to-do lists, so you do not have to go around memorizing things.
8. Set boundaries for yourself. Do not be afraid to say no, and you do not have to give an explanation.
9. Get to know your strengths and weaknesses - where can you improve?
10. Practice self-discipline to manoeuvre your own behaviour.
11. Engage in personal development and pursue new knowledge.
12. Make time for yourself, switch off and learn new things.

As the world is changing, we need to change with it. Adaptability is key to performance and how to thrive in the future.



A vibrant sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water's surface. A small boat is visible on the horizon line to the left. The overall scene is warm and dynamic, with the water's ripples catching the light.

FEATURE

Pioneering Partnerships for Association Growth

This Boardroom Special Feature delves into the realm of strategic partnerships, where the synergy of shared resources and complementary objectives can significantly enhance your organization's reach and influence. In this exploration of the intricacies and potential of these collaborations, we have drawn from the expertise of seasoned contributors to guide you through the art of forming and nurturing successful alliances.

How Partnerships Can Shape the Future of Associations

Strategic partnerships are formidable tools that offer the potential to achieve more with fewer resources, and when executed effectively, they hold the power to generate significant value for your organization and its members.

Words Remi Deve

Traditionally, associations have focused on internal organic growth to enhance their operations. Yet, strategic partnerships have emerged as an increasingly appealing alternative to conventional expansion methods. These partnerships, also known as strategic alliances, enable organizations to collaboratively leverage specific resources and capabilities while pursuing mutual or complementary objectives.

While partnerships may appear straightforward in concept, their practical implementation and operational maintenance can prove to be challenging. They often suffer from inadequate resourcing, with partnership management duties often buried under the catch-all category of "other duties as assigned."

This makes it difficult for staff to consistently prioritize the follow-up and execution of partnerships. Many associations find themselves reacting to the latest opportunity that presents itself rather than developing a proactive, strategic approach to partnership cultivation. These challenges not only hinder the initiation of partnerships but also diminish the impact of existing ones within the organization's portfolio.

In simple terms, strategic partnerships enable you to optimize your limited resources by leveraging key assets and connecting with new audiences and platforms to expand your influence, opportunities, and reach. In an environment of tightening budgets and increasing expectations, identifying key partnerships can extend your brand's reach or enhance your member offerings.

As the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research puts it: *"Strategic partnerships and collaborations are the cornerstone of our progress at the Alliance. Over the years, we have worked with a diverse range of stakeholders including national and local governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, research institutions, universities, civil*

society organizations and membership organizations. These players contribute their own perspectives, approaches, and expertise towards our shared vision of promoting the generation and use of health policy and systems research as a means to improve health systems in low- and middle-income countries."

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Strategic partnerships may have several defining characteristics. Firstly, they hinge on the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements, often spanning across a spectrum of organizations, encompassing non-profit, for-profit, or for-benefit entities. They can also be characterized by their enduring nature, constituting long-term, multi-disciplinary initiatives that break free from the confines of departmental boundaries. Finally, they serve as potent vehicles for attaining specific outcomes that steer your organization toward its predefined strategic objectives. In essence, these partnerships represent a multifaceted and dynamic approach to fostering collaboration and achieving shared goals across diverse sectors and entities.

In fine, partnerships extend beyond fleeting transactions, representing a gateway to enduring possibilities. The cultivation of a robust, mutually beneficial strategic partnership opens doors for your organization and its members, delivering an array of advantages. These can include an amplified platform for industry messages, elevated brand visibility, access to new and diverse audiences, cost-effective resources, and opportunities for thought leadership through speaking engagements and written insights. Such collaborations will definitely enhance the collective influence and potential of your organization, fostering a lasting impact within the industry.



In an article featured on www.asaecenter.org, Sharon H. Kneiss and Warren Bimbleck reflect on the strategic partnership they established. Sharon served as the CEO and president of a trade association representing the waste and recycling industry, while Warren held the position of group president at a media and events company. Together, they orchestrated a strategic alliance that proved advantageous for both organizations and offered valuable insights into the significance and complexities of such partnerships: *“We could leverage the partnership to build momentum, strengthen both brands, enhance resources, strengthen financial positions, and capitalize on each other’s strengths.”*

DOING IT RIGHT

It’s safe to say that strategic partnerships have the potential to revolutionize your organization, producing benefits that far exceed what you could achieve independently. However, it’s crucial to do it right.

Associations often maintain lists of numerous existing partners, many of whom fail to deliver their full potential due to insufficient

resources and positioning for success. Becoming more selective and deliberate in the relationships you cultivate reduces the risk of unequal partnerships and enhances the likelihood of fulfilling your end of the partnership.

Prioritize addressing gaps in existing partnerships, whether they pertain to market awareness, audience expansion, member benefits, or other areas, to maximize the benefits derived from the partnership. If a partner isn’t contributing value aligned with your strategic goals, it may not be the right fit at this juncture. Choosing the right partner is pivotal, given that partnerships demand considerable effort.

Once you’ve identified organizations that can serve as valuable partners, the path to success must be cleared. This involves assigning dedicated staff for planning and project management and securing buy-in from decision-makers across departments. A genuine partnership often necessitates significant effort from your organization, and any obstacles can trigger a chain reaction leading to the partnership’s failure.

The Benefits of Partnership or Acquisition in Leadership Succession

As more longtime executives approach retirement, many associations are facing leadership succession challenges. If your organization doesn't have an heir apparent, it might be time to consider a business partnership or acquisition strategy.

Words Scott Gerber

Many association executives are taking steps to groom the next generation of leaders as part of their organization's succession plan, but some are finding the process of identifying and preparing future leaders from within to be challenging. To protect the organization's value to members and preserve what current leaders have created with commitment and passion, some associations may find it useful to consider another scenario for transition—a business partnership or acquisition.

In many instances, an acquisition or partnership may be the best solution, especially if another organization has a complementary vision and set of values. Often an organization takes this route because the partner or acquirer can provide much-needed investment capital, particularly if the association is cash-strapped or losing members.

A business partnership or acquisition strategy for succession can provide several key benefits:

Technology upgrades. Many organizations are still working on legacy IT systems—technology that is behind the times or not internally owned. The right strategic partner or acquirer may have a solid suite of technology products and services that will help the association to grow and thrive in the future. Or a partner's investment may enable the organization to access the latest technology directly and build a core IT infrastructure rather than relying on third parties.

Ultimately, the return on investment in new technology systems can be tremendous. For instance, new technology can dramatically improve the member experience, making it more digital and personalized.

A capital infusion, combined with relevant external insights and industry expertise, could breathe new life into membership, updating what's antiquated and building something new that's more in line with the organization's mission, vision, and purpose.

New talent. Association leaders may be loyal to the people who helped the organization grow, but they should also be looking at how additional investments in staff can take the association to the next level.

A partnership or acquisition could mean additional resources to hire skilled professionals dedicated to membership acquisition and retention. It might also create an opportunity to focus on business development, creating new sources of non-dues revenue to sustain and grow the organization in new and smarter ways. New team members bring new ideas that may help attract a more diverse leadership and membership.





More relevant benefits. An association's portfolio of benefits should be reviewed periodically to ensure that its offerings are still relevant to members. An acquisition or partnership strategy serves as an opportunity to assess, audit, and reinvest in valuable benefits. In a period of change or transition, it might be easier to sunset member products and services that members no longer value.

For instance, your organization may be well known for its large-scale meetings and conferences but may have failed to invest in smaller meetings or summits that keep members engaged year-round. By evaluating current programs and rating the ones that are most valued, you can determine which areas of work are ripe for expansion and new business opportunities.

SUCCESSION SUCCESS

A strategic partnership or acquisition as part of a succession strategy isn't about selling out to cash in; it's about considering what's best for the organization. That means you'll be looking to identify potential partners or acquirers who will act as faithful stewards of the association. This may be another organization that is as deeply entrenched in your industry as you are, or it could be a current investor, sponsor, member, or industry executive.

Think about your organization's most valuable assets—your membership, events, publications, and advocacy efforts—and identify parties with best-in-class business practices that would see those assets as a natural extension of what they already do.

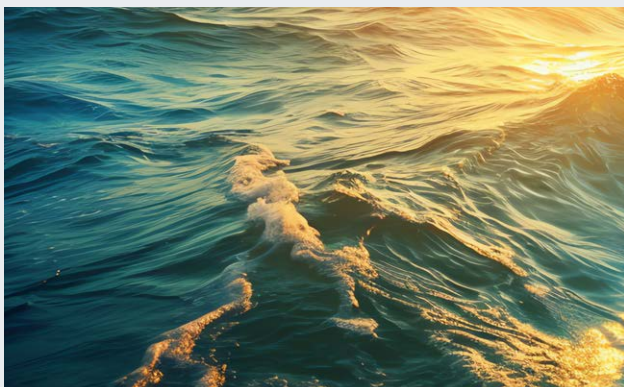
A partnership or acquisition could help amplify your mission, vision, and ethos.

Finding people with the same loyalty and passion as your longtime executives won't be easy, but it's an essential task for ensuring the organization's survival.

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Partnering for Impact: An Italian Example

IAPCO member and winner of the Association's 2022 Collaboration Award, OIC Group's **Ginevra de Bellis** explains all about the Progetto Mentore initiative.



In 2022, OIC Group, an Italian Professional Congress Organizer (PCO), and Federcongressi&eventi, the Italian Association for Meetings & Events, received the prestigious IAPCO Collaboration Award for their outstanding partnership on the Progetto Mentore initiative.

Originating in 2010 within the Federcongressi&eventi Learning Center and supported by OIC Group over three years, the project's core objective revolves around nurturing the professional growth, training, and mentoring of budding talents entering the meeting industry. Progetto Mentore serves as a prime example of an impactful program that equips young participants with practical experience, fostering their skill development from both theoretical and hands-on perspectives. The initiative creates a 'safe space' where the next generation can learn, collaborate, and ask questions among peers.

Twenty students, carefully selected from master's degree courses at Italian universities, participate in the program every year. They attend the annual Federcongressi&eventi convention, where Progetto Mentore is conducted in both in-person and online formats. The overarching goal is to establish a pathway for professional enrichment, personal development, and training, guiding

the industry's future leaders. Through open dialogues and discussions, the needs and priorities of the next generation come to the forefront, shedding light on critical industry insights.

The program covers a wide array of topics, including personal branding, project management, client value creation strategies, and various other essential aspects of the meeting industry. The collaboration between OIC Group and Federcongressi&eventi began with a strategic planning phase, aligning their objectives for Progetto Mentore. Over months of concerted efforts, they refined their ideas and expectations, resulting in a well-executed initiative that exceeded all expectations.

The impact of this collaboration is profound, and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback and testimonials.

"The research and continuous training of talents are two key elements of OIC Group's strategy and positioning. For me, Progetto Mentore represents the joy of contributing to shaping the future: accompanying the next leaders of this industry on a journey of knowledge and personal enrichment, while also gaining a deeper understanding of their needs and the motivations arising from the new generation of talents," says Nicola Testai, CEO of OIC Group.

"Enhancing the personal development of the new generation aspiring to enter the meeting industry sector is an important objective for Federcongressi&eventi, within the perspective of sectoral growth and overall industry expansion. Progetto Mentore is undeniably one of the key projects in this regard," concludes Gabriella Gentile, President of Federcongressi&eventi.

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



The Joy of a Promiscuous Partnership Philosophy

Global Association Hubs' International Advisor **Martin Sirk** argues that associations would benefit from a more uninhibited and broadminded approach to their strategic relationships.

Of all the conference formats I've facilitated, none is more eye-opening and intellectually humbling than a "wisdom of crowds" workshop. The collective knowledge of a group of competent professionals is inevitably far greater than that of even the most expert speaker. On three occasions during the last few years, I have given roomfuls of international association leaders the task to identify as many different components and dimensions of "partnerships" as they can realistically imagine, and the aggregated results demonstrate that few associations are even scratching the surface of what is possible.

Why do so many associations insist on going it alone, or on only giving partnership relationships an occasional fling? One hypothesis is that partnerships are seen as secondary activities, not central - tactical rather than strategic - and associations have no default process for *always* considering partnership as part of their decision-making. There is also the fear of losing control, influence, or visibility. But all too frequently, there is simply a lack of imagination: the right questions have never been asked.

Whatever the reason, the reality today is that every association can improve performance by increasing its range of collaborative activities. And the beauty

of a more promiscuous partnership philosophy is that it doesn't require massive new budgets or capital investment, it simply requires an expanded way of thinking about four key dimensions*:

A. The objectives, challenges and projects that could benefit from working with others

B. The full range of potential partners

C. The assets that can be allocated to generate partnership value

D. The constraints and fears that prevent partnerships from working

A. OBJECTIVES, CHALLENGES & PROJECTS

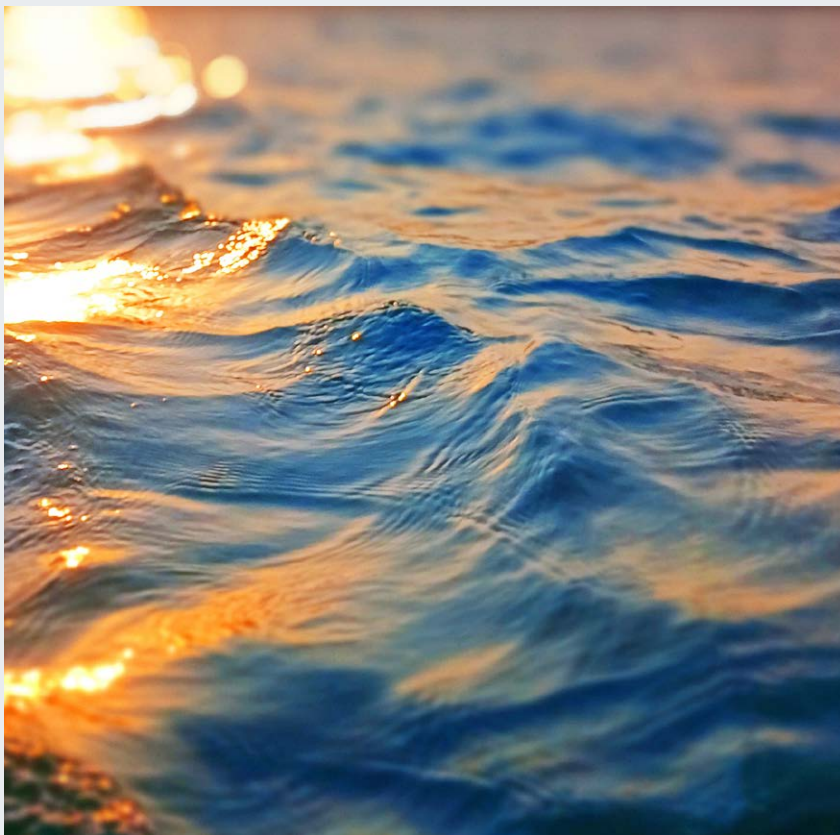
The starting point here is to critically analyse *all* the activities your association is currently carrying out, and those that were desirable but have had to be rejected for one or more reasons, asking the simple question: what might be possible if we weren't attempting to do this on our own? New events and novel content, stronger advocacy, additional audiences, shared (and therefore reduced) overhead costs and risks, more extensive research and forecasting, missing skillsets overcome - all these and more are achievable for the same or lower cost.

The catch is, wherever you decide to enter into a partnership, you are also sharing

the rewards: the outcomes are "ours", not "mine"! This is why it's so vital to determine where the association genuinely cannot afford to share the limelight. Some partnerships should be temporary, or constrained by geography (for example: "compete in Europe, collaborate in Asia"); some can be with a single partner, others a larger group; some can change the nature of your governance or management practices, others are almost entirely risk-free for the rest of your enterprise. You don't need to pick just one partnership model in perpetuity, the range of options is almost unlimited.

B. POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Other associations are obvious candidates, even bitter rivals (provided you can carefully define the parameters of your collaboration). So too are companies that are currently being treated as sponsors or exhibitors or advertisers: almost all will react positively to a deeper, less transactional proposal. But have you considered universities or research institutions, bloggers and podcasters, IT suppliers and potential office space sharers? It's really sensible to consider all of the interested parties in the destinations where you will be holding future major events, from citizen groups to policymakers to start-up communities - but bear in mind that some destinations



are much more geared up than others to help you forge these relationships, including the Global Association Hubs cities: Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC.

Here's a simple idea to lift the spirits of all your team members: partner with a local art college to design unique and inspiring artwork for your office walls that reflects your mission or community. And one of the biggest untapped sources of partnership could be hiding in plain sight: your own members, whose skills, resources, and connections are almost certainly being under-utilized.

C. ASSETS

What can you offer potential partners? What skills or resources are you missing? Both sides of the equation are equally important, and both deserve a detailed audit and creative thinking. Associations

frequently underestimate the potential value of assets that they take for granted: their communication channels, their circles of trust and established relationships, their staff skillsets, their cultural know-how.

It's also rare that associations carry out a detailed investigation of their potential partners' weaknesses or gaps, but that is where your own assets have the greatest potential impact and value, and where you have the strongest negotiation leverage. Always ask this open-ended question after the deal looks ready to go ahead: *"Are there any additional assets that either of us can throw into the mix that will make this partnership even more valuable?"*

D. CONSTRAINTS & FEARS

Entering into a partnership relationship without an 'eyes wide open' awareness of all the factors that could prevent it from succeeding is a very unwise move.

Every new partnership is an experiment and leap of faith, and just like opening a business or entering a marriage, there are no guarantees that it will work out after the honeymoon period.

Have you considered the personalities of the key players who will need to work together? Are you making changes in an area where some of your members have an emotional attachment? Do both partners have meaningful 'skin in the game'? Is enough cash on the table to achieve the stated objectives? Is there even a shared understanding of the partnership's goals, or a good alignment of values and culture?

Before running three workshops on this subject, I had considered myself a very experienced partnership practitioner, with dozens of projects under my belt, confident that I could easily identify the most important issues under each of these four headings. Afterwards I felt deflated by my overconfidence and hubris! The delegates came up with literally dozens of extremely relevant examples and options I had not even considered. I'm now confident that my extensive checklists are still incomplete and missing many important ideas, but at least they are a starting point for any association wanting to take this issue seriously, and to put partnerships at the centre of their strategic decision-making process.

*Boardroom is publishing as an addendum to this article the full checklists created from these workshops. Get them by scanning this QR code:



Global Association Hubs, a partnership between Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC, 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.

Brussels
Dubai
Singapore
Washington DC

GLOBAL
ASSOCIATION
HUBS



Stronger Together

Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, the international association of convention centres, contends that strategic partnerships enable organizations, even if they're small, to 'punch above their weight'.

We just had our first ever local AIPC Academy at the MTCC in Toronto, organized in close collaboration with the Convention Centers of Canada (CCoC). It is the result of a partnership which started in 2020, following a conversation with Barry Smith - executive director of the CCoC and a friend since many years.

Since then, many other partnerships have been created between AIPC and various organizations, all with the same ambition: to become stronger together.

For those who know Belgium just a bit, it might come as a surprise that its national motto is "stronger together". Split into



regions and sub-regions, each with their own government and parliament, it is sometimes hard to see how that actually works.

Fortunately, it is a lot easier to see the advantages of partnerships at the level of AIPC and to make them work. AIPC - though truly global - is a relatively small organization. As a result, partnerships are not a nice-to-have but a key success factor. This becomes especially clear when industry-wide challenges need to be addressed. For example: from the start of the pandemic, UFI, ICCA and AIPC joined forces in creating resources - such as the guides for dealing with the different phases - which we made available to the entire event industry, independently from membership to our respective associations.

The same was done when it comes to sustainability. Kathleen Warden from the Scottish Event Campus pushed the start button for UFI, ICCA and AIPC to work together on a climate pledge

(under the supervision of the United Nations), which was presented at COP26 in Glasgow two years ago. Since then, the initiative has continued to grow and has been lifted at the level of the Joint Meeting Industry Council (JMJC), managed by the recently appointed director Alex Alles. The initiative - known as the Net Zero Carbon Event initiative - has over 600 supporters in 60 countries.

But partnerships can also result in smaller, though not less important, outcomes. The strategic alliance AIPC has with the Convention Centres of Canada is a nice example. AIPC has a number of educational flagship events, such as the Academy, which is a one-week intense management course touching upon all the different aspects of convention centre management. While well attended, its location in Belgium does create a threshold for certain venues to participate. So, Barry Smith and I decided to perform a test and co-created an Academy specifically for the Canadian convention centres, which took place in Toronto. The overall concept was kept, but tweaks were done on the format (slightly shorter) and also on the target audience (which was broadened to convention centres *and* service suppliers). The outcome was double: CCoC was able to offer a new educational service to its members and AIPC was able to increase engagement with the Canadian community of convention centres. As a result, we are now analyzing whether this model could be rolled out into other regions, such as Africa or Asia.

Next to jointly addressing industry challenges or co-creating professional education with other associations, we also cherish close collaboration with AIPC's Business Partners. These global companies serve the convention centre community in different capacities, from architecture to technology. Their insights and network allow us to continuously enhance our offering when it comes to education and research and very often they are actively involved in developing and implementing this offering.

These three types of partnerships allow AIPC to 'punch above its weight' and increase the value delivered not only to our community but also to the communities of the partners involved, making us stronger together.

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





The reality today
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Zurich: A Truly ‘Swisstainable’ Conference Destination

Switzerland, known for excellence in various fields, also champions sustainability, or ‘Swisstainability’ as they like to call it. Zurich, its largest city, stands out as a sustainable destination for association events.

Words Marc de Faoite



Switzerland’s pristine natural sights and its unique heritage and culture.

Six cities are now part of the GDS movement (Global Destination Sustainability), which envisions thriving places and communities activated by regenerative tourism and events, aligned with UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). Among these six GDS sites is Zurich, Switzerland’s largest city, which ranked #12 in the latest rankings of the GDS-Index.

AN ECOSYSTEM FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

Ideal for business events, Zurich offers the perfect setting for event planners, particularly for events centred around Life Sciences, Cleantech, ICT, and Finance. Zürich Tourism’s congress team is well-connected with these industries and can facilitate valuable contacts, arrange speakers, and organize technical visits.

Zurich’s success factors include world-class academic institutions, strategic investors, cutting-edge intellectual property strategies, innovation-friendly authorities, and a thriving startup ecosystem. The city works to facilitate collaboration between private industry, research institutions, and authorities, creating a supportive and innovative environment.

From timepieces to railways, from chocolate to cheesemaking, and much more besides, the Swiss reputation for high standards of excellence is world famous. The old dictum of *‘if something is worth doing, it’s worth doing well’* seems to be embedded in the national DNA.

Sustainability is no exception to this unwritten rule, with the nation appropriating and self-styling its approach as “Swisstainability”, and as might be expected the focus is centred on efficiency and attention to detail, as well as

Zurich's central-European location, combined with Switzerland's world-class rail system that connects to the networks of all five neighbouring countries, makes reaching the city by train a viable and environmental option for delegates which can significantly reduce any event's carbon footprint.

VENUES LEADING THE WAY IN SUSTAINABILITY

The Arena Convention Expo Zurich (ACE) is a collaboration between Messe Zürich, the Hallenstadion Zürich and Zürich Tourism. With 30,000 sqm spread across seven exhibition halls, Messe Zürich is a popular convention venue. Its rooftop solar array generates 150,000 kWh annually, providing 100% of the Messe's electricity. Meanwhile, Hallenstadion Zürich is one Europe's largest multi-purpose halls, with a capacity for up to 15,000 guests over 14,000 sqm. It has committed to reducing food waste by working with caterers that favour seasonal local produce and partnering with the fairpflichtet (right and fair) and myClimate labelling systems.

The Zurich Convention Centre reopened in spring 2021 after a major renovation project based on an entirely climate neutral approach, with the relevant ClimatePartner certification having been granted in summer 2019. In June 2022, the centre obtained the ISO 9001 Certificate for quality management after a rigorous inspection.

Among the green initiatives at the Convention Centre are the use of water from Lake Zurich for the building's thermoregulation. The catering uses regional and seasonal products, including a range of vegetarian and vegan dishes. The centre has also partnered with a forest conservation project in Peru to offset any unavoidable CO₂ emissions, while easy access by foot or public transport

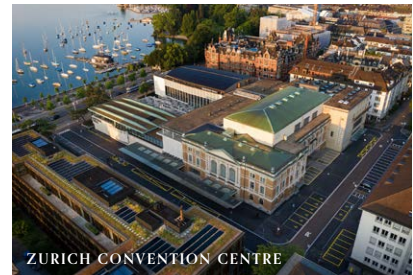
reduces conventions' and event organizers' reliance on fossil fuels.

All these activities ensure that the Convention Centre's operations are entirely climate neutral and do not result in any additional costs for organizers – a major area of concern when it comes to organizing sustainable meetings for planners.

The Circle at Zurich Airport is a commercial development that opened in autumn 2020, comprising a new district that includes ten restaurants and cafés, two hotels belonging to the Hyatt group with a total of more than 550 guest rooms, a congress centre capable of welcoming up to 2,500 attendees, a medical centre, and more besides. After a twelve-year process, The Circle received the Minergie and LEED Platinum certificates in June 2022, making it the largest Minergie and highest-rated LEED building in Switzerland. The Minergie certification recognizes the building's energy efficiency and significant use of renewable energy, including geothermal energy piles and photovoltaics. The Circle is also Europe's largest building complex with this certification.

"Sustainability and energy efficiency are central to real estate today," said Giorgio Engeli, Head Real Estate Portfolio Management Schweiz at Swiss Life Asset Managers, one of the co-owners of the development. *"We are very pleased to receive these two certificates for The Circle. They underline the forward-looking orientation and innovative character of the building."*

This environmentally compatible construction aligns with Zurich Airport's commitment to ecological impact assessment. The next major construction project, the new Dock A, aims for LEED certification and features sustainable wood construction, a unique approach for a terminal building of its size.



A TRULY 'SWISSTAINABLE' CONFERENCE DESTINATION.

Switzerland's centuries-long dedication to excellence, combined with a modern 21st century infrastructure, and commitment to sustainability, make Zurich an obvious and "Swisstainable" choice for association event planners eager to reduce the impact of their conferences.

To learn more about organizing your conference contact

Sarah Zürcher,
Manager Zurich Convention Bureau
(sarah.zuercher@zuerich.com) or
scan this QR code



More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

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



Meet the Visionary Canadians Attracting International Events

Canada's brightest minds are providing true value for business events



One of Canada's greatest offerings remains undiscovered by many. When people think of Canada, they may picture pristine mountainous landscapes, the most famously friendly people in the world or perhaps a bottle of maple syrup. And while Canada is blessed with unparalleled natural beauty and an incredibly welcoming population - some of whom enjoy a drizzle of syrup here and there - the country has a lot more to offer.

Canada is home to some of the globe's most visionary minds, and they are more than willing to share their ideas with the world.

In this article, we will examine how Canada's leading thinkers and intellectual offerings are changing the landscape of their sectors, and attracting - and benefitting - international business events.

CANADA'S INTELLECTUAL PROWESS

Canada is a powerhouse across numerous arenas of work, but particularly in six key sectors: agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, technology, life sciences, natural resources, and finance and insurance (F&I).

In the technology sector, for example, Canadian destinations are flourishing. In 2023, CBRE reported that Calgary, the Waterloo Region and Québec City were among those with the highest growth in their "Tech Talent Scorecard Ranking".

Meanwhile, in the F&I sector, Toronto remains North America's second-largest financial hub and contains over 600 fintech firms, 10,000 financial services companies and over 320,000 financial services professionals.

In the natural resources sector, Canada provides great value as a cleantech powerhouse. The country is the world's second largest producer of hydroelectricity and Vancouver, known for its natural beauty, is home to the largest hydrogen fuel cell industry on earth - with a 16% global market share.

These examples are just a surface level view of why Canada should be viewed as a global leader in these sectors, and the others identified above. If you're looking to host impactful and inspiring business events, this provides a fantastic opportunity.

THE CANADIAN VISIONARIES NETWORK

In each of the areas, there are Canadian academic, industry and association leaders undertaking pioneering work and driving their sector forward.

Event organizers can leverage this knowledge capital to enhance their agendas by hearing from these experts as keynote speakers, touring their state-of-the-art facilities and/or engaging in business-to-business exchanges with the organizations leading their field. Destination Canada recently developed the Canadian Visionaries Network (CVN) as a vehicle for telling the stories of Canada's thought leaders. The CVN aims to showcase the country's intellectual capital offerings and to connect organizations with the inspiring ideas and experiences of these influential innovators.

MEET THE VISIONARIES

Rather than simply describe the CVN, we thought it would be best to introduce two of its members - from the life sciences sector - to give you a better idea of the calibre of expertise available in Canada.

Professor Lara Mahal

"A lot of people don't realize the wealth of intellectual resources here, and I think it's important that they see it," claims Prof. Lara Mahal. Based in Edmonton, Alberta, Prof. Mahal was the recipient of a prestigious Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC), in Glycomics, in 2019.



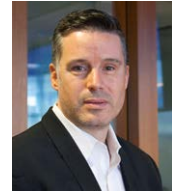
The highly competitive CERC Program supports world-renowned researchers, and offers universities award values of either \$8 million or \$4 million over eight years for them to establish ambitious research programs at Canadian universities.

Prof. Mahal's work focuses on system-based approaches to understand the complex sugars that encode the information governing our health.

"You have this wealth of expertise here and a local population that is really educated in a lot of different life sciences sectors, that actually then allows for a much more vibrant conference," she says.

Dr. Ryan D'Arcy

Having published over 260 academic works and attracted more than \$85 million in competitive research and innovation funding, Dr. Ryan Darcy is a leading mind within the neuroscience community.



He is the President and Chief Science Officer of HealthTech Connex, a biotechnology company based in the Metro Vancouver area, and is a three-time TEDX speaker.

His work with events, however, is not limited to delivering impactful addresses. In 2014, Dr. D'Arcy helped bring the International Conference on Biomagnetism - the world's premier conference on neuroscience and biomagnetism mapping on the brain - to Halifax, Nova Scotia. He says: *"Historically in neuroscience and brain research, Canada has been highly regarded on the world stage. Many of the pioneers around how we understand the brain come from Canada, which was a major advantage to holding the event here."*

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Many of Canada's brightest minds have helped draw events to the country, and many more have been leveraged by visiting organizations to enhance their meeting's agenda.

And while the CVN is a fantastic resource for an association looking to learn more about Canada's intellectual riches, many Canadian destinations have their own local ambassador programs that act as one-stop-shops for those looking to tap into a city's innovation ecosystem.

These initiatives - like the MIND Partnership in Vancouver or The Legacy Project in Saskatoon - allow visiting corporations and associations to connect with the right people to help make their event unforgettable.

Contact

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Calgary's Event Ecosystem: Calgary TELUS Convention Centre & Beyond

A vibrant and thriving city nestled in the heart of Western Canada, Calgary is rapidly emerging as the region's premier convention destination. With almost 100,000 sqm of cutting-edge meeting space, it's a city that's ready to welcome the world. Its strategic location, world-class facilities - spearheaded by the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre (CTCC) - and an unwavering commitment to service excellence are propelling Calgary into the spotlight, making it the go-to destination for international events.

Words Remi Deve



CALGARY TELUS CONVENTION CENTRE

Calgary, the fourth-largest city in Canada, offers a dynamic live music scene, diverse culinary delights, world-class theater, and an abundance of green spaces. It's the perfect fusion of urban vibrancy, welcoming hospitality, and unanticipated adventures that have transformed it into a global meeting hot spot.

Calgary's ascent to becoming a convention hub is underpinned by its good connectivity. Home to Canada's third busiest airport, Calgary International Airport, and headquarters for two major airlines, it has established itself as a bustling aviation hub.

Directly linked to over 90 domestic and international destinations, Calgary offers ease of access for attendees and event planners from across the globe.

Calgary is also a powerhouse for commerce and creativity, boasting key sector strength in aerospace, agribusiness, life sciences, financial services, energy, and technology. It has long been the epicenter for head offices and a hotbed for thought leadership, sponsorship, and innovation, making it a natural choice for hosting international conventions. Hosting a conference in Calgary offers a distinct

advantage through convenient access to a diverse range of thought leaders and experts across various domains, ensuring a competitive edge for your event.

CALGARY TELUS CONVENTION CENTRE: MORE THAN A VENUE

At the heart of downtown Calgary stands the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, a place that transcends the conventional definition of a venue. With about 11,500 sqm of meeting space, 36 meeting rooms, and a multipurpose hall, the CTCC anchors historic Stephen Avenue, the heart of the city. What truly sets it apart is its seamless connection to over 1,100 hotel rooms and the hottest restaurants, nightlife, and shopping destinations in Calgary.

Earlier this year, the CTCC introduced its fresh brand, centered on the dedication to crafting masterfully designed events. The process begins with a profound understanding of creating authentic and significant experiences within the city, molding each event into an "opportunity to explore and imagine the possibilities." It involves the art of storytelling, ensuring each event

carries a distinctive narrative that transforms it into a tailor-made occasion. Furthermore, it embraces quintessential hospitality, underpinning the commitment to provide a unique and memorable vision for each event. This approach aligns seamlessly with global endeavors to drive substantial change and promote a positive impact.

The concept of collective responsibility presents associations with a powerful avenue for instigating tangible change within both the host destination and their respective industries. The CTCC has made community engagement an integral aspect of its culture and actively champions causes and initiatives that transcend the confines of the convention centre, leaving a lasting impact on the broader community. By aligning an event with a venue that is deeply dedicated to community well-being and sustainability, these guiding philosophies naturally influence the conference's design, fostering a sense of responsibility and shared commitment to effect positive change.

INVENTURES: A TESTIMONIAL TO CALGARY'S INNOVATION

Inventures, a home-grown innovation event in Calgary, is a testament to the city's business community strength and tech leadership. As a one-of-a-kind experience that challenges convention and inspires

transformational thinking, it invites participants to explore new currents of thought in Alberta's key economic sectors, leading to unexpected insights and amazing possibilities.

Hosted by Alberta Innovates and CTCC, Inventures brings together entrepreneurs, thought leaders, startups and investors to connect, foster new collaborations and spark deal-making opportunities. It's the place to discover new technologies, talent, capital, customers and markets, from health tech and clean tech, to agtech, fintech and more.

Since its inception in 2018, Inventures has grown to a 3000-person conference and 2024 is expected to be even larger. As a breeding ground for innovation, the 2024 event will feature more than 300 thought leaders from over 30 different countries who are changing the innovation game. The outcome? Creative collisions that result in breakthrough solutions, scale-ready ventures, job creation, and economic and social transformation.

"Inventures taps into the pulse of global innovation, bringing bright minds and bold ideas together. The intense energy it creates leads to new collaborations and breakthrough solutions that benefit Alberta and the world," says Laura Kilcrease, CEO Alberta Innovates.

Inventures is a case study showcasing the CTCC's execution of their core values. Offering exemplary hospitality, the CTCC has hosted Inventures since its inception and, through this collaborative relationship, has helped the event grow into the success story it is today. The CTCC shares in Inventures' commitment to collective responsibility, working with the event to design immersive spaces highlighting integrations with local artists, breweries, Indigenous performers, and more. Together, event and venue work towards an aligned goal of fostering a place of possibilities – creating an environment for connections, innovative thinking, and social and economic progress.

CALGARY'S WARM WELCOME

Tourism Calgary works in close collaboration with the CTCC and event clients to ensure a seamless event experience. They provide support for booking accommodations, connections to local suppliers, and offer a wide range of destination services and tools, making sure your event in Calgary is a resounding success.

For more information and to plan your event at the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, visit www.visitcalgary.com/meet-CTCC



© KELLY HOFER



Brussels Welcomes The Association Place

Brussels, the bustling European capital, is gearing up to welcome a new addition to its vibrant landscape - The Association Place (TAP). This exciting initiative by visit.brussels Convention & Association Bureau is poised to become the go-to hub for international associations, offering a wealth of resources and opportunities.

Words Remi Deve



WHAT ASSOCIATIONS CAN EXPECT

Nestled at the heart of the European district, The Association Place is set to open its doors before the year's end. This project represents a significant step in visit.brussels' long-standing strategy to prioritize the international associations sector. Notably, the project received support from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve, underlining its commitment to this dynamic community.

The Association Place aims to foster collaboration and connection among international associations. It serves as a platform to promote partner activities and highlight the array of business services available for associations. Moreover, visit.brussels, which will manage the place, has designed an engaging yearly program of activities within the walls of TAP. This includes partner knowledge events and tailored networking gatherings.

In that regard, The Association Place is the city's premier first-stop shop for international associations, offering an wide variety of specialized services. One of its key features is providing a single point of contact for associations seeking information about services and stakeholders in Brussels. The Convention & Association

Bureau's expert team is ready to offer invaluable insights into various aspects of association business activities and events.

Registration to TAP is exclusively tailored for association executives, whether they're based in Brussels or abroad, seeking a central hub for their advocacy and activities.

"International associations have a significant impact on our destination that extends beyond their direct economic contributions, such as the creation of jobs and the generation of overnight stays through their meetings," says visit.brussels CEO Patrick Bontinck. *"Non-profits organizations and professional societies play a key role in the European democratic process by providing decision-makers with consolidated data and positions for the sector they represent. By providing a dedicated physical space for them, we encourage dialogue and international exchanges. TAP will be a place where associations can feel safe and ignite that flame that will spark positive change."*

In addition, TAP will offer a unique benefit - the chance to tap into a vibrant professional community. Whether you're based in Brussels, in Europe, or abroad, you can rent this space - at a preferred rate - for co-working or your board meetings, seminars, trainings or networking events, and thus effortlessly become part of a dynamic network comprising more than 40,000 individuals deeply engaged in European affairs.

MORE THAN A PHYSICAL PLACE

But The Association Place is more than just a physical space; it's a testament to Brussels' commitment to nurturing and supporting the international associations that call the city home. It's a place where collaboration thrives, knowledge is shared, and connections are forged.

TAP is set to become the epicenter for international associations in Brussels,



further solidifying the city's position as the top global hub for associations. As the doors open later this year, associations both within and beyond Brussels' borders can look forward to a thriving community and a wealth of resources to fuel their missions.

For now, associations have the chance to register before the year concludes, presenting a unique opportunity. By taking advantage of this offer, they gain access to a valuable perk: an additional 10 accesses each year, supplementing the 20 accesses already included in the subscription package. This proposition not only amplifies an organization's accessibility but also enhances the overall experience, enabling them to fully leverage the dynamic environment that this international associations hub provides.

THE ASSOCIATION HUB

Brussels boasts a unique standing when it comes to hosting international associations. The city is home to over 2,400 international associations, making it the world's number one association city.

With its strategic location, the capital city of Belgium - and Europe - serves as a focal point for decision-making, policy advocacy, and networking for a myriad of industry sectors. The city's reputation as a leading centre for associations is bolstered by its status as the headquarters of numerous international organizations, including the European Commission, the European Parliament, and NATO.

The presence of these influential institutions has attracted a diverse range of associations to set up their offices and hold their meetings and conferences in Brussels. The city offers a dynamic environment that fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and transnational cooperation. Associations based in Brussels benefit from the proximity to policymakers, stakeholders and journalists, allowing them to actively engage in shaping European and international agendas.

This proximity brings together experts, professionals, and thought leaders from various fields, creating unique opportunities for networking, partnership building, and innovative problem-solving.

TAP & BEYOND

For those considering hosting international events, visit.brussels Convention & Association Bureau offers dedicated assistance. This includes support in event bidding, industry-specific networking, event development, and participant hosting. With specialized tools dedicated to event organization, finding the perfect location or service provider is a breeze.

In addition, associations looking to maximize their presence in Brussels can tap into a range of free online resources tailored to meet their needs. From comprehensive guides on legal implications to thematic summaries covering areas like accounting, recruitment, and banking, to a directory of service providers, associations are well-supported.

Explore visit.brussels' dedicated online resources for international associations, featuring a treasure trove of customized materials. Be sure to subscribe to the ASSOCIATION newsletter to stay updated.



Te Ao Māori: New Zealand's Conference Advantage

In a changing world where diversity, equity, and inclusion are paramount, Aotearoa New Zealand is embracing the Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) approach in its conference landscape. This involves a deep connection to Māori culture and values, enhancing the appeal of New Zealand as a unique and culturally rich conference destination.

Words Rochelle Long

Achieving DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and ensuring an authentic connection with the local culture are becoming increasingly important to conference organizers.

While Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous Māori culture has always held appeal for international visitors, now the Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) approach is being increasingly embedded in its conference delivery, from engaging Māori speakers to including Māori representation on the Local Organizing Committee to support authentic co-creation.

Recognized as the tangata whenua - or people of this land - Māori have a world view with a strong emphasis on hospitality and respect for the natural environment. They are rapid risers in the wider New Zealand economy, delivering unique Mātauranga Māori (knowledge) in areas from food and fisheries to education and health.

"If a country's appeal for events could be compared to a gift box, with solutions for the organization's and delegates' business, educational and scientific objectives as the contents of the box, and the destination's tourism and culture as the emotional wrapping paper, then New Zealand is uniquely positioned to include its cultural appeal inside the box as well as on the wrapping paper." says Martin Sirk, founder of strategic consultancy Sirk Serendipity and recent visitor to New Zealand.

EQUITY OF VOICES

This was evident at the 8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport held at the Aotea Centre in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland last November, attracting 1,850 delegates from 90 countries.

Local host WISPA (Women in Sport Aotearoa) arranged an advisory rōpū (group) He Wāhine Toa Kei Te Kokiri, which, alongside Ngati Whātua Ōrākei as host iwi (tribe), guided organizers through the best way to integrate Māori values,

content and culture into proceedings: from the opening traditional pōwhiri welcome, to the poi and waiata (song) in the program activities, and the speakers on stage.

Outcomes for Māori were also embedded in the conference, which aimed to advance gender equity and equality in sports.

The event incorporated the first Indigenous-focused initiative of IWG's 29-year history, with a First Nations Workshop attracting 115 participants from 19 countries. Together they created an Indigenous Statement with 16 actions to promote a safe and equitable space for Indigenous women and girls around the world.



8TH IWG WORLD CONFERENCE
ON WOMEN & SPORT

Additionally, WISPA gave 76 scholarships to young leaders and Māori Kōhine (girls) to attend the conference, to empower the next generation.

A WIDER WORLDVIEW

Te Ao Māori is also being recognized as a unique strength for New Zealand at bidding stage.

Tourism New Zealand General Manager New Zealand & Business Events Bjoern Spreitzer says: *“The authentic and transformative cultural knowledge and experiences that Aotearoa New Zealand can offer business event attendees really sets us apart as a destination. These events create excellent opportunities for knowledge sharing and positive legacies.”*

Auckland has been chosen to host WIPCE, the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education in November 2025. It is expected to attract some 3,000 representatives to the NZICC to share strategies for culturally grounded education.

The bid was led by Auckland University of Technology's Office of Māori Advancement and its Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development with support from Auckland Convention Bureau and Tourism New Zealand.

AUT's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Māori Advancement, and Chair for WIPCE 2025, Professor Pare Keiha, says: *“We look forward to welcoming thousands of our global Indigenous brothers and sisters to the shores of Aotearoa New Zealand, so that we may collectively work to transform the lives of our young people, the world over.”*

COMMUNICATION & ADAPTATION

Ōtautahi Christchurch has won the 8th Adaptation Futures Conference in 2025 (AF2025), which is part of the United Nations World Adaptation Science Programme (WASP). The international climate adaptation conference will bring together some 1,500 top scientists, Indigenous scholars and policymakers, at Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre.

The conference bid was submitted by Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC) academics in partnership with mana whenua (the local tribe) Ngāi Tūāhuriri, with the support of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, plus a Scientific Steering Committee



drawn from universities across New Zealand, ChristchurchNZ, and Tourism New Zealand.

The bid acknowledged the vital role of inclusive approaches to climate-resilient development, which AF2025 will recognize by drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge and special relationships with mana whenua, to advance a fairer, more liveable, and sustainable future for all.

Christchurch will also host the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) in 2024, bringing more than 1000 delegates to Te Pae Christchurch.

The bid was again led by UC and endorsed by mana whenua Ngāi Tūāhuriri, with the support of ChristchurchNZ and Tourism New Zealand.

The conference theme, 'Whiria te tangata | Weave the people together: Communicative projects of decolonizing, engaging, and listening', invites reflection on the terms and models appropriate to describe contemporary communication, including the political and moral goals embedded in them.

“Supporting this conference is a unique opportunity for our academics to share their perspectives on Indigenous knowledge with the wider world and perhaps inspire communications research globally,” UC Vice-Chancellor Professor Cheryl de la Rey says.

For more information on bringing your next conference to New Zealand
businessevents.newzealand.com



Beyond Medicine: Vienna's Impactful Approach to Liver Congress

Vienna, known for its rich cultural heritage and stunning architecture, recently solidified its position as a leading destination for conferences with the successful hosting of the 2023 annual congress of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), which had a major impact on the city as a whole, leaving a long-lasting legacy.

Words Remi Deve



EASL TOOK A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO EDUCATING VIENNA'S YOUTH ABOUT LIVER HEALTH.

© STEVE FORREST / EASL CONGRESS 2023

Meeting Destination Vienna might well be the quintessential European conference destination. The city's well-developed infrastructure, state-of-the-art congress facilities, and iconic landmarks offer an ideal setting for the exchange of best practices and professional networking. Its positioning as a hub for knowledge in many sectors is further enhanced by its accessibility. The city is, for instance, well-connected to major international airports and better connected by rail than any other European city, making it easily accessible for international participants.

LOVE YOUR LIVER

From 21 to 24 June this year, Vienna hosted the annual congress of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), drawing approximately 7,000 participants from the fields of medicine and science. While the event focused on disseminating the latest research and knowledge in liver health, EASL 2023 went a step further, emphasizing impact projects for the general population under the theme "Love Your Liver." These projects, implemented by EASL with the support of the Vienna Convention Bureau, marked a

pilot endeavor that aimed to leave a lasting legacy in Vienna.

The success of EASL 2023, held at the Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center, extended beyond medical knowledge to the realm of legacy initiatives. Christian Woronka, Head of B2B Management at the Vienna Tourist Board and Director of the Vienna Convention Bureau, highlighted the bureau's role in aligning the visions of international associations with the destination's potential: *"As Convention Bureau, we have been looking at how legacy initiatives can be implemented in practice.*



In doing so, we see our role as matching the vision of international associations with the destination in the best possible way."

"We are aware that the approach is different for each association. Based on the ideas and visions of the association, we try to bring local partners on board who can concretely support the realization of the impact projects through their network and their area of expertise," he added.

In preparation for EASL 2023, a collaborative workshop took place early in the year involving the event organizer and the venue, Messe Wien. Subsequently, EASL worked diligently to elaborate on the proposed local impact projects. To facilitate the implementation, the Vienna Convention Bureau orchestrated partnerships between EASL and two crucial local institutions in the fields of education and healthcare: the Board of Education for Vienna and the Vienna Healthcare Group.

Ben Hainsworth, Executive Director of EASL, expressed his satisfaction with the collaborative efforts and the impactful results achieved during the event: *"We wanted the EASL Congress to leave a lasting impact on the scientists who attended*

but just as importantly, help to educate the broader Vienna public about the importance of liver health – and we did! The exemplary diligence, know-how and hospitality of our Viennese hosts and partners have made this event an impactful, joyful and resounding success."

BEYOND THE CONGRESS CENTRE

Beyond the walls of the congress, EASL 2023 actively engaged with the Viennese community. A free public event held at the Billrothhaus in Vienna's 9th district featured speakers from the fields of medicine and healthcare, raising awareness about liver health among the local population. Moreover, Viennese residents had the opportunity to have their liver health checked during the congress, with free liver examinations and hepatitis C tests on offer. More than 400 liver screenings and nearly 100 hepatitis C tests were conducted, with individuals advised to consult their family doctors in case of abnormal results.

EASL also took a proactive approach to educating Vienna's youth about liver health. Collaborating with a local school and two Viennese hepatologists, the association organized an interactive event for schoolchildren. The students created artwork

centered on the liver health theme, which was exhibited at Messe Wien, allowing them to actively participate in the event. The success of this pilot project has opened the door to future collaborations with schools in Vienna to further raise awareness about the importance of liver health among the city's youth.

In light of these accomplishments, Vienna's legacy project for EASL 2023 serves as a model for future endeavors. The Vienna Convention Bureau aims to extend the benefits of such impact projects to other companies hosting congresses in the Meeting Destination Vienna. This cooperation will be actively communicated during the application process, fostering a legacy of impactful initiatives in the years to come. Vienna's commitment to leaving a lasting impression on both its visitors and local community exemplifies the city's dedication to advancing knowledge and improving lives through international events.

For more information on Meeting Destination Vienna visit meeting.vienna.info

Rotterdam

Where Education & Business Events Converge for Success

In the fast-evolving landscape of the business events industry, Rotterdam has emerged as a vibrant hub that seamlessly combines innovation, sustainability, inclusivity, and exceptional venues. The European Association for International Education (EAIE)'s decision to choose Rotterdam for their 2023 conference, and the selection of Rotterdam Ahoy Convention Centre as the venue, isn't merely a matter of convenience—it's a testament to the city's vibrant role in international education and its commitment to hosting impactful events guided by social responsibility.

Words Vicky Koffa



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A CITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Rotterdam's involvement in international education is profound. Home to prestigious institutions such as Erasmus University and the University of Applied Sciences, the city is dedicated to promoting multiculturalism and knowledge exchange. Rotterdam, with its diverse population representing more than 170 nationalities, underscores the significance of global educational partnerships, with business events playing a pivotal role for such collaborations.

Rotterdam Partners (the city's dedicated Convention Bureau) and the Municipality of Rotterdam recognized the value of supporting the EAIE Conference, aligning with the city's mission to foster international education excellence. Founded in 1989, the EAIE is the European center for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalization of higher education. The conference theme, "Connecting currents," paid homage to Rotterdam's maritime history, symbolizing the significance of water to the city's growth—a narrative that

resonates with international education's role in connecting diverse ideas, expertise, disciplines, and cultures.

"Rotterdam is a place where the river meets the sea. In similar ways, international education actively connects 'currents' of thought, areas of expertise, disciplines and cultures. From virtual learning to climate action, multilingualism to geopolitics, the currents we navigate as international educators are fast-moving and unpredictable, exciting and important," mentions the organizer's welcome note to participants.

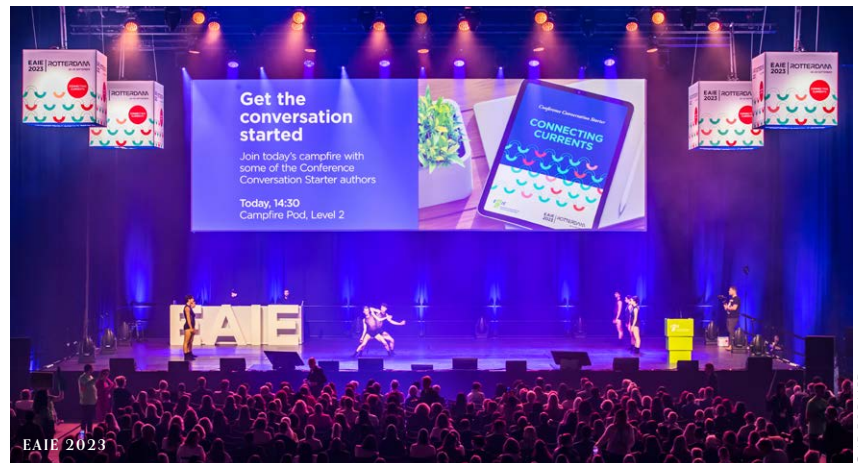
The 33rd Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition took place on 26–29 September, fulfilling its mission of offering the more than 6700 attendees the tools needed to promote international education in the Netherlands and beyond. With over 250 sessions and activities, this year's program offered something for every learning style – from interactive fishbowls and campfires to insightful panels and posters.

ROTTERDAMS APPEAL TO BUSINESS EVENTS

Rotterdam's strategic geographical location in Western Europe, boasting Europe's largest smart port and a nearby airport, makes it easily accessible via air, road, sea, and rail. With its status as the number one connected city in Europe, world-class universities just 30 minutes from the city center, and an array of over 16,500 hotel rooms, Rotterdam is a compelling choice for event planners. This accessibility is complemented by the city's capacity and lengthy experience in hosting large-scale congresses and events for the meetings industry.

Moreover Rotterdam's focus on innovation, sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience, positions it as a forward-thinking host city. The city's diverse and cosmopolitan population contributes to a unique, vibrant atmosphere that enriches the event experience. From the first-ever floating farm producing dairy products to exploiting the city's flat roofs and greening entire neighborhoods, Rotterdam has become the synonym of livability.

“Rotterdam focuses on innovation, sustainability, inclusivity and transitioning to become the most resilient city in Europe. With so many nationalities living together we are also a very diverse and cosmopolitan city, with a unique vibe. Rotterdam is home to several thriving industries, which is reflected in the many congresses and business events our city hosts,” says Mirjam van de Kamp, Director of Conventions at Rotterdam Ahoy.



ROTTERDAM AHOY: LEADING THE SUSTAINABILITY CHARGE

Rotterdam Ahoy is at the forefront of sustainability efforts. The venue has made significant strides in transitioning to a 100% fossil-free operation and utilizes 100% sustainable energy. Sustainability initiatives also extend to areas such as water use (with investments in an Urban Waterbuffer), waste management, and mobility. Rotterdam Ahoy's commitment to continuous improvement aligns with the EAIE Conference's strong sustainability focus.

Collaboration is a key driver of sustainability progress for Rotterdam Ahoy. Van de Kamp recognizes that sustainability is an ongoing journey: *“Sustainability is not a race; it is finding solutions that continuously improve our future. We try to understand the need of our clients, the aim they have and see how we can support this. Most importantly we believe in the power of collaboration and moving forward and improving event per event. Together with the support of our Rotterdam Partners Convention Bureau, we trust to be very accessible and always working hard to get the right results.”*

Hosting the EAIE event, with its rigorous sustainability standards, provides an opportunity for mutual improvement. The organization works only with venues that conform to responsible

consumption standards. During the annual conference, EAIE encourages delegates to adopt sustainable practices, from bringing reusable water bottles and using public transportation to reducing paper usage through digital platforms and managing electricity consumption. The team works with the local catering companies and food suppliers to provide plant-based, locally sourced ingredients in the daily meals.

In essence, Rotterdam's hosting of the EAIE Conference in partnership with Rotterdam Ahoy Convention Centre is a powerful convergence of international education, innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity. It showcases the city's commitment to not only being a top destination for business events but also a leader in the global effort to create more sustainable and inclusive gatherings that benefit both attendees and the planet.

As Rotterdam continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the business events industry, it remains a shining example of a city that blends modernity with a commitment to environmental responsibility and diversity.

To learn more about Rotterdam Ahoy Convention Centre scan this QR code:



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South Africa, a Country on the Cusp of a Tech Revolution

Where the African meetings industry got its start a quarter century ago, South Africa may be younger than other destinations, but the country is proving its strength through a succession of sought-after international events — the World Economic Forum included.

The melting pot of 62 million people of different cultures, languages, and religions is contributing to the country's growth and transformation into a knowledge-based society.

A variety of key industries and sectors are driving development and change — and influencing the mindset of associations meeting here.

Words Lane Nieset

Home to three capital cities — legislative Cape Town, administrative Pretoria, and judicial Bloemfontein — and nine different provinces brimming with history, you'll find plenty of diverse experiences and expertise in each corner of South Africa. The country may be seen as a gateway to safaris, but for the past few decades, South Africa has emerged as a hub for international events and major sports world cups, like the 2010 FIFA World Cup and Cricket and Rugby World Cups.

In comparison to some countries, South Africa's MICE sector is relatively young, but this is something the country is using to its advantage. *"South Africa is a pioneering and mature meeting destination in Africa with a fairly advanced MICE infrastructure,"* explains Nicanor Sabula, Chief Executive of the African Society of Association Executives (AfSAE). *"The country has been leading in the African ICCA association meetings rankings for many years and has*

been a benchmark to other emerging meeting destinations in the continent. Through its annual Meetings Africa tradeshow, it is leading the way in showcasing Africa's young MICE industry."

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) has played a large role in the country's — and continent's — strength and positive perception as a meetings destination. Supporting a pan-African approach to building the business events industry on the continent, the SANCB continues to invest in enhancing the capacity of African associations through its hosted buyer program during Meetings Africa and Association Day, which runs alongside the continent's largest trade show.

Now the challenge, as some like Rick Taylor of The Business Tourism Company Consultancy are finding, is that

South Africa needs to step up its game to remain on top. *"The Africa marketplace has gotten a lot more competitive over the last ten years with other national convention bureaus entering the sector,"* says Taylor.

This is where the power of the country's convention centres comes in. Rated a five-star venue by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, the Durban International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) has been voted by clients as one of the top 1% of convention centres worldwide. The accolades don't stop there: Durban ICC has been voted "Africa's Leading Meetings and Conference Centre" by the World Travel Awards no fewer than 17 times in 18 years and has received the title "South Africa's Best Convention Centre" three times in three years by the World MICE Awards.

"South Africa as a whole has several competitive advantages when it comes to business events," explains John Aritho, Chief



Operating Officer of the Durban ICC, referring to the country's diverse destinations, world-class conference facilities and accommodation options, cultural diversity, natural beauty, and accessibility. *"South Africa's rich cultural heritage and history can provide unique opportunities for integrating local experiences into business events. Stunning landscapes, wildlife, and outdoor activities can be incorporated into post-event programs and leisure time for conference attendees."*

GATEWAY TO AFRICA

South Africa is a gateway to the African continent and major cities are well-connected by air to international destinations. With a variety of cities like Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban,

considered the country's entertainment playground, plus wildlife-rich areas, the destination and its 1,700 meeting venues offer associations plenty of variety when it comes to hosting business events.

The Durban ICC, for instance, is the largest, column-free multipurpose event space on the continent (the main convention area measures 11,600 sqm and can be divided into 22 separate convention halls). It's also five-star graded by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa and maintains ISO9001, ISO14001, ISO22000 and ISO 45001 certifications ensuring the highest international standards in Quality Management, Environmental Responsibility, Food Safety, and Health and Safety – the only

convention centre in the country to hold all four of these certifications.

The Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) has also received a five-star grading, is ISO 22000-certified, and is committed to sustainability and green initiatives, which has led to its Green Building Council 4-star grading. As a member of the International Congress and Convention Association, the CTICC has *"the opportunity to have active engagement in the international association meetings and events space,"* explains CEO Taubie Motlhabane. *"Association meetings are important for professional development and education and have a great impact on economies. Cultivating relationships with key figures in the conference and association industry is vital – and this involves*

engaging with international event planners, association executives, and decision-makers to showcase the CTICC's capabilities to host association events."

INNOVATION NATION

South Africa is responsible for ground-breaking inventions that have majorly impacted the world, including the first heart transplant and the first oil-from-coal refinery. As Zinhle Nzama, Acting Chief Convention Bureau Officer for the South African Tourism Convention Bureau, explains: *"South Africa is currently transforming toward a knowledge-based economy, with a growing emphasis on technology, e-commerce, and financial and other services. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail commerce, financial services, transportation, mining, agriculture, and tourism are among the important industries that contribute to the GDP and keep the economic engine humming. Hosting important events in these industries may help the country's macroeconomic advantages to accelerate dramatically."*

Mining and agriculture were among the main drivers of the country's economy until the 1920s, but now the manufacturing sector is one of the top industries in South Africa. The automotive industry is concentrated around Durban and accounts for one of the largest and most successful automotive clusters in Africa. A significant contributor to the country's industrial output and exports, this is one sector in which South Africa has invested heavily in terms of research and development, particularly focusing on the development of electric vehicles and advanced manufacturing technologies.

The country also boasts the largest and most advanced ICT sector on the

continent – and this isn't a new occurrence. The infrastructure and innovation have been in place for some time now in South Africa. MTN became the first mobile operator to introduce a prepaid cell service in Africa back in 1996, and the Please Call Me system invented in South Africa earned national telecoms company Vodacom billions of Rands in revenue. A few other accomplishments: Ubuntu, the world's first free and consumer-friendly operating system, and Computicket, the world's first complex computerized reservation system for ticket holders.

Centred around the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg, the ICT sector accounts for a number of companies that develop and provide software, hardware, and telecommunications services, in addition to research and development institutions. As Nzama explains: *"The ICT sector is growing rapidly, with a focus on software development, telecommunications, and IT services, as well as benefiting from a growing pool of software developers, data scientists, and ICT-related research."*

Nzama adds that South Africa is also making significant investments in renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and biomass. *"The country has been actively investing in renewable energy sources, recognizing their importance in addressing environmental concerns, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and diversifying its energy mix,"* she adds.

NEXT ON THE HORIZON

Renewable energy is one sector that will help make South Africa competitive on an international level – as well as provide a futureproof plan. But to support economic growth and social development, the country is investing in another

area: infrastructure. Through the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), the government has developed 13 blended finance projects through ISA and the National Treasury, a total value of R57.7 billion.

Through the Integrated Transport Plan, the government is investing in new and upgraded roads, railways, and ports, including the ongoing multibillion-rand upgrade of the Saldanha Bay Port and the new Msikaba Bridge in the Eastern Cape, anticipated to be completed in 2024. In the Northern Cape and Free State provinces, renewable projects like solar and wind farms are also underway. *"These regions are known for their abundant solar and wind resources, making them ideal locations for such projects,"* says Nzama, adding that this supports the country's efforts to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. *"The government is also working to improve the reliability of the electricity grid by expanding renewable energy infrastructure to help diversify South Africa's energy mix, reducing its dependence on fossil fuels, and contributing to environmental sustainability."*

With strategies in place for everything from a national water and sanitation master plan to digital infrastructure aimed to accelerate the country's digital transformation, South Africa's current investments are impacting the future of the country's booming sectors. As the business destination continues growing, associations will help drive even more development in South Africa and keep accelerating innovation in the country and across the continent.

JALISCO, MÉXICO

GUADALAJARA

(gwa:də'lə'hɑ:ɹə), meaning "River Valley Of Stones"

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Innovation is our tradition

Emerging Guadalajara: Conversations With the Faces Behind Success

Guadalajara, Mexico, is rapidly establishing itself as a global destination for business events, attracting top-tier conferences. This transformation has been made possible through years of dedication and collaboration, as highlighted in conversations Boardroom had with Dr. Jorge Ocampo Candiani, President of the World Congress of Dermatology Guadalajara 2027, and Elena Hurtado, General Director of Expo Guadalajara.

Words Remi Deve

Mexico's second-largest city Guadalajara, known for its green spaces and forward-thinking outlook, boasts the largest economy in western Mexico. Its ideal climate, stunning natural surroundings, and strategic location at 1,500 meters elevation make it an attractive destination both for visitors and delegates. Nestled in Jalisco, it seamlessly melds traditional Mexican culture with modern amenities, offering a sustainable and distinctive experience for conference-goers.

The state of Jalisco itself hosts 51 industrial parks, fostering economic growth and stability. Traditional industries like textiles, tequila, and furniture coexist with modern sectors like electronics and apparel, creating a dynamic business hub that draws local and international investment.

Lately, Guadalajara has been making waves, as it emerges as an international business events destination.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Dr. Jorge Ocampo Candiani, President of the World Congress of Dermatology, which will take place in Guadalajara in 2027, reflects on the journey to secure one of the world's largest medical congresses, acknowledging that it was a formidable challenge. His dedication and strategic approach, however, have enabled them to compete with global dermatological hubs.



"We have been working for more than eight years to achieve this goal. It was not easy. We were competing with other economic and dermatological powerhouses, such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland," Dr. Ocampo Candiani explains.

Recognizing the need for unity, he continues, *"This inspired us to unite all of the Mexican and Latin American dermatology societies into a single block. We, then, worked with and added support country by country, from the large number of countries that make up the International League of Dermatology."*

With this collective effort, the 2027 World Congress of Dermatology is poised to host around 15,000 delegates in Guadalajara. Dr. Ocampo Candiani emphasizes the indispensable role of the Guadalajara Visitors & Convention Bureau throughout this journey.

"We have been working in partnership with the Guadalajara Visitors & Convention Bureau for eight years. Their assistance has been integral throughout the years, providing in-person, financial, conceptual, and logistical support," he says. *"Within Mexico and the broader Latin American community, they are unmatched."*

He also emphasizes the critical role of strategic partnerships, particularly with a Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) like Triumph, to ensure the success of the congress and concludes: *"Hosting the greatest World Congress in the history of dermatology is a great responsibility for us as Mexican and Latin American dermatologists."*



MUSEO CABAÑAS

This is now our opportunity, together with the Jalisco College of Dermatologists, to work towards putting our country at the top of the list.

INNOVATIVE DESTINATION

And where to hold the Congress, if not in one of Guadalajara's largest and most experienced venues in the city, namely Expo Guadalajara?



Elena Hurtado, General Director, represents another key figure in Guadalajara's ascent as a business events hub and recognizes the importance of innovation in the industry, drawing on her experience with Intermoda, one of the most important fashion events in Latin America, and her commitment to customer service:

"I am clear about three key points, two of which are very much in line with both Expo's strategy and the vision of the new president, that being: sustainability and the staging of our own events. The third point that I consider essential in order to make a difference is communication."

In that regard, the Guadalajara Visitors & Conventions Bureau, together with Expo Guadalajara, has embarked on an ambitious project around Intermoda that will set new standards in the region. Their goal is to reshape the events held in the city by infusing sustainability and a lasting legacy to stimulate revitalization. To achieve this, they have received guidance from renowned international leaders like GDS-Movement & Meet4Impact, which specialize in assisting destinations and entities in enhancing sustainability, fostering regeneration, and creating a meaningful social impact.

And, as Expo Guadalajara prepares for a future filled with international events, Hurtado underscores the significance of modernizing facilities and infrastructure: *"There is definitely a lot of work ahead. It is true that international events are being won. However, it is also true that Expo Guadalajara as a venue is already 37 years old. Therefore, in light of the upcoming events, we are focusing on ensuring that our facilities and infrastructure are up-to-date."*

To maintain international standards, Expo Guadalajara actively seeks certifications and aligns with key associations, illustrating their dedication to delivering top-notch experiences.

With the collective efforts of leaders like Dr. Ocampo Candiani and Elena Hurtado, alongside the support of organizations like the Guadalajara Visitors & Convention Bureau, Guadalajara's rise as a burgeoning powerhouse in the business events industry is undeniable.

Contact

ligia.gonzalez@gdlmidestino.com

The French Connection

The world is undergoing undeniable transformation, driven by both accelerated pre-existing trends and the emergence of new global challenges. Within this evolving landscape, the international meeting industry is responding by embracing change. French professionals are actively investing in innovation and workforce development to address the evolving demands and challenges of your events. This collective effort is shaping a landscape of regenerative business events, with a primary goal of not only reducing our environmental and societal impact but also maximizing the positive influence of these events. In this exclusive Boardroom feature, you will discover how several prominent destinations in France are taking meaningful actions to contribute to a better world. This feature also aims to inspire purpose-driven meetings and events.

All texts by Remi Deve

More information:

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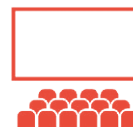
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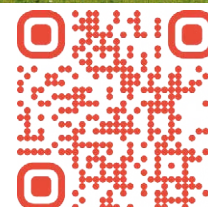


Grand Roissy Tourism Office

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Introducing the Thriving Hub of Grand Roissy

In the heart of the bustling international landscape, Grand Roissy emerges as an enticing destination for association conferences and events. Representing a cluster of five vibrant municipalities around the renowned Paris Charles de Gaulle International Airport—Roissy-en-France, Le Mesnil-Amelot, Gressy, Écouen, and Luzarches—this territory offers a compelling array of attractions and resources that make it an ideal choice for hosting gatherings of all kinds, far from the clichéd hustle of big cities.

Grand Roissy's biggest allure is its exceptional connectivity. The presence of an international airport, coupled with a conveniently located TGV train station within the airport, ensures attendees can swiftly transition from arrival to their meeting venue or hotel room within minutes. Daily hi-speed train services from various French cities and neighboring Belgium make it effortlessly accessible for participants traveling from near and far.

One of Grand Roissy's standout features is also its accommodation options, boasting 8,700 rooms. What sets these lodgings apart is their unwavering commitment to quality without the daunting price tags typically associated with international destinations. This affordability ensures a comfortable stay without breaking the bank.

With over 240 meeting and seminar rooms capable of accommodating up to 500 people theater-style, Grand Roissy offers a plethora of event spaces to cater to diverse needs. For those seeking distinctive event venues, the region presents

a diverse selection of remarkable and surprising locations perfect for luncheons, cocktail receptions, or gala evenings. Among them let's mention Roissy International Golf Course and its 2,700-sqm clubhouse or the Château d'Ecouen which can welcome up to 800 guests.

Beyond its conference capabilities, this destination serves as a gateway to a plethora of tourist attractions within a 50-kilometer radius. From the historic Château de Chantilly to the exhilarating Parc Astérix, from Disneyland Paris and the tranquil Abbaye de Royaumont, there's a wealth of pre- and post-conference excursion opportunities.

Additionally, Grand Roissy, with its historical significance, offers a remarkable cultural heritage that includes castles, manors, abbeys, Gothic churches, cobble streets, and museums, providing a genuine sense of place and heritage to enrich your events. And, of course, the vibrant city of Paris itself is a mere stone's throw away, situated less than 25 kilometers distant!

And you won't have to do this alone. The Grand Roissy Tourism Office is committed to assisting associations in organizing their conferences. This support includes building candidacy files, presenting the region, offering competitive proposals, and even participating in candidate presentation meetings. Furthermore, the office aids in arranging inspection visits, planning tour itineraries, and coordinating appointments with local venues and service providers relevant to the association's needs.

In essence, Grand Roissy emerges as a distinctive destination where accessibility, affordability, and authenticity converge to create an enticing backdrop for association conferences.

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Lyon's Sustainable Efforts Gain Momentum

Lyon has been making significant strides in the realm of sustainability, particularly in the organization of eco-friendly conferences within the city. The efforts involve extensive collaboration and support across the whole stakeholders' chain, making it, *in fine*, very easy for association planners to reduce their impact on the environment.

Lyon's remarkable commitment to sustainability has earned it a prominent position on the global stage. Last year, Lyon ranked second in France in (and 13th globally) in the prestigious Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS), a pioneering program designed to assess and benchmark the sustainability strategies and performance of cities as conference destinations.

This achievement hardly comes as a surprise when you consider the city's extensive repertoire of sustainable ventures in recent years. The Lyon airport, for instance, achieved carbon-neutral status in 2017, reflecting its steadfast dedication to environmental responsibility. Moreover, numerous hotels throughout the city have garnered recognition for their sustainability endeavors, holding certificates from well-established labels.

In fact, it's the whole French event sector that has undergone a significant transformation, with convention centres now subject to stringent environmental regulations aimed at reducing their ecological footprint. These regulations encompass waste management, energy consumption and water management initiatives.

In this regard, the Lyon Convention Centre has earned the prestigious ISO 20121 certification - like ONLYLYON Tourism & Conventions - a globally recognized standard for sustainable event management that underscores the Centre's commitment to promoting responsible consumption and provides comprehensive guidelines to minimize the impacts of events altogether. Meanwhile, La Cité Internationale, an architectural masterpiece envisioned by Renzo Piano, boasts equally impressive eco-friendly credentials. The venue, for instance, employs an innovative centralized watering system, enabling the efficient collection and reuse of rainwater to nurture its sprawling 2,000-square-meter gardens.

Lyon Convention Bureau has commissioned two CSR audits, aimed to evaluate the sustainability practices employed during various business events. The primary objective is to identify

barriers that hinder the implementation of sustainable actions and, subsequently, find solutions to support the chain of service providers in embracing sustainability. Importantly, these solutions are designed to be cost-effective for conferences, ensuring they remain within budgetary constraints.

In practice, this often requires making choices, such as opting for local materials, eschewing non-local promotional items, and minimizing excessive packaging for meals. Emphasizing the use of local suppliers for all purchases and the redistribution of surplus food to charitable organizations are also pivotal aspects of Lyon's sustainable approach.

Transportation remains a significant contributor to carbon footprints, especially concerning arrivals at the event destination. In response, Lyon has positioned itself as a leader in public transportation in France, boasting the second-largest public transport network in the country. Additionally, the city offers a network of bicycle stations, with five located conveniently near the convention centre.

"Looking ahead, there's hope that conference participants who travel by train may enjoy more favorable registration rates, provided they can furnish adequate documentation of their mode of transportation to event organizers," says Valérie Ducaud, manager of Lyon Convention Bureau. *"Although this concept has been discussed, its full realization remains to be seen".* Nevertheless, Lyon is setting an inspiring example for cities aiming to host sustainable conferences, fostering a culture of responsible and eco-conscious event planning.

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Marseille, A Global Meeting Hub on the Rise

Marseille, situated on the Mediterranean coast of southern France, is a captivating business events destination. As France's second-largest city, Marseille offers a diverse cultural milieu, culinary delights, and convenient access via its airport or train station. With a rich history and pleasant Mediterranean climate - and thanks to its proactive convention bureau and a dedicated strategy - it's been attracting the attention of European and international associations more and more lately.

Marseille has recently made headlines with its remarkable ascent in the ICCA rankings, a widely recognized barometer for evaluating cities' performance as international meeting destinations. Surging from 142nd place in 2012 to its current 43rd position, Marseille now stands as France's third-largest city for international conferences. This achievement underscores the city's dynamic spirit and its unwavering dedication to attracting and supporting international gatherings. Collaboration between local authorities and event industry professionals has yielded innovative solutions that cater to the diverse needs of organizers and participants.

To accommodate the growing demand for international conferences, Marseille's infrastructure is rapidly expanding. Venues such as the Palais du Pharo, Marseille Chanot, World Trade Center Marseille Provence, and Aix-en-Provence's conference centre have emerged as top choices for hosting events. These modern, well-equipped spaces offer tailor-made facilities to accommodate conferences and provide exceptional event experiences. Worth noting is that Marseille is the leading city in France in terms of the percentage of hotels holding the Green Key label: 30% of the hotel inventory and 70% of 4 and 5-star hotels. Meanwhile, nature is just a stone's throw away, thanks to the stunning Calanques National Park, offering an idyllic playground for post-conference relaxation and enjoyment.

THE CASE OF ESMINT

ESMINT, the European Society of Minimally Invasive Neurological Therapy, annually hosts a prominent event that serves as a vital platform for medical practitioners and scientists specializing in various neurointerventional fields. The 15th ESMINT Congress was held in Marseille at Palais du Pharo in September and brought together a record number of 1315 delegates. It aimed to foster interdisciplinary discussions among professionals in neuroradiology,

interventional neuroradiology, neurointerventional surgery, endovascular neurosurgery, and vascular neurology.

President Prof. Paolo Machi expressed his excitement about the event's relocation to Marseille, emphasizing the fresh energy it brought to the research community. The congress featured cutting-edge plenary sessions, clinical research findings, case presentations, and discussions on topics ranging from robotics and artificial intelligence to regulatory aspects of device development. Collaboration with sister societies, interactive sessions, morbi-mortality discussions, educational activities, and a vibrant social program added to the event's richness.

He added, *"The annual ESMINT Congress is one of the most important events in our specialty held around the world. As the host city for our event, Marseille provided the ideal setting not only for knowledge exchange, but also an exciting social program with plenty of opportunities in stunning locations."*

Nisan Bartov from CONGREX, the PCO that organized the event, lauded Marseille as an ideal conference destination. He cited the city's outstanding congress venue, easy accessibility to hotels and restaurants, and the proactive support from Marseille Convention Bureau as key factors contributing to its appeal.

"Marseille Convention Bureau offered comprehensive assistance to us as the organizers, including introductions to suppliers, support during negotiations, timely problem-solving, a crucial grasp of local perspectives, and the translation of our international requirements, greatly simplifying the entire congress organization process - and its success," he concluded.

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Nancy: A Beacon of Sustainability

Nancy, renowned as the cradle of Art Nouveau and a UNESCO-classified city for its 18th-century centre, is emerging as a prime destination for association meetings. Even if the charming capital of the Duchy of Lorraine boasts architectural gems like the iconic Place Stanislas, its allure extends beyond its historical districts and rich cultural life, encompassing a distinctive dedication to environmental stewardship.



Considered by some to be the most Italian town of eastern France, Nancy boasts a strategic location, just 1 hour and 30 minutes from Paris by high-speed train (TGV), with the station conveniently situated a mere one-minute walk from the main conference venue. Meanwhile, the entire centre is easily navigable on foot, making commuting very easy for inhabitants and visitors alike.

Accommodations are plentiful, with a capacity of 3,600 rooms, including hotels, tourist residences, furnished rentals, and bed and breakfasts. Several hotels have earned coveted distinctions, such as the Green Key and the ADEME environmental label, attesting to their commitment to sustainability.

The city's venues are equally impressive. Celebrating its 10th anniversary next year, the Prouvé Convention Centre, spanning 20,000 square meters in the city centre, occupies a former postal sorting centre, offering a unique blend of history and modernity. With abundant natural light

and a panoramic view of the city, it provides an exceptional setting for events.

CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

Recognizing the paramount importance of sustainable practices, Destination Nancy, the destination marketing organization of the city, embarked on a CSR journey in 2014. Since 2018, it has proudly held ISO 20121 certification, a pinnacle of sustainable event management worldwide. In 2020, the Nancy Tourist Office became the first in France to achieve this distinction.

Furthering its commitment, Nancy recently secured the "Destination Innovante Durable" (Innovative Sustainable Destination) label in 2022. This milestone demonstrates a broader, territory-wide commitment to sustainability, with prominent event and cultural actors actively participating. Collaborators include local hoteliers, the UMIH (a leading professional federation for cafés, hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and renowned PCOs like UL Propuls.

Key venues, such as the Zenith du Grand Nancy, L'Autre Canal, and the Opera, as well as renowned festivals like Nancy Jazz Pulsations, have also joined forces with local authorities and the Grand Nancy Metropolitan Area to ensure responsible event hosting.

CONCRETE STEPS

Nancy's commitment to hosting responsible events shines through a multitude of pragmatic measures, including eco-friendly catering partnerships, resource-efficient practices like rainwater utilization and solar panels, precise carbon footprint assessments, food waste reduction efforts, comprehensive waste sorting, and the provision of eco-conscious corporate gifts.

Event organizers receive extensive support and guidance, both in the pre-event planning stages and post-event evaluations. Accessibility for individuals with reduced mobility is ensured, encompassing induction loop systems for the hearing-impaired and specialized signage for the visually impaired.

Nancy even contributes to biodiversity by housing beehives on their rooftop and invites visitors to explore the destination's natural and wellness offerings through the Metropolitan Tourist Office's guided tours.

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Unlocking the Potential of Rennes' Healthcare Sector

Nestled in the heart of Brittany, Rennes is rapidly emerging as a healthcare hub with a promising future. The city's sector is witnessing substantial growth, characterized by innovative advancements, robust research institutions, and a burgeoning digital health industry. No wonder the capital of the region is also playing host to numerous high-profile medical conferences.

Rennes's healthcare sector is characterized by innovation, research excellence, and a commitment to high-quality care. As it continues to grow and adapt to emerging trends, the city has been positioning itself as a leader in healthcare excellence, attracting professionals, researchers, and innovators from around the world.

As of today, Rennes is home to an impressive healthcare workforce, boasting over 30,000 jobs dedicated to the sector. The city's expertise extends to a wide range of medical fields, including liver pathologies, cardiology, neurology, and orthopedics, as well as cutting-edge biotechnologies and health nutrition.

Rennes's dynamic healthcare landscape features the prestigious Rennes University Hospital (CHU Rennes), known for its "high-quality care" certification, and is the largest employer in the metropolis. Furthermore, the city boasts a robust presence of research and higher education institutions, hosting around 2,600 jobs and over a dozen research laboratories.

As a recognized digital hotspot in France, Rennes has also grown a reputation in the digital health realm, housing several promising startups in e-health, imaging, and healthcare technologies. These companies have significantly contributed to Rennes'

economic vitality, with a 125% increase in jobs over the last decade.

CASES IN POINT

It hardly comes as a surprise the Couvent des Jacobins, Rennes' main convention centre, has recently been - and will be - the focal point for numerous healthcare gatherings, both national and international. These include, for instance, the European e-Health Week which was organized in September this year, the BioEM Conference which will be held in 2025 and the International Congress of Therapeutic Drug Monitoring & Clinical Toxicology in 2026.

The first event brought together nearly 700 participants, from France and abroad, in the health and medico-social sectors, with the aim of decompartmentalizing the business, technical and regulatory worlds. That very week, Biotech Santé Bretagne, a technological innovation centre in health and biotechnology in Brittany, organized a dedicated session on e-health innovation, featuring contributions from numerous local stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the BioEM Conference is expected to attract 350 participants in June 2025. Established in 2021 through the merger of the Bioelectromagnetics Society (BEMS) and the European

Bioelectromagnetics Association (EBEA), BioEM serves as a leading proponent for the exchange of ideas and the advancement of the science of natural and applied electromagnetic fields in biology and medicine. It comprises biological and physical scientists, physicians, and engineers. Operating as an international society, BioEM boasts a diverse membership hailing from approximately 40 countries and regions worldwide.

Last but not least, the International Congress of Therapeutic Drug Monitoring & Clinical Toxicology is set to attract 800 participants to the Couvent over three days in 2026. Founded with the mission of promoting research, education, and collaboration in these critical areas of healthcare, the IATDMCT brings together professionals, researchers, and experts from around the world. Through its initiatives, conferences, and publications, the association plays a pivotal role in enhancing patient care by fostering the understanding and application of drug monitoring and toxicology principles in clinical practice.

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Strasbourg's Congress and Exhibition Centre opens itself to a World of New Opportunities

Situated at the heart of Europe, Strasbourg has a rich history, vibrant culture, and strategic location in Europe and offers a captivating backdrop for international events that inspire collaboration, innovation, and unforgettable experiences

Strasbourg's exceptional central location and good connectivity as well as its large accommodation offer make it an ideal destination for meetings of all kinds. Moreover, with its robust train network, Strasbourg provides sustainable transportation links to numerous European cities, ensuring seamless access for travellers seeking both convenience and eco-friendliness.

Following a substantial €200 million investment by the city, the convention centre has undergone a remarkable transformation and expansion. Additionally, a new, architecturally striking venue, conceived by the world-renowned Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, has been seamlessly integrated. The Strasbourg Event Complex, a member of GL Events Venues, stands as a shining example of harmonious synergy between its facilities and the picturesque surroundings.

Nestled in the heart of the city, just a stone's throw from the European Parliament, the cutting-edge complex boasts three auditoriums that can host anywhere from 500 to 1,900 guests. Additionally, it features a diverse selection of 20 adaptable rooms catering to gatherings ranging from 35 to 450 attendees. Moreover, the complex offers an expansive 40,000 sqm of exhibition and multi-functional spaces as well as a new multi-level parking facility with 857 spaces that has been inaugurated this September.

But what truly distinguishes the event complex is its stunning natural surroundings and picturesque green landscapes that enhance the overall event experience and offer ample possibilities for outdoor activities.

Christophe Caillaud-Joos, CEO of Strasbourg Events, also emphasizes their strong commitment to sustainability: *"Certified ISO 20121, we proactively manage events with a focus on sustainability, implementing a multitude of practices in this direction. For instance, we forge partnerships with organizations like Emmaus to utilize second-hand*

furniture, adopt systematic composting of organic waste and minimize food waste by donating leftovers to local associations, reduce carpet usage and pursue initiatives to reduce our energy consumption. Furthermore, we are committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions as close to zero as possible with the planned installation of 5,000 sqm of solar panels, ensuring a sustainable and eco-friendly energy source."

The 2024 agenda of international events hosted in Strasbourg in the near future reflect a diverse range of fields and interests, showcasing the international appeal and significance of Strasbourg not only as a host city but most importantly as a hub of collaboration and accelerator for innovation in varied fields. Among them let's mention the Advanced Automotive Battery Conference Europe, the International Conference on Strangeness in Quark Matter, the International Congress of Mathematics & Physics or the European Huntington Disease Network.

Ramona Fischer, Chief Marketing and Business Development Officer at Strasbourg Events and chair of ICCA France BeNeLux Chapter, says: *"In the recent ICCA ranking, Strasbourg has risen through the ranks ascending among the top destinations in France for international association meetings. To continue to achieve this, we are actively forging partnerships with key stakeholders, collaborating with local experts and professors, and championing excellence across various business event domains. With the fully completed Event Complex we open ourselves to a world of new opportunities."*

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ICCA's Transformative Year & Future Vision

Senthil Gopinath, ICCA CEO, reflects on a transformative year for the organization, highlighting key achievements and its forward-looking vision.

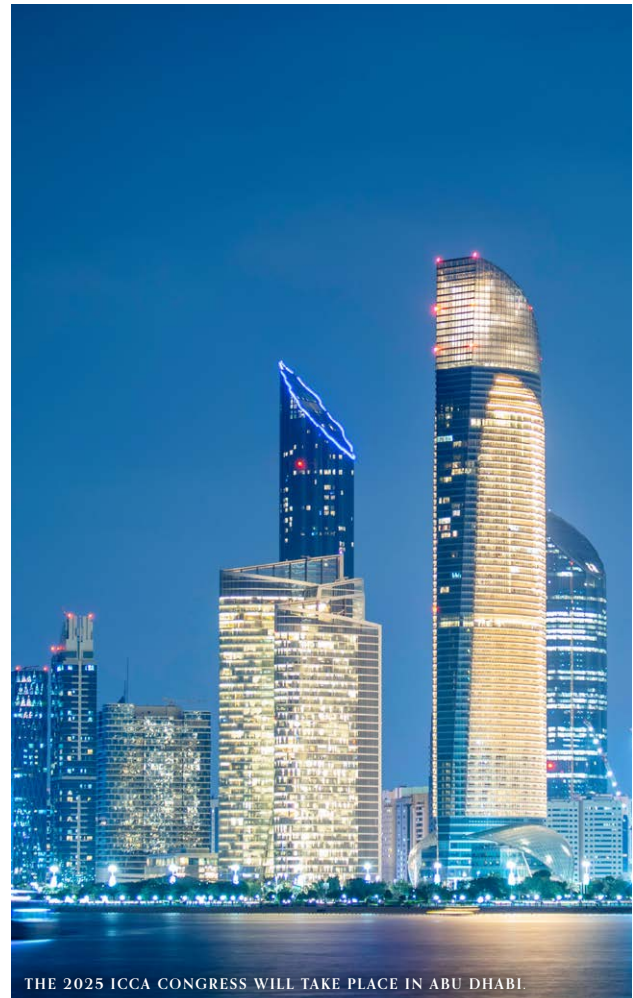
2023 has been quite the year for ICCA.

We have seen much activity in every region of the world; reflecting our global reach and ambition. We continue to engage proactively with members about optimizing their attractiveness to the associations we value so highly. With competition increasing in the marketplace to host events, it was evident early in the calendar year that we must do more to compete and to thrive. I am proud to report - as I will to ICCA members and Board - that we have. I am even prouder to announce that there is more to come. Much more, which will soon be evident at the 62nd ICCA Congress.

If I were to play a quick highlights reel of our year, it would include: the surveys we conducted and published for associations and for members (*Partnering For Success and 2023 City and Country Rankings* respectively) which always makes intriguing reading generating much industry buzz. The reel continues and we see the ICCA digital transformation of both our website and ICCA Business Intelligence Database - including the addition of the innovative governmental meetings application.

The highlights keep coming: the forging of important strategic partnerships with leading industry partners. Our continued championing of innovation through showcasing and celebrating new forward-thinking initiatives. Advocating tirelessly for sustainability, DEI, and legacy. The opportunities we have taken at senior management level to speak directly to government about the influence our industry has... and the leverage it needs to grow and shape communities.

And, as my imagined reel reaches a crescendo, the year itself points decidedly towards the future as we continue to seek and to nurture new industry talent. This is especially important to me and to ICCA because it is new lifeblood that will bring fresh impetus to what we do.





Our own efforts in this area are best exemplified by the second cohort of Future Leaders Council - who took the reins just before IMEX Frankfurt (following the stirring work of our now alumni Future Leaders Council) - and through ICCASkills, our creditation program for the improvement of professional industry standards. Finding and supporting the meetings and events professionals of tomorrow is something we must all commit to. I stand passionately behind the advancement of ICCASkills and am delighted that we have run successful classes in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific.

We approach the end of 2023 proudly launching the International Centre for Advancement of ICCA Skills (with the Luxembourg Convention Bureau) - a permanent ICCASkills learning hub - and renewing our unique partnership program with Tourism New Zealand. ICCASkills will continue to grow in stature, size, and scope in 2024.

The main highlight of any ICCA year is our annual Congress. This year we head to the breathtaking city of Bangkok for what will be a quite unique experience. In all my years at ICCA, I have never witnessed as much thought, creativity, and energy go into a Congress concept and strategy as this one. One of the biggest initiatives is to rip up the traditional Congress playbook and do it all very differently. The sense of freedom and possibility this approach evokes is quite inspiring.

We have a plan. We have a goal. We have asked our members what they need from us, and not in a soft and unfocused way, but in a deep dive search into the deliverables that will grow their

business opportunities and increase their commercial acumen. We have asked our associations what they need so they can make the best possible choices about who they connect with and ultimately, who they do business with. And the results? I don't know. No-one does. Yet. It is all up for discussion.

What I do know however, is the outcomes and learnings we harvest will be used to shape our industry in the coming years. Never has a concept theme - *It Start With Us* - captured the optimistic mood and spirit of a particular time and place.

2023 is the year that sees ICCA stronger than ever. For this, I thank the relationships we have and the engagement levels we maintain. The program we have planned for 2024 looks very positive, with the thrilling prospect of a 63rd Congress in Abu Dhabi. I am also delighted to report bids are coming in for 2025 and 2026, with more on the horizon.

So, my highlights reel of the year is tantalisingly incomplete, a work in progress. Congress, IBTM, ICCASkills... there is much still to be added for 2023. As I mentioned at the start of this piece, there is more to come. We are forging ahead with exciting times and new milestones will be announced in 2024. It promises to be a pivotal year for all in the ICCA global community.

This article is a result of the special collaboration established between Boardroom and ICCA, formalized through their official media partnership. Associations interested in joining ICCA can have a look at www.iccaworld.org/join/association-community



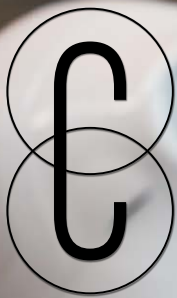


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