

Calling all trailblazers

New AIPC president talks digitalisation, competition and talent

What are the biggest issues facing convention centres today?

How to trend-set and trail blaze in today's digital economy. It's not about embracing digitalisation for its own sake, rather what does digitalisation mean for a centre and what do we want it to do? To drive revenues? Improve customer experience? This transformation process needs to start with a firm vision and strategy—premised on how the centre brings value to its stakeholders and the destination it is in. It also depends on its courage and commitment to drive change without losing sight of the end game.

Convention centres today are no longer about the hardware or even the software. It's about UX (user experience) and how centres play a role through various touch points to create a customer journey.

It's no longer about differentiating yourself from the competition, it's about putting yourself in a novel playing field so you are not just different but unique.

Where will the industry be five years from now?

Convention centres will move beyond being venue providers or even partners and solution providers, to community builders. An integral player in a destination's brand positioning and delivering economic and social value to the destination.

What do you think are some of the best opportunities available to centres right now? Are they taking advantage of them?

Centres are striving earnestly to adopt appropriate digital transformation initiatives that can help engage customers and grow their business. Digital transformation is not just about adopting new technologies. It is also about getting the right digital talent to support—and be integrated into—the organisation, while existing talent must be prepared to embrace the new direction through the edification process, as well as partnering with digital accelerators to ensure speed to market.

Centres should capitalise on or deepen their partnerships with local governments, bureaus and industry players and forge a



Aloysius Arlando

AIPC president

strong alignment in order to secure (international) meetings business. This is the one and only advantage within their grasp to strengthen their collective ability to stand out from the competition.

We're living in a very competitive world. How should centres compete for business today?

By being adaptable, by listening to customers, by being brave, by focusing on the end game and by being visionaries. Not to look backwards (at legacy and so on), not even by looking around at the competition, but looking beyond it. The only way to revolutionise is to trail blaze.

What would you most like to see members do as far as supporting their association?

To take advantage of the valuable programme offerings by AIPC by actively participating and contributing their experiences. These programmes have been carefully developed out of interactions with industry and economic leaders, clients' feedback and members' survey findings.

We continue to encourage our members to surface clients' and shareholders' expectations; and share their innovative practices and business learnings so that through the association's various platforms, members gain new and relevant knowledge that will go a long way in helping to grow their business. ■

Digital transformation

New tech requires new talent, and existing staff to embrace change

