

# AIPC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## STRATEGIC EXCELLENCE (IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE)

EACH YEAR, THE AIPC (INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES) ORGANISES ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE BRINGS MEMBERS TOGETHER TO CONSIDER KEY INDUSTRY ISSUES AND HEAR FROM TOP PROFESSIONALS IN A VARIETY OF RELATED FIELDS.

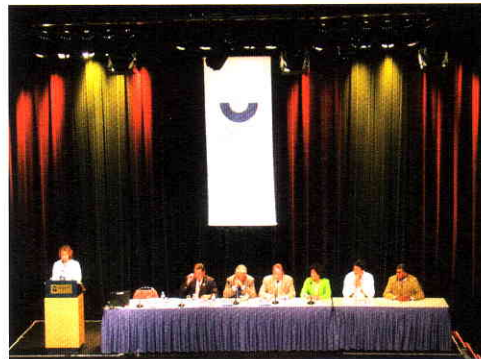
Le Centre des Congrès de Québec hosted this year's event in July. They provided an outstanding social programme and were experts at organising and marketing the event (for instance, the teasers sent to the participants were very original!). The social programme consisted of events showing off the city itself and its beautiful surroundings - such as a special musical evening in the Hall of the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, eating fresh lobsters as a reward after interactive games on the Île d'Orléans, and lunch in the Parliament. In short, the entire team of Claude Pinault, CEO of Québec City Convention Centre, gave all attendees a memorable business experience at an outstanding facility - where 'total customer satisfaction' is indeed much more than a simple slogan!

The theme of the congress this year was: "Strategic Excellence". A wide range of selected speakers combined their knowledge around this theme, with Change as the connecting thread.

The first keynote speaker, David Baxter from the Urban Futures Institute, sought to show how demographic and attitudinal changes will also have an impact on the Meetings Industry. Although his argument was quite interesting, it lacked a clear, direct correlation to the meetings sector itself.

As the second keynote speaker, John Parker explained that it is important to couple an organization's strategy and aims in function of change: "Change affects the entire organization, and the ability to change is both a strategic and an evolutionary process."

Following these talks, there was an interesting panel discussion among several congress centres on the topic of how they are reacting



to change. Rod Pilbeam, CEO of Ogden IFC in Australia, gave a good overview of how the expectations of customers of congress centres are also changing. Several areas in which expectations are changing: Value for money, the WOW factor (the delegate experience has to be continually heightened), convenient and comfortable access.

Didier Scaillet of MPI Europe gave an overview of a number of studies carried out by planners as well as by suppliers. The number of events, and their budgets, are on the rise, but both planners and suppliers should work more productively. "What planners would like from suppliers is that they work as partners rather than as vendors.... What suppliers want from

planners is more honest disclosure of budgets and more comprehensive communication."

Panels and workshops completed the total package of informative experiences for the attendees. A selection of the topics offered: Launching a new product, new business opportunities for congress centres, managing and evaluating performance.

The 2006 congress will be held in Montpellier France, 16-19 July 2006. We'll be reporting more on this in future issues of HeadQuarters.  
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