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content that delegates can't get whether or not they choose to attend.

However, the way that the information is delivered, and the ability to interact with those presenting it, as well as with other delegates, can make all the difference. For this reason, there's a lot more emphasis these days on audience interaction and participation.

These are the kinds of things you can't easily replicate through remote communications technology.

Another area that creates value for delegates is the ability to network and build or reinforce personal relationships. This again distinguishes the "face to face" experience from what's possible via other communications vehicles, and for that reason there's a lot more

emphasis on this aspect in today's event programs.

It's been said that meetings are now less about content and more about "validation" – the ability to become more comfortable with information by being able to interact with the source of that information.

This, again, is influencing how meetings are structured – with more emphasis on networking opportunities and sessions that encourage exchange rather than the traditional "one way" presentations that used to characterise so many meetings.

But even this may not be enough to persuade some delegates, particularly those who are regular attendees, and who may feel their networks are already up to speed.

This is where "delegate experience" comes in. It is an expression

that sums up the unique set of experiences a delegate takes away from an event they've chosen to attend.

Part of this experience has to do with the actual destination and facility where the event is taking place. If the destination is seen as attractive and the facilities accommodating, delegates are much more likely to have a sense of personal enjoyment to go along with whatever learning and networking activities they're engaging in.

For a meeting to be unique, it needs to incorporate aspects of the local experience into the overall package and give delegates a sense of having "been there" rather than simply attending a series of sessions that might have taken place anywhere.

This is where both planners and centres need to make an effort to make interesting and engaging aspects of the local community and culture accessible to delegates.

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At the same time, today's "connected" delegate wants the comfort of feeling they can stay in touch with their business or professional activities while away. And this where available technology can make a big difference.

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Some of these requirements, such as programme modifications to achieve more effective delegate interactions, are best dealt with by meeting organisers. Some, like providing the facilities and technology allowing delegates to network and communicate more effectively, are largely the role of the centres.

But all can benefit from an approach to planning that engages both planners and centres in a cooperative effort to make sure the event is as satisfying and productive as possible.

Organisers know their delegates. The centre knows their destination and facilities. With today's highly discriminating delegates at stake, everyone needs to pool their respective resources and insights to make sure every delegate comes away from a convention feeling as though they've had good value and a good time! *Events*