

# Briefing interview

Briefing caught up with Barbara Maple, Chair of JMIC (Joint Meetings Industry Council) for the latest news and views from the organisation.



**Briefing: Can you outline the progress that's been made on JMIC's "Profile and Power" Programme?**

Barbara: Some specific advances included a proliferation of "Meetings Industry Weeks" in various countries; the inclusion of numerous "how to" sessions on this topic in industry association conferences and the implementation of the "Profile and Power" awards which have recognised three leaders in the area of enhancing industry profile. In addition, we've taken a larger role in working on such programmes as the Politician's Forum at IMEX which address the same objective.

**Briefing: JMIC is an 'association of associations'. What do the next two years hold for the organisation and what are your major objectives, challenges or ambitions?**

Barbara: The importance of such an industry alliance really came to the fore after 9/11 and the economic and business fallout that followed. However, we've now learned the advantages of industry-wide cooperation and as we look to the future, there are many areas – from continued profile-building to sustainability and workforce issues that would benefit from a similar approach. For that reason, JMIC membership

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has been growing. As a result we're looking both at further alliances and further programmes.

**Briefing: JMIC is actively involved in the IMEX Politicians' Forum. What did you think of discussions at this year's Forum?**

Barbara: The Forum has evolved into a really important programme. One of its greatest benefits is that we are now becoming much more familiar with the issues politicians have to face themselves. This year we once again saw the need to recognise and help them address these if we are to gain their support for our own priorities. Labour shortages, migration, economic development and the "green" agenda are all areas in which we can connect positively – and for mutual advantage - with political leaders.

**Briefing: Environmental issues were also a very hot topic at IMEX. What's JMIC's position on climate change and the impact of environmental issues on the global meetings industry?**

Barbara: JMIC member associations are all actively participating in quality standards programmes that include guidance on reducing the carbon footprint of the meetings industry. This is a major topic that JMIC will continue to address through information sharing and the development of practical guidelines. At the same time, we need to put such impacts into perspective. It is important that undeniable meetings industry benefits such as global economic, scientific and cultural development are not threatened.

**Briefing: The number and scope of professional education opportunities throughout the industry seem to expand every year. What do you see as the major educational challenges for meetings industry professionals in the future?**

Barbara: Better educational support is a major key to addressing the looming skilled labour shortages in many parts of the world. In particular, we need to bring along the leaders of the future to ensure we can maintain the high quality and professionalism that has characterised our industry. We also need to engage emerging markets so that such educational opportunities become available in developing regions. Organisations like JMIC can play a key role by acting as a "clearing house" for the educational and professional development programmes offered by its members.

**"We've learned the advantages of industry-wide cooperation"**