

T&F Informa buys IIR in \$1.4bn deal

UK - The world's largest provider of trade conferences and exhibitions, IIR Holdings, has been bought by its rival, T&F Informa, in a \$1.4 billion cash deal.

The acquisition gives T&F Informa instant critical mass in the North American market as well as the muscle to push its reach further in emerging economies.

Chief executive of T&F Informa, Peter Rigby tells CMW



Eye on the big prize: Peter Rigby

the deal represents "a fantastic opportunity for both

businesses". The acquisition of IIR, says Rigby, "complements existing events business, geographically and by sector".

IIR arranges more than 4,000 events a year, including 1,400 conferences, and was founded in 1973 by Scottish Peer Lord Irvine Laidlaw, who is set for a windfall of over £700 million, as owner of 93 per cent of IIR. Rigby expects the acquisition to be "significantly earnings enhancing".

News in brief...

Air traffic up

WORLD - IATA traffic data for the period January-April 2005 show freight expansion for the first four months of 4.7 per cent and passenger traffic growth of 8.7 per cent, illustrating the demand for travel is strong.

"The real story, however," says director general and CE of IATA Giovanni Bisignani, "is the bottom line. The continuing extraordinary price of oil and increasing pressure on yields means that a speedy transition to a low-cost industry is critical."

Capacity expansion remains below traffic growth, on load factors of 73.6 per cent.

PCMA dines out

USA - The Professional Convention Management Association's Education Foundation raised \$100,000 for meetings industry research at its 2005 annual dinner on 25 May in Washington.

PCMA chairman Gregg H. Talley named senior VP global sales from the North American division of Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, Christie Hicks, this year's supplier partner honoree and CEO of American Dental Association Business Enterprises, James Sweeney, meeting professional honoree. Chair of the tourism and convention administration department of the University of Nevada, Professor Patti J. Shock was the first university faculty honoree.

Queensland on up

AUSTRALIA - Queensland has hosted more international conventions in 2004 than any other Australian state, according to data from the International Congress and Convention Association. This follows Queensland's two convention centres, Cairns and Brisbane, being named number one and two respectively in ICCA's 2004 world's best venue rankings. Brisbane and Cairns undertook 29 and 17 international events respectively, amounting to a total of 46 for Queensland.

AIPC expands its reach

WORLD - Fifteen new members in six months has boosted the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC) family to a record level of 142 centres in 50 countries.

AIPC president Barbara Maple believes this success is based on "the effective use and sharing of experience and expertise".

Maple believes that AIPC is well on track to achieving its goal of true global representation. "Quebec City Convention Centre hosts the 47th annual AIPC conference 20-23 July.

Centre President and CEO Claude Pinault describes it as "a

chance to learn from the experiences of our peers in seeking solutions to our own challenges." The conference, he says, marks the transition from "a vision focused on operational excellence to one of strategic excellence".

The product on offer is no longer just about meeting halls, tables, and technology, Pinault argues, but about business solutions: "It will underscore the notion that, for our clients, meetings, conventions and shows are first and foremost business strategies and tactics that are essential to their growth."

The new AIPC 15:

- Megaron Athens ICC, Greece
- CCI Barcelona, Spain
- IKB Bonn, Germany
- The Boston CEC, USA
- Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia
- Kuala Lumpur CC Malaysia
- The Barbican Centre, UK
- Trade Fairs and Congress Center of Malaga, Spain
- Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia
- Phoenix CC, USA
- Messe Congress Centrum Stuttgart, Germany
- Helexpo CC Ioannis Velidis, Thessaloniki, Greece
- The Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Canada
- The Victoria Conference Centre, Canada
- Austria Center, Vienna

What members want Reid to lead Confex

WORLD - A new report, *Membership retention and recruitment in Europe 2005*, finds that associations are failing to meet members' expectations and must act if they are to stem erosion of membership. Published by IMEX in partnership with Association Gateway, the report combined results from 192 mainly UK respondents in 2004 with a second more detailed study conducted this February among 207 respondents from the rest of Europe.

IMEX marketing and operations director, Carina Bloom says: "The scope of the association network within our industry is unique, but also, perhaps, more competitive. That means it is vital to work hard to keep members happy and so protect revenue streams and hard-fought reputations."

The report finds common recipes for association success: a focus on delivering good business networking opportunities, a relevant education programme, up-to-date industry news and best practice guidance.

Associations are cautioned to avoid having the same management in place for too long.

UK - International Confex has a new director, Duncan Reid, who moves up from within CMPi. "Confex is a big show, the number one event for the industry. I have lots of ideas and am looking forward to putting them into place," Reid tells CMW.

Travel group director Ben Greenish, says: "Duncan has been at CMPi for nine years so he knows Confex and the industry and has broad exhibition experience. We could have chosen someone from the MICE industry, but we felt Confex needs exhibition experience."



Duncan Reid

Investment plans and Confex event strategy for the next five years will be announced to exhibitors on 8 July.