

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS

exhibition & event  
association of australasia

## Greening an event

Exhibitions are competitive environments – you are literally next door to your biggest competitors and all are showcasing their offering and trying to put across their unique selling point.

It's tough, especially when constrained budgets limit possibilities, as sometimes the bells and whistles can be the deciding factor for visitors to walk over and chat. So incentives may be the next best thing in attracting potential clients and ensuring your brand sticks in their mind.

When using incentives, the biggest consideration is to ensure the product, promotion and/or gift is in line with the company's message and objectives. Many exhibitors nowadays equip their stands with a coffee machine, for example. While the line for a free latte is usually quite long, the staff members on the stand typically fail to chat about their company's product or services. The message is not lost – it is just never communicated in the first place.

So the key to an incentive is to not only attract initial interest, but also to engage the target audience with a product, service and/or brand message.

A show bag can be a great way to entice people to your stand and leave with important information about your company. But the risk is that visitors will leave with countless show bags and the likelihood of going through them all is minimal. Be sure to include something practical like a branded pen, making the brand a part of their daily life. Brochures, including contact details, should also be included, although no more than three to a show bag is recommended.

The humble business-card competition can be a great way to entice visitors. Ideally, the prize should be an offering from your company, such as the new product being launched or showcased at the exhibition. Announcing the winner via email also provides a chance to follow up with stand visitors after the exhibition, which is vital for ensuring the company is kept in the mind of potential customers.



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# Other people's money

By AIPC president Edgar Hirt, who is also managing director of Congress Centre Hamburg.



**At first glance, the economics of a convention centre can seem a little odd. Few ever recover their capital cost, many lose money on the bottom line and need to be subsidised, and those that do make an operating profit may do so at the expense of the broader economic benefit they might otherwise generate.**

This is all simply the result of a market that understands only too well the value it brings to a host city or region. The overall economic benefit generated by conferences, conventions and related exhibitions far exceeds any potential bottom-line profit by the centre itself, and governments (typically the owner) are in the best possible position to capture a portion of that benefit through incremental tax revenues. Clients know that, and negotiate accordingly. That's why those who generate the largest economic benefits score the best rates – and why local events or others that generate relatively small amounts of non-resident spending pay higher rentals.

But the biggest benefit of all is

seldom even understood, let alone calculated – that is the role a centre and the kinds of events it hosts play in generating new business and investment. Viewed in that light, the modest subsidy some owners pay in running a centre pales in comparison with the much larger proportion paid for by the planners and delegates whose presence provides typically a destination's most effective business and investment promotion.

Most cities or regions serious about attracting business and investment work hard at promoting themselves to decision makers. A key part of this is encouraging potential investors to see the destination first hand, and the big problem is that busy professionals and executives need to find the time to visit. A convention centre can do this – and create a positive impression. And in most cases, most of the cost of this process is covered by the revenues generated by the audience itself.

Here's how it works: convention delegates are usually senior

professionals and business people who would otherwise not have a reason to visit the host region. Once they are there, their event program is typically designed to expose them to many of the attributes and opportunities of the destination – an exercise ironically paid for almost entirely by the delegates themselves.

A problem for centre owners is that this factor does not lend itself to direct measurement and is often ignored, yet is understood in the case of major events such as the Olympics.

Few people would question the wisdom of spending money to attract business and investment, and it is about time the role of convention centres in this was recognised.

## As it happened

# Training, networking ... and relaxing

### Premium Wealth Management Annual Conference.

**Venue:** Sea Temple Palm Beach, Tropical North Queensland.

**Duration:** Four days.

**Attendance:** 52 financial planners plus 21 partners, three children, four guest speakers and 29 sponsors/fund managers.

**Client:** Premium Wealth Australia and Premium China Fund.

**Budget:** \$160,000.

**Organisers:** Premium Wealth management team (group co-ordinator Roz Kaye and general manager Helen Bridgwood), Sea Temple sales and marketing manager Senga Greenwood and conference co-ordinator Giannina Huth.

**Partners:** A special program was organised for the partners, including a cooking demonstration and lunch, plus breakfast with the animals at Cairns Tropical Zoo.

**Objectives:** The main objective of the conference was training and networking. "Because of the global financial crisis, the industry has been hit hard by retrenchments, complaints, high stress levels and unhappy clients, financial planners and office staff, so we aimed for an environment where our delegates could relax totally," says Huth.

Opening the conference was the keynote speaker,

Olympic gold medallist Ken Wallace, followed by sponsor introductions and technical sessions. In the evening there was cane-toad racing with Tropic Entertainment followed by dinner in the Sea Temple restaurant themed with the colours of the sea and table decorations of seashells and fairy-light centrepieces. Entertainment was by singer Chris Lloyd.

On the second day, delegates had a choice of three activities: Low Isles reef trip (snorkelling, swimming, coral viewing), Kuranda train/Sky Cable tour or deep-sea fishing. When the fishermen returned, the Sea Temple chefs and even the general manager lent a hand to clean the 19 fish in the catch, which were then barbecued in the pool area.

On the third day there were technical sessions in the morning. After lunch, keynote speaker Dr Toby Ford discussed stress and its effects. Finally there was a "members only" session.

In the evening, the gala dinner at the nearby Sebel Reef House had a tropical theme. The Ward Benedict themeing company had the guests dress in tropical style, and leis were handed out to everyone. There were cocktails on the beach as the sun set, and photos of the previous three days were presented as a slide show on a big screen during the dinner. Entertainment was by the Tectonic band.

Delegate comments ranged from "Best resort I have ever stayed at" to "Paradise – I have found it and will be back". ☺