

CENTRE POINTS

Indians sort out the cowboys

By Philip Logan, General Manager Delegate, Hyderabad International Convention Centre.



When one spoke about India in the tourism business five years ago, it conjured up imagery of the Taj Mahal, royal palaces turned into hotels and exotic colours – a truly different holiday. The “Incredible India” campaign spread the message that India was opening its doors.

“Why the Elephant is dancing...” elaborated India’s finance minister P. Chidambaram at the 39th annual meeting of the board of governors of the Asian Development Bank in May 2006, the first event at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre, attended by 68 finance ministers of the Asian region as well as international bankers. His message was about the thrust of business development in India and the way ahead for the nation’s economy – the day of the clichéd imagery was over and India was ready to do business with the world.

Hyderabad International Convention Centre was applauded as being world class and befitting of the message – it was time for India to reach out. With the convention centre, India was ready to bid for world congresses.

But lack of expertise and knowhow proved an impediment – no-one knew how to go about winning a bid. The challenges were many. There was a lack of trained personnel in the meetings industry and no city infrastructure for hosting large meetings. For the first time, hotels in Hyderabad were being told that co-operation was the way to win the business.

Sometimes the time lines of events would befuddle – as a nation, we were accustomed to such immediacy as a 24-month window. Looking ahead 10 years was a totally new concept.

But India did present a wealth of opportunity. “The cost of doing clinical research in India is 40 to 60 per cent lower than in developed countries, and as clinical trials constitute about 70 per cent of the cost of a new drug, using India could bring down the average cost of US\$800 million for a new drug by around \$200 to 250 million,” said the FDI Confidence Report 2007. It placed India second globally as most attractive destination for investment. Two years later, the World Travel Tourism

Competitiveness Report, presented at the World Economic Forum in Geneva, noted that India was the host for 33 international exhibitions and trade fairs.

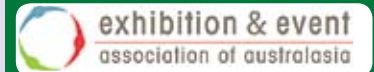
Indians are becoming members of trade bodies and associations to increase their business network. It makes sense therefore for associations to hold their world or regional meetings in India. A 15 to 17 per cent increase in registrations has been noted when congresses are held in India.

Hyderabad International Convention Centre started working with association organising committees to prepare bid documents, and now the meetings industry in India is actively following this lead and is also working with state tourism authorities.

Training people in the meetings business is a part of our agenda as more convention centres are built throughout the country. We need more and more trained people to run the business as the meetings industry starts to take off.

● AIPC, www.aipc.org

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS



Still doing business

It has been an interesting year for the exhibition market, but most of us weathered the GFC storm. In reality, it has not been that bad. Australia had stable visitor numbers, and though fewer exhibitions were held many events produced returns and business was still done.

So what lies ahead for exhibitions and events? It’s a tough question. If anything, we’re entering “No Man’s Land”. The economy should continue to recover and confidence may be restored – 2010 may prove slightly better, but it’s early days yet. Regardless, we should be investing in training and development programs. It is the ideal time to invest in our companies, people and industry.

The key to success this year lies in being adaptive to market and economic changes. The value of face-to-face marketing can’t be overlooked. That said, the market is evolving rapidly.

New technologies have led to more talk of “virtual exhibitions”, and we’ve seen the first of these already. It is not likely this form of exhibition will ever dominate the market, but technology is playing an increasing role in all sectors so it is important that industry members note how new technologies and social media can enhance the event process.

Finally, remember how you want to be treated as a potential client or customer. When planning an exhibit, keep the customer in mind. Consumers want to know how everything is going to affect them. Your company’s latest product may have the most sophisticated technologies behind it, but until you communicate how that’s going to enhance the user experience, it will fall on deaf ears.

Here’s to a prosperous 2010.



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SHOPPING LIST

Laptop bags reflect feedback



A new collection of laptop bags and rollers has been released in Australia by Targus.

There are seven products in the new Hughes range including three laptop rollers, two durable laptop bags, a women’s laptop tote and a smart casual laptop messenger bag.

“The collection is a new direction and incorporates feedback from business professionals,” says Targus Australia managing director Alenka Tindale.

Key features of the collection include water-resistant fabric with stain-guard coating, a reinforced bottom and micro-suede and twill-lined accessory pockets to better protect sensitive surfaces such as sunglasses and mobile phones.

A rain flap is included on the rollers, which also have hidden garment sections for overnight trips, while the laptop bags have soft leather handles and luggage straps.

Priced from \$179.95, the collection is available from retailers nationwide.

● Targus, www.targus.com.au