

ICCA
insights

Work happens – wherever

Meetings industry leaders have had to spend a great deal of time and energy over the past 12 months justifying the relevance and positive impact of meetings.

This is a result of a PR storm in the US about taxpayer money being wasted, along with the EU talking about cutting business travel and corporate meetings by 20 per cent, and CO2 generation by travel to meetings being in the firing line.

While we have advanced powerful arguments about the value of meetings – per capita economic spend; business and trade development; advances in medicine, science and technology; solutions to environmental and societal problems – I sometimes think we miss out on the biggest issue of all: the fundamentally changed nature of work itself.

In the “good old days”, it was perfectly logical to think of time spent at meetings as time away from the office or the laboratory, or away from sales calls. After all, that was how business was done. But

how relevant is that today? Consider today’s meetings: do delegates stop e-mailing? Do they drop out of contact with clients and colleagues? Do their ongoing projects grind to a halt? Of course not. Every spare minute not spent in business sessions is probably spent online.

Do delegates work their usual eight- to 10-hour day at conferences? No, they probably put in a good 14 to 16 hours of productive activity, talking business and absorbing ideas from breakfast until midnight. And, most critically, are delegates really away from clients, partners, colleagues and suppliers? No – most conferences are designed to bring these people together. How can this fail to be the most cost- and time-efficient way of having face-to-face time with them?

Let’s put meetings where they belong – right at the heart of the new work paradigm ... that is 24/7, constantly online, ever more decentralised and diffused, ever



From ICCEA CEO
Martin Sirk.

more global. Meetings are the “glue” that strengthens the multitudinous relationships we need to build and maintain. They create the emotional bonds that enable our electronic communication to work effectively. They do not stop us from carrying on our day-to-day work. They add enormous value to that work, which carries on remorselessly anyway. So let’s stop thinking about work as something that happens only when we are behind our desks or speeding down a motorway for a sales appointment, and let’s be proud of meetings as the most valuable generator there is of productive work.



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CENTRE POINTS

Just how green is our thinking?

By AIPC director of programming and international development
Rod Cameron.

Just like a pendulum, issues have a way of running to excess before returning to a logical balance between the idealistic and realistic.

With the “green” movement on such an upswing for several years, most people have now adopted a reasonable level of expectation about environmental responsibility. But there are always those who want to push the agenda as far as it will go. In the case of meetings, the odd thing is that many are devoting more energy to the “green” issue than in arguing about the value of meetings themselves. This is ironic given that this may well result in a drastic impact on our collective future.

Many within our industry have become almost obsessive about

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EYE ON EXHIBITIONS

exhibition & event
association of australasia

Keep 'em coming...

Exhibitions are undoubtedly an unrivalled marketing tool in generating face-to-face contact with potential clients and new business, but communicating with existing customers is vital.

It takes only a little effort to let customers know they are appreciated. Believing their business is no longer important can prompt customers to move elsewhere.

Nothing beats exhibitions for meeting existing and potential clients, but as competitors have the same advantage it is imperative to let clients know you value them.

Considering it costs seven times as much to gain a new customer as it does to retain one, there are simple ways to show clients their worth during an exhibition without impinging upon the ability to generate new business.

Promoting an event offers opportunities to acknowledge and reward clients. Reaching out to them before the event with personalised e-mails or direct mail marketing also encourages traffic to your stand.

Offering special deals before an exhibition is another way to acknowledge clients and encourage them to visit.

Exclusivity sells, so make sure your client database is notified about one-off and VIP offers.

Integrating a promotional item with a prospective deal can work wonders. Giving clients something they can present at your stand to receive an exclusive offer ensure they call by. It’s also an excellent way to re-iterate the business relationship.

Current customers can be the most powerful source of word-of-mouth marketing, both positive and negative. Ensuring they are satisfied and know they are valued increases the likelihood of such referrals.



MATTHEW PEARCE
President,
Exhibition & Event
Association of
Australasia.
www.eeaa.com.au
www.gotapassion.com.au