



International Association of Congress Centres

Founded: 1958

Membership: 160 members in 53 countries

Mission statement: AIPC is the pre-eminent international association of convention centres, with a mission of encouraging, supporting and recognising excellence in centre management. Its global network of over 160 leading centres in 53 countries, combined with the active involvement of more than 500 centre management professionals, ensures a broad and diversified level of industry knowledge and expertise, while its wide variety of programme activities supports members in developing and enhancing their skills in the areas of operations, finance, technology, staff development, marketing, client relations and sustainability.

Programme activities include:

- Conducting industry research and analysis
- Preparing technical publications
- Carrying out training, educational and professional development activities including the comprehensive AIPC Academy programme
- Maintaining global marketing and communications for the industry
- Facilitating member networking and information exchange forums
- Maintaining performance standards including the AIPC Quality Standards programme
- Recognising management excellence through Awards programmes such as the AIPC Apex Award for 'World's Best Congress Centre' and the 'AIPC Innovation Award'

Characteristics: AIPC ensures that the convention centre perspective is prominently represented in the advancement of the industry by addressing key opportunities and challenges facing members and actively engaging with government, business and media audiences on issues of importance to the future success of the industry.

Annual Conference:

July 3-7, 2010 – Liverpool, UK

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AIPC quality standards: A valuable tool for centres and clients

In today's complex and competitive market, convention centre clients need more than ever some reliable means of assessing the performance of a given facility, while centres themselves need a way to demonstrate their accomplishments. That immediately suggests some form of rating or accreditation which would help both.

The problem has been that, for a very long time, no such accreditation has existed. Yes, there were credentials that could be adapted from other areas such as hospitality or manufacturing but these generally failed to really reflect the kinds of performance important to the management of a centre. At the same time, there were credentials developed in particular countries or regions, but these lacked the universality required by clients who were regularly looking for venues world-wide because of their event rotation.

It was for this reason that AIPC undertook a few years back the task of developing a performance standard specific to convention centres. To be universally applicable, such standards would need to be flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of facility types, ages and configurations, be seen from a client perspective so they were relevant to the market and to be seen as having been developed and maintained by an external body like AIPC, using an external auditor, in order to maintain their credibility.

The standards that were developed addressed 10 key areas of centre management: Customer Service, Quality of Facilities and Operations, Employee Relations, Health, Safety, Security and Emergency Response, Financial Integrity, Community Relations, Environmental Responsibility, Industry Relations and Supplier Relations. The process was essentially one of having to demonstrate that measurable policies and procedures were in place for each area in a form that could be reviewed and assessed by the auditor. At the same time, there needed to be a means of identifying and addressing any shortcomings that were identified in order to achieve continuous improvement.

A trial run amongst a number of representative AIPC member facilities demonstrated that the programme was both beneficial and achievable. At the same time, those involved identified a number of additional benefits from the process, including team building amongst staff and a greater ability to identify and address management issues.

Our challenge now is to facilitate as many members as possible to achieve this distinction. While it represents another demand on centres managers who are already very busy with meeting client expectations, it is a way for them to distinguish themselves for their performance in a way that will be increasingly recognised in today's highly competitive market.

Edgar Hirt

President, AIPC