

CENTRE POINTS

# Soccer event kicks goals for meetings industry

**Africa's quest to improve its role and positioning as a meetings and events destination has often been a challenging process, hindered largely by lack of infrastructure in some parts of the continent.**

However, with increased democratisation and stability, most destinations are coming to realise the importance of the meetings and events industry as a catalyst and driver of economic development. A corollary of this has been an increased focus and investment in infrastructure.

And over the past five years, some of the countries with the highest economic growth in the southern hemisphere, albeit from a low base, are on the African continent: Angola (15 per cent), Mozambique (6.5 per cent) and Tunisia (5.5 per cent).

A key event that will help propel the continent even further in its quest to be a player in the meetings industry is the hosting of the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa. This will galvanise the continent into greater co-operation and co-ordination, and be a key element in advancing African destinations in



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the minds of meeting planners.

More importantly, it is the growing investment in infrastructure across most of the Southern African Development Community countries that will deliver a lasting legacy and dividend for the meetings industry. It is estimated that \$12.8 billion is being ploughed into safety and security, transportation, information management, customer service, new hotels and meetings and events venues.

At the same time, other improvements and enhancements are underway in most SADC countries that will ensure these destinations are given greater consideration. In Durban, a new international airport and trade port are opening soon. A new stadium is also nearing completion, while

several new hotels are being built.

A total 55,000 graded rooms were required by Match, a professional services company contracted by FIFA to provide ticketing, accommodation and event information technology, and South African Tourism believes South Africa will have about 100,000 hotel rooms available before the World Cup.

But supply factors are only one aspect of the equation. Creating a demand for meetings and events is critical in ensuring a destination's success. To this end, marketing initiatives and institutional alignments are also being undertaken. These include a greater focus and emphasis on the meetings market by South African Tourism, moves to establish a convention bureau in Durban, and Department of Trade & Industry incentives to encourage investment in meetings venues.

These developments, along with the patriotism engendered by the hosting of the World Cup and demand to associate corporate meetings with the event, are ushering in a new chapter for the events and meetings industry on the African continent.

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS



## How to catch attention

Smart exhibition design can lure more stand visitors and ensure success.

With the exhibition floor being a highly competitive sales environment, effective visual merchandising is the way for companies to set themselves apart.

Arguably the most important step in creating a visual impact is the correct use of lighting. Visitors are drawn to light, which can highlight displays and bring colour to life. It creates focal points for the stand and accentuates branding materials and promotional deals.

Movement sparks interest. The instinct to notice movement can be used to an exhibitor's advantage. Creating a display that integrates movement can be a challenge, but the same effect can be achieved by a background LED light that changes colour. Predominant colours should be limited to three and be consistent with branding and marketing message.

Product demonstrations are a way of involving visitors. Displays involving plenty of action attract crowds.

To make the most of a small space, emphasise one strong visual focal point with lighting and physical set-up. Overhead banners are a clever way to use vertical space, while display screens can put a wall to good use.

No matter how much space is available, keep stands simple. While the goal is to attract attention, visuals should be subtle and inviting, not overbearing.



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## ICCA insights Pushing up productivity Down Under

**Having just sprinted through five days in Australia and three days on aircraft and in airports, I've been thinking a great deal about one of the big myths regarding meetings and events: that time spent at meetings is time away from "real" work.**

This is why we need to constantly justify to delegates why they should abandon their day-to-day activities to attend our esoteric programs; and why we need to calculate the ROI of meetings as something to be balanced against the lost ROI of days spent chained to the desk. This is a myth that's in serious need of puncturing.

So what is the reality, as exemplified by my few days at AIME and the journey there and back from Amsterdam? Well, I logged an average of 16 to 18 hours' work a day (compared to eight to 10 when at head office), answered 80 per cent of my emails (including all the urgent ones), delivered four major presentations with the chance to update dozens of our members and to raise

ICCA's profile with hundreds of new contacts, and gave something back by lecturing to a great crowd of postgraduates at Melbourne's Victoria University. As well as that, I identified two super new speakers and invited them to address future ICCA events.

Then there were the wall-to-wall meetings with senior contacts from Korea, Japan, South-East Asia and New Zealand as well as Australia (I couldn't have afforded the time to visit them individually even if they lived around the corner), site inspections of the new Melbourne Convention Centre and meeting the Gold Coast people who are bidding for our 2013 congress, plus stimulating dinners with industry leaders, politicians, academics and other thought-leaders, the chance to make significant progress with two major business partnership agreements, and managing to encourage half a dozen prospective members to visit our congress as observers.



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On top of all this, I had hours of undisturbed time at 30,000ft to read interesting books and articles relevant to our congress educational objectives, and the latest strategic political, economic and business developments.

Could I have achieved even half of this by sitting in my office in Amsterdam? No chance! Can I justify virtually circumnavigating the earth over eight days? Damn right! I even managed to buy some high-tech Aussie mousetraps to solve the late-night visitations my wife phoned me to complain about halfway through my trip. Now that's what I call productivity. ☑