

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS



Before and after counts when using social media

Social media engagement is an effective way to reach a wide audience and can generate enthusiasm and encourage interaction, all before an event takes place.

Not only is it a platform for pre-show networking, but social media is a great way to develop a loyal and interactive online community. For example, by highlighting the various aspects of an exhibition, it can boost interest and build anticipation in the lead-up.

Exhibitions and social media serve as platforms for brands to engage in conversation with clients. While some may fear that online networking will replace face-to-face interaction, social media offers a chance to expand conversation beyond the four corners of the exhibition hall and allows discussion long after the event has finished.

Like exhibitions, social media has enabled a fundamental shift back to the consumer, creating an environment that values feedback and opinion. So securing a credible online presence and regular conversation will help companies develop a loyal network of followers, who will promote the brand themselves via their own Facebook, Twitter or blog.

Many brands are reaping the benefit of a social media strategy. The reason is simple: giving clients the chance to directly engage with and feel closer to the brand creates a stronger sense of brand loyalty. For exhibition participants, complementing face-to-face meetings with online participation will help bring companies closer to achieving their objectives.

See next month's *CIM* about which social media platform is best suited for particular brands, and how best to use this platform. Until then, follow us at www.twitter.com/eeaaupdate.



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

CENTRE POINTS

Looking at survival strategies

By AIPC director of programming and international development Rod Cameron.

Strategies for surviving and prospering will be explored at the 2010 AIPC Annual Conference in Liverpool, UK, next month.

From July 3 to 7, the conference will expand on the association's approach of addressing senior-level convention centre management issues with a program that draws on the expertise of economists, researchers, financial managers, design professionals and government relations experts.

"This year's conference will incorporate a comprehensive look at the process of facility development from initial planning through completion" says AIPC president Edgar Hirt. "These are challenging times to be interacting with governments and communities that are still recovering from the shock of the financial crisis, and we will need special skills and insights to succeed."

A variety of formats will be used at the conference including presentations, workshops and panel discussions.

"The results will be of intense interest not only to members engaged in or contemplating a major project, but those who recognise that such projects are an inevitable part of their future," says Hirt. "Of particular interest will be the two keynote speakers, who will be applying their global perspectives to the challenges of the convention centre industry."

One of the keynote speakers, former editor-in-chief of *The Observer* and present columnist Will Hutton, who has published several books and is a governor and visiting professor at the London School of Economics. He will give an overview of the economic climate facing governments in the post-financial crisis world, particularly addressing the questions of how best to deal with and make investment arguments to indebted governments.

Hamish McRae, the other keynote speaker, is economic editor of *The Independent* and author of *The World in 2020: Power, Culture & Prosperity*. He is a visiting professor at the School of Management at Lancaster University and a council member of the Royal Economic Society, and has been awarded the David Watt Prize for political journalism. He will be offering insights into how the industry can best position itself in the economies of the future.

"These notable speakers will be joined by a wide range of other experts in the areas of market research, financial planning, architectural design and communications to round out a comprehensive program that will also be drawing on experienced AIPC members," says Hirt.

Along with ongoing management updates and issue exchanges, the conference will have an executive theme with implications for centre managers. "Rapid changes in the industry generate increasing levels of expansions, renovations and venue development in order for centres to stay competitive," says Hirt, "yet such programs are often outside the main stream of a centre manager's expertise, and those who do obtain direct experience may have little use for it after their own project is complete.

"Because of this, the conference will incorporate a comprehensive look at the process of venue development from initial planning through government and community relations, and actual project management."

Program sessions:

- 1. Where's the Money?** A keynote presentation in which senior economist Will Hutton reviews government circumstances following the financial crisis, and suggests how centres will have to deal with deeply indebted government shareholders in terms of their ongoing work and investment requirements.
- 2. How Centres are Evolving.** A research-based review of changing expectations and evolving building requirements that will impact the kinds of buildings needed to meet the future demands of clients and the changing mix of business (based on surveys carried out in partnership with Michael Hughes, former vice-president of research and consulting for Tradeshow Week Research).
- 3. Converting Concepts into Design.** Taking the insights of centre expectation research and showing how factors ranging from diversifying program requirements to a need for distinguishing features in a competitive environment can be translated into architectural design. Led by a panel of architects with convention

centre design and development experience, the session will include a workshop on the process of creating design elements from industry trends.

- 4. Building Today's Business Case.** From feasibility studies to business projections, the essential elements of a business plan and who and what are needed for effective development. Led by industry analyst Lyle Hall of HLT Advisory, the session will emphasise how arguments need to be shaped in today's challenging financial environment.
- 5. Experiences and Lessons Learned.** A panel of AIPC member centres engaged in and/or having completed major projects share their war stories and offer advice.
- 6. Fitting Into the "New Economy".** Hamish McRae offers his insights into how the industry can best position itself in the economies of the future. He will provide examples of innovation and success in other sectors.
- 7. Winning the PR Battle.** Effective community and government relations tactics that can be help win the support and commitment needed to see a project through to completion. This session looks at new positioning, messaging and alliances critical to winning the credibility war.
- 8. What are we Measuring, Anyhow?** Convention centre success has for too long been assessed primarily on tourism-related measures like room nights and the economic impacts of visitor spending. Based on his landmark study in Australia, Professor Leo Jago will look at the choices and the role centres can play.
- 9. The Requirements and Costs of Going Green – Is it Worth it?** This session will focus on the design component, drawing from a panel of design experts to compare standards and implications as well as laying out the state of play and the cost of sustainable design.
- 10. The Realities of Project Management.** An expert will outline the principles of major project management and explain what needs to be understood and what could be done better.

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