

AIPC



International Association of Congress Centres

Founded: 1958

Membership: 166 members in 53 countries with the active involvement of more than 750 centre management professionals.

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 convention centres 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:

June 27-July 1, 2011 – San Diego, USA

Contact:

AIPC – International Association of Congress Centres

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Design your very own convention centre!

One of the most challenging conclusions to come from our recent AIPC Annual Conference was the idea that the updating of convention centres may be moving from an occasional to an ongoing undertaking.

Centres must face the fact that they are long-term investments in a short-term industry. The market is changing rapidly and centres must remain relevant and competitive, even though, once built, they have limited flexibility. In recent years, changing market expectations have touched on the size and shape of spaces - not easy subjects to address when you're dealing with something as solid as a building!

There are a host of other new demands to be met, ranging from new technology to sustainability. Sometimes these can be satisfied with changes to operations; often it requires a lot more than that. And even if the new demands can be satisfied, they can be expensive and demanding to implement.

With the supply of the convention centre product in many areas increasing faster than demand, competition increases and no centre can afford to remain behind in that kind of situation.

And business just doesn't spread itself around to fill up surplus supply – that's not how things work. Organisers choose a particular destination for many reasons and if a centre is fortunate enough to have good customers it must do everything it can to avoid driving them away. That's why we will always upgrade our centres regardless of the competition.

This means many centre managers must become project managers as well as operators, and customers get to shape the facilities they use.

On the basis that we will never be able to predict exactly what future demands may be, the best approach is to design in the ability to adapt to changing needs as they arise. For example, the flexibility of multi-purpose spaces and moveable walls can go a long way toward helping centres respond to changing meeting requirements.

But it sure helps to have the best possible idea of what the future demands are going to be – and this is where customers come in. Event organisers are best placed to anticipate new directions in meeting formats and by communicating these ideas to centre managers and designers, are more likely to get the kinds of facilities they will want in the future.

To encourage such dialogue, centres should design their post-event surveys to capture the insights clients have about how building changes could create better meeting environments, not just how they felt about the service they got. As for the clients, they should take the time to think through what kind of current or future building changes would suit them. And the same thing should apply to convention centre suppliers, whether they be food and beverage, security, housekeeping or audio visual.

Let's take advantage of this trend toward more regular updates as an opportunity for everyone to take a part in designing the best possible convention centre of the future.

Edgar Hirt
President, AIPC