

QUALITY STANDARDS

Aloysius Arlando, Chief Executive Officer, Singex Group, Singapore explains how Asia's rise will be driven by a focus on quality

Asia's rise as "meetings industry central" has been nothing short of meteoric. Asia now hosts more than one fifth of the world's meetings, while the region currently offers a total gross indoor space of over six million square metres.

But as Asian cities jostle to build more facilities to vie for a piece of the meetings industry pie, how do existing venues stay ahead of the game and expand their market share?

In today's venue business, capacity is commoditised. Established centres have to reinvent themselves through innovative solutions and good governance to create the defining difference that enhances the event experience and meets the evolving needs of event organisers.

Organisers today are increasingly focused on generating higher returns on investment (ROI) for all parties in the meetings industry value chain where the "confex" model of holding one or several conferences within an exhibition is becoming commonplace. Global conferences are also rightsizing into decentralised intimate sessions to speak directly to their target audiences.

Venue managers therefore need to move beyond capacity supremacy to adopt a strong people-centric approach towards operational excellence and creative solutions, where partnership and customer focus are the priorities. Leading spaces should now focus on developing ancillary services like hassle-free internet connection, delegate-focused concierge services and intelligent technical capabilities like mood lighting systems and video conferencing technology to differentiate themselves.

In this ROI-driven environment, quality assurance and smooth event delivery are more important than ever. Venues can demonstrate their commitment to customer-centric quality management systems through the adoption of industry best practices and globally recognised certification from bodies such as the International Organisation of Standards.



An international standard, like the ISO 9001:2008 achieved by Singex, reflect a venue manager's longstanding commitment to good governance, a 360-degree customer service approach and assures end-users of a fuss-free event experience. These best practices and industry standards must be reviewed annually to maintain relevance with organisers and visitors.

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Adding to the list of concerns today are potential security threats and natural disasters. To cope with the realities of a changing world, venues must prepare robust and responsive crisis communication and disaster recovery plans.

Critical business functions should be reviewed regularly with partners and public agencies such as the civil defense. Going one step further, venue managers can work towards receiving certification in business continuity management to signify that their centres are able to resume operations during service disruption within a reasonable timeframe and with minimal interruption. This ensures worry-free events for organisers, partners and visitors.

Finally, good governance also extends to good citizenship. Green initiatives are becoming less of a flash-in-the-pan trend and more of a business requirement. From energy efficiency to waste minimisation and sustainable goods procurement, venue managers should reflect on the carbon footprint left by their properties and incorporate environmentally-conscious measures into their daily operations.

Replacing artificial light with natural light in walkways and recycling waste after each event are two common eco-friendly practices for venues. At EXPO – managed by Singex – air-conditioning systems use NEWater to cool chillers, while MAX Atria (EXPO's enhanced convention wing opening in early 2012) is certified Green Mark Platinum, having integrated innovative sustainability features in its construction.

As major Asian economies continue to forecast strong economic growth, Asia is set to be the focal point for trade and investment in years to come. Continued focus on good governance and operational excellence can only be positive, motivating venue players to collectively raise industry standards through healthy competition and contribute to an even more vibrant and dynamic meetings industry landscape. ◦



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