

# KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES IN CONGRESS DELIVERY

The fourth in the AIPC/IAPCO series of seminars was held at EIBTM in December 2005 and was, like the previous events, a sell-out. The meeting examined 'Key accountabilities in congress delivery', and was chaired by Rod Cameron, with a panel consisting of Torsten Wichmann of SAP Global Events, Leonhard Loew of Convention Centre Basel (AIPC), Carlos de Sebastian of Tilsa OPC (IAPCO), and Sarah Storie-Pugh of Concorde Services (IAPCO).

Working together as partners was the theme for the seminar. Torsten Wichmann, a major client in the meetings industry, opened the discussion by pointing out that, in many cases, what was offered to a client by an agency salesperson in no way represented what could be delivered by the project manager. "If there are problems, tell us," he said, "so that we can work them out together. Don't let us discover them half way down the line – that just leads to mistrust. We have to work together".

Sarah Storie-Pugh examined some of the more complex issues regarding accountability. "In this current climate of litigation," she commented, "we need to be well aware of the accountabilities of all parties, be it the association, the conference centre, the PCO or the sponsoring companies." One of these key issues, she continued, is **data protection**, which is becoming increasingly important for people who do not wish to 'drown' in junk mail and spam emails. For all materials, whether they be email blasts or registration forms, there has to be an 'opt-out' facility. Delegates should be able to opt out of being included in the list of participants or having their details circulated to a third party, such as exhibiting or sponsoring companies. Most importantly, if someone does opt out, this must be respected.

Another hot topic is **intellectual property** or copyright. An important question to consider is: who actually owns the copyright of a presentation, and from whom do you have to

seek the right to transfer that copyright or intellectual property? Intellectual property covers not only the scientific content of a presentation but also the right to publish it in a book of abstracts or on a CD-Rom. It also covers the design and content of an exhibitor's stand, promotional materials, design, IT, and research.

**Insider trading laws** are perhaps a less obvious issue of concern. There are directives in both the EU and US regarding the protection of data (i.e. results of clinical trials) that are not yet in the public domain but that might influence the share price of a company. Insider trading laws cover the use of such information prior to it being made public.

The panel continued its discussion on issues of accountability with Carlos de Sebastian examining the area of **fear and security**. "Fear is driven by events," he explained. Some of these are environmental, such as the weather, some are political, and some are things such as health scares – the fears arising from these kinds of events affect meeting attendance and can be ruinous for an event or a destination. Many events require security to allay these fears, and the level of security must be appropriate to the event; but whatever the level of security, staff training and briefing are an essential ingredient in implementing a strategic plan in the event of a major incident. "Remember," he continued, "20% of those present will panic, 20% will do as they were instructed and 60% will just follow the strongest character!"

Leonhard Loew summarised the panel's deliberations by acknowledging that everyone has responsibilities towards an event; problems should be aired and shared, and solved together. An understanding of these issues can provide the opportunity of finding an alternative means to a solution. In summary, he said, "There is an accountability to deliver what has been promised."

## Carving Up The Financial Pie - Who Gets Which Slice?

08.45, Wednesday 31 May 2006, at IMEX  
IAPCO / AIPC Joint Seminar

Moderator: Rod Cameron

If you are attending IMEX this year, can you afford to miss this spirited debate regarding the financial pressures placed upon events in the current economic climate?

- Roslyn McLeod, Tour Hosts, Sydney (IAPCO)
- Philippe Fournier, MCI France, Paris (IAPCO)
- Barbara Maple, Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre, Vancouver (AIPC)
- Vanessa Cotton, ExCel Conference & Events, London (AIPC)

## HELPING CLIENTS TO SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE... IN GOOD TIME!

AIPC recently conducted a survey of its members to examine the growing issue of clients being unable or unwilling to commit to a formal contractual agreement until the last possible moment. Such delays in signing a formal contract result in the need to manage a client's expectations and commitments in the interim period.

Of the 70 centres worldwide who responded to the survey, 77% indicated that clients were delaying signing a formal contract for a longer period of time than they were 5 years ago, and 63% felt that the delay would likely increase in the future.

This trend for delaying contracting for as long as possible appears to be caused by concerns over economic and global issues. "Such delays can be driven by excessive deposit terms and punitive cancellation clauses," commented Roslyn McLeod of Tour Hosts, Australia. "However, the appointment of a PCO allows for keen negotiations with conference centres, based on the PCO's experience and close working relationships with the centres." With careful budgeting and the provision of accurate historical data, she explained, a PCO will be able to manage a client's liabilities and therefore ensure that contracts can be signed in a proper and timely manner.