Data Will Only Get Us So Far!

I had the pleasure of moderating the Governmental Panel Session at the most recent Politician’s Forum at IMEX earlier this year and was struck by the fact that while we spend a lot of time documenting the numbers – things like financial performance, economic impacts and delegate numbers – what often has the biggest impact on elected representatives are the “stories” that illustrate what major events like conventions and exhibitions achieve in terms they understand as politicians. We are all being inundated with big numbers these days – whether from governments themselves or other industry organizations who are also trying to make their point about the value they generate. But while these numbers are critical to credibility, they only tell the “hard” part of the value message, and often it is the “soft” side that really captures the imaginations of decision-makers.

It’s not easy to illustrate the full impact of things like knowledge transfer, investment attraction, economic priorities and academic excellence using numbers alone – so everything we can do to pump up these aspects with good examples that demonstrate the key points really help make those points more effectively.

That was one of the key take-aways from our Joint Meetings Industry Conference on the Value of Meetings held in Paris this past May. Delegates there recognized the value of a narrative, particularly in speaking with elected officials, and conference recommendations thus included the idea of creating a template in order to encourage a consistent format for these and an online “platform” that would make them available for others to access in assembling their advocacy programs.

This is yet to come. But in the meantime it is certainly of value for us all to be thinking about what kinds of ‘stories’ we can be putting together to illustrate just what the events we host do in broader community terms!

Geoff Donaghy, AIPC President

A Big Year for AIPC Education

The 2015 AIPC Annual Conference in Boston this July focused on the multiple interactions centres have with their respective cities and how these can best be managed to deliver the broadest range of benefits. The theme was reflected not only in the conference sessions but in the experience delivered by the host city, which has worked hard over many years to ensure that its centres generate benefits consistent with the overall economic, academic and community goals of Boston.
“Centres are major drivers and tools of economic development in their respective cities, but they are also big investments in infrastructure that shape the form and function of the city in important ways”, said AIPC President Geoff Donaghy. “This means our members should be an integral part of the broader planning and policy development process of their host cities - but that’s not always the case. What we learned at this conference is that we can and should be much more engaged in these processes, and that in doing so we will not only be doing a better job of serving our respective communities but at the same time enhancing our own future business prospects as well”.

Action-Packed Sessions Drive the Program:

The Annual Conference theme was reflected in a range of presentations from keynote speakers who reinforced the key role of centres in civic affairs.

Global cities expert Greg Clark’s session The Role of Convention Centres as Instruments of City Development and Transition, addressed the important questions of how our cities are evolving and the role that centres can and are playing in facilitating that change. His was a two part session; first an overview of city development on a global scale followed by a workshop that created an opportunity for specific examples and advice on how delegates could better manage this interface in their own communities.

Clark, as the Chairman of The Business of Cities, an advisor on City Development to a number of global cities as well as OECD, World Bank, Urban Land Institute and the Brookings Institution, was the perfect choice to lead this discussion. He used specific city case studies to illustrate his key points, which were that cities everywhere are in a state of ongoing transition, and that centres can and should play a key role in this by being more active participants in the processes that drive decision making.

However, he also noted that in order to do this centre managers needed to be more aware of the issues facing city and economic policy makers and prepared to put forward a convincing story about how their operations could contribute to broader policy objectives. Clark concluded with a pair of factors that in his view constituted the critical areas where centre and city policies could better complement each other.

Supporting this message was a second keynote session delivered by global branding visionary Chris Fair, who addressed the related and increasingly important topic of destination branding in a session entitled Brand Redevelopment: How Do We Respond to the New Agenda?

As President of Resonance Consultancy, and an individual that has pioneered a lot of the most current work around aligning images to the benefit of a range of stakeholders, Fair has helped a wide variety of countries, cities and communities create development strategies, marketing plans, and brands that shape their future.

He noted that many of us still operate with branding primarily designed for leisure promotion which can create challenges for those trying to attract meetings and conventions, particularly those that are very sensitive in this regard. The same applies to others such as economic and investment agencies which are also trying to establish a destination image, often without reference to other destination campaigns.

His central thesis was around the question of how we as centres align with these various images to deliver a cohesive and believable brand, and can become more active in the processes whereby cities develop their various levels of branding, becoming advocates for better integration that reinforces an image of relating to knowledge, innovation and economic strategy rather than just relying on “a pretty face”.

The topic was rounded out with a third session entitled Community Backlash: How Cities are Being Impacted by Visitors delivered by Dr. Johannes Novy, an urbanist and Professor for Planning Theory. Novy’s well researched thesis was that in many cities around the world growing visitor numbers are increasingly associated with resident backlash, both because of the image they create and the impacts they have on local neighborhoods, and that as a generator of visitors, centres run a similar risk.

However, he acknowledged that centres attract a fundamentally different type of visitor – one more likely to be associated with positive attributes like education, knowledge and economic progress – and that this offers an opportunity to be seen as a provider of “quality” visitors in a time when this will be an important distinction. In concluding, Novy set out a series of factors that in his view could help centres become better “neighbors” in the overall planning process.
And Now for the Practical Side...

Other Annual Conference topics focused on the more practical side of the centre/city interface as well as the status of other centre management issues and included:

Security Revisited: A Global Review of Crisis Management and Recovery, where a broad-reaching panel of member centres and partners including Aloysius Arlando, CEO Singapore EXPO Convention and Exhibition Centre, Robert Noonan, Director of Public Safety for Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, Julie-May Ellingson, CEO of the Cape Town International Convention Centre and Michael Lockwood, Principal of Populous explored the range of issues associated with facility safety and security and reached out into the many aspects of security and safety beyond immediate facility policies, including the city security interface, the importance of having recovery and image-rebuilding plans and how cyber-security has opened up a new front for concern. These topics were well illustrated by the very recent and high-profile experiences of host city Boston as a result of the Boston Marathon bombing incident that took place only a short distance away from the centre where delegates were having the discussion.

Sector Update: Issues and Expectations from the Association World, Alessandro Cortese, Immediate Past President of ESAE: European Society of Association Executives and CEO of European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) and Scott D. Wiley, Board Secretary-Treasurer, ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership and President & CEO of the Ohio Society of CPAs joined forces in a panel designed to clarify developments in one of the most important areas of centre business – the evolving world of major associations. While perspectives varied to some extent between these two geographical areas, there were many common concerns raised, including the growing importance of demonstrating ROI to members; the challenges of responding to demands for content, format and technology and the ongoing financial issues that accompany association management today.

Exhibitions Today and Tomorrow featured Paul Woodward, Managing Director, UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry and a global exhibitions industry leader, who provided an overview of how the exhibition sector has gone through some dramatic changes, many of which are of great significance to centre managers. Amongst these rapidly changing formats, exhibitor expectations and competition for marketing investments from other media. Woodward concluded with a “scary story” that illustrated how fast fundamentals can change in ways that threaten traditional revenue models!

The Evolving World of Hotels Jan Freitag, Senior Vice President of STR (Smith Travel Research) outlined what may be the best conditions ever for this sector while acknowledging that this may not be the best news for centres looking for support in attracting group business. However, he also highlighted a number of positives, including the fact that most new investment is going into limited service hotels rather than those that compete most directly with centres by providing competing function space.

Technology: The Centre Perspective saw Steven Bury, Vice President of Sales, Freeman Audio Visual deliver a centre-oriented session that explored both current and upcoming issues in technology from a centre manager’s perspective. Braving the “free WiFi” controversy, Bury suggested routes to managing the related costs while acknowledging that both the technology and the spiralling demands for more bandwidth are likely here for the foreseeable future!

Together the content provided one of the most comprehensive industry overviews in recent years – while at the same time looking into the future with a broader perspective on the changing role of facilities in their communities.

New Board offers Combination of New Faces and Continuity

The General Assembly at the 2015 AIPC Annual Conference in Boston produced a significant change in AIPC Board membership as a result of a number of terms completing at the same time. A major Board election involving all but two positions generated a number of new faces while ensuring continuity with the re-election of a number of incumbents to a second term.

The outcome is one of the strongest and most senior Boards we have ever had, with a wide range of experience and expertise to drive Association activities.

The new AIPC Board now consists of:

- President | Geoff Donaghy, Australia
- Vice-President | Aloysius Arlando, Singapore
- Treasurer | Hilmar Guckert, Germany
- Jan van den Bosch, Netherlands
- Marc Rodrigues, Spain
- Julie-May Ellingson, South Africa
- Greg O’Dell, USA
A Big Year for AIPC Educational Outreach!

The next 12 months will show a big increase in the AIPC professional development program, including both enhancements to our signature Academy and Summits as well as our two new regional events in South Africa and Singapore. Here are the details;

**AIPC Asia Summit Marks the Start of Outreach Programming**

**Singapore, October 22**

One of the most consistent requests in member surveys over the past several years has been for programming that reaches out into the various parts of the world where member centres are located in order to deliver quality centre-related education, training and issues-oriented programming. This fall, in cooperation with the Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organizers & Suppliers (SACEOS), AIPC will be carrying out its first Asia Summit designed to specifically address this need during TravelRave 2015.

Weemin Ong, CMP, Chair – Education & Professional Development, SACEOS says “SACEOS is proud to partner with AIPC on what will be the first ever industry education program targeted at convention centre professionals in Asia. With industry relevant knowledge driven and delivered by AIPC, the AIPC Asia Summit will address key trends and issues relevant and unique to convention centre professionals”.

The full day program engages convention centre professionals across macro topics such as sales & marketing as well as convention centre operations. Running during TravelRave 2015, it will offer an array of centre-related perspectives to attendees, ranging from overall industry conditions and competitive factors to client views on their most urgent priorities for centre spaces and services.

**AIPC’s Africa Summit at Meetings Africa**

**Johannesburg, February 22, 2016**

Our first foray into the delivery of “on the ground” professional development was the AIPC full day Summit at the 2015 edition of Meetings Africa, combining a regional forum with regionalized research results, Africa in context and a number of other presentations from industry authorities gathered for the most important industry event in Africa.

The Summit more than delivered on expectations, with attendance in excess of 50 and a range of subject matter facilitated by the presence of a number of industry leaders who all contributed their expertise to several events aimed variously at association, supplier and industry audiences.

Based on this initial success, AIPC will again be delivering a day-long event at Meetings Africa on February 22, 2016. This year promises to be even more relevant and productive with the benefit of last years’ experience and more professional input from local members.

**The AIPC Facility Operations Summit**

**Barcelona, November 15 and 16, 2015**

This event brings together operations and event managers from around the world in a two day program designed to address key operations and event management issues.

Strengthening in both content and attendance year over year, this session promises to be the best yet with a diverse array of presenters and topic areas filling two full days.
Next year’s AIPC Academy will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of this uniquely convention centre-specific learning experience designed to address the critical need for centres to maintain fully qualified staff in a highly competitive industry and to establish the kind of industry networks that facilitate future professional growth. With a strong track record and an evolving program that ensures every Academy is entirely up to date and relevant to the most current needs, it is quite simply the best professional development opportunity available in our industry today.

Now, the Academy has implemented an inter-disciplinary approach that puts the emphasis on issue identification and practical problem-solving at a management level. With an increasingly diverse international faculty, it offers a broad experience that addresses the needs of staff who are seeking to broaden their knowledge of the industry and prepare for more senior management responsibilities as well as those who already have significant management experience and who are looking for a forum in which they can work with Academy Faculty and colleagues on developing strategies to meet today’s most pressing management challenges. This includes:

• centre managers with several years of industry experience who are expected to grow their responsibilities,
• those that have recently moved into this sector and require an overall orientation to the industry, and
• previous attendees who wish to continue to upgrade their knowledge, credentials and networks by returning participants in the new issue-oriented format.

Performance Survey 2015: Trends Tracked, New Areas Explored

AIPC 2015 also featured the results of AIPC’s Annual Performance and Prospects Survey that has been tracking industry performance and confidence levels for six years, making it one of the most extensive bodies of centre-related information in the industry. The survey has now evolved to a point where it supports regional comparisons as well as those relating to client expectations for the same time periods, making it a powerful vehicle for centre planning and benchmarking.

This year’s edition again tracked key performance indicators and a few dramatic results, including the fact that overall business growth has outpaced growth in GDP for a number of years. In addition, a special section had a close look at a variety of elements in the centre / DMO interface, including roles, responsibilities, reporting relationships and mechanisms for managing performance in one of the most frequently discussed aspects of the community interface.

While the session simply provided a “taster” of findings, the full and final report will have been be available to members via the AIPC website since the end of July.

2016 details are as follows:

LOCATION
The program takes place at the Dolce la Hulpe, a dedicated training facility just outside of Brussels that provides a perfect learning environment with full technical facilities along with sophisticated accommodation and services.

FEES AND TIMING
DATES
Sunday, February 14 | 14:00 to Friday, February 19 | 12:00
FEES
2.595 EUR | five day program
Early registration up to November 15, 2015
2.795 EUR for registration on/after November 16, 2015
DISCOUNTED REGISTRATION RATES
Discounted registration rates are available for long haul attendees in recognition of the costs associated with travel to the Academy:
• 6-8 hour flight: 20% discount
• Over 8 hour flight: 50% discount Program fees

SCHOLARSHIPS
A limited number of Professional Development Program scholarships are available through the support of our Corporate Partner IMEX and AIPC members. Application criteria are outlined on the AIPC web site at www.aipc.org/trai_schol.php
2015 AIPC Innovation Award: Creativity on Display

The 2015 AIPC Innovation Award competition was overflowing with great ideas for centre management, marketing, systems and technology, and all were on full display in the poster session and “pecha kucha” presentations at this year’s Annual Conference in Boston.

Two awards made; one a result of the assessment of the Award Panel and the other the “Popular Choice” Award as selected by delegates who had the opportunity to interact with entry representatives and get into more detail. While the jury’s still out on which if either takes precedence the fact is that both awards are a direct reflection of the relevance and applicability of the winning innovations.

This year’s Jury winner was the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre for their highly innovative new system of bundling short-term product offerings based on pre-set components, with the Delegate’s Choice Award going to the Halifax Convention Centre for an innovative launch campaign for their new facility.

Why did you decide to pursue AIPC Quality Standards qualification?

López Bermúdez: Obtaining AIPC’s Quality Standards certification was our way to demonstrate our team’s genuine commitment to service excellence for our clients, and it makes us proud to distinguish ourselves as the first accredited convention center in Latin America. At the same time, the audit process has enriched our operation and has allowed us to set new challenges in favor of our clients and shareholders.

How challenging was the process for your staff?

López Bermúdez: After communicating the importance of the certification process and putting a team together to work on each of the different fronts, the initial perception from the staff was that it was going to be a complex process and that surely the internal audit was going to prove challenging. We didn’t know what was going to be our starting point, but that the whole team had to make an important time commitment in addition to our day to day responsibilities in order to reach all the objectives.

Was it worth it?

López Bermúdez: The exercise proved very rewarding in terms of teamwork, staff empowerment and the opportunity for individuals to contribute outside their areas of responsibility, which led us to discovering hidden talent amongst us. Ultimately the process gave us a platform to grow as a company by helping us structure new initiatives and by directing us towards processes that needed to be implemented or improved.

Do you see other benefits?

López Bermúdez: As the only convention center in Latin America recognized with AIPC’s Gold Standard Certification, the accreditation represents for us a distinctive competitive advantage. Our organization aims to be a reference for its level of service excellence and better operating procedures allow us to fulfill that mission. As we see it, such a valuable distinction brings great responsibility. Going forward, the new accreditation marks a milestone in our promise of service excellence towards clients, partners, suppliers and shareholders. As part of our marketing communications plan, we’ll use the new certification to motivate our team, promote high standards among our peers and as a reminder to the press about the importance of the meetings sector and internationalization of our services.
MEET OUR NEWEST AIPC MEMBER CENTRES!

FLANDERS MEETING & CONVENTION CENTER ANTWERP

Creating real live experiences is part of Antwerp’s heritage as a famous gathering place and 19th century zoo, making it an inspiring location for an early morning run or engaging conversations amidst wildlife. Features of the Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp include:

- 30 meeting rooms accommodating 2,500 delegates
- Auditorium seating 2,000 pax
- Adjacent to world’s most beautiful railway station including Eurostar and Thalys
- State-of-the-art technology and excellent service
- Zoo access all inclusive with the booking of the Convention Center

Anja Stas, Chief Commercial Officer, says ‘It is our mission to bring our clients closer to what matters and let them experience a special kind of meeting magic that happens only when one meets live, and this gets a special flavor amidst 4,000 exotic species living in the world’s best kept 19th century zoo. We hope to learn and share the tools and methods that allow us to reach another level of excellence and become frictionless in our operations and for our clients so that they get to focus on what’s really important to them.’

PUNTA DEL ESTE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTER

In May of 2016, the most exclusive resort destination in Uruguay and Latin America will be opening its new Convention and Exhibition Center. Developed over an area of more than 120,000 square meters, the new Center offers a meeting space with capacity for up to 4,000 delegates and 6,700 square meters for exhibitions. With a highly trained professional team and first class technology, it will provide everything needed to make any event a success – all surrounded by a charming natural environment.

Says General Manager Arnaldo Nardone “We have decided to join AIPC to link up and do business on a truly senior and global Conventions centers networking platform, getting access to valuable knowledge that we will need to achieve our future business goals and high operational standards through its research, educational and academy programs, for us, as a new company we are proud to become part of a global association where senior international convention and exhibition centre colleagues join efforts to improve professionalism within the industry”.

HYDERABAD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

Situated on a sprawling 15 acre landscape, Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) is a world class facility with state-of-the-art infrastructure, connectivity, hospitality expertise and management bandwidth to execute conventions & exhibitions of both national & international stature. It has a massive internal hall of 6,480 square meters that can hold over 5000 delegate in a plenary and can be portioned into six smaller halls. Immediately adjacent to it is the Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, a 287-room 5 star hotel. With 37 breakout rooms and VIP lounges equipped with world class AV equipment and Wi-Fi, HICC is the most sought after MICE destination in India.

HICC is an integral part of HCVB (Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau) India’s first regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, an initiative by Tourism Industry & Andhra Pradesh Government to promote and market Hyderabad as a global MICE destination. Says Neil Paterson, General Manager – Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre, “Hyderabad has emerged as one of the leading metropolises in India for MICE destinations, ranking only behind Delhi, and is on the fast track to becoming India’s Convention Capital. The city hosted 18 prestigious meetings in 2014, and the significant contribution of Hyderabad International Convention Centre is highlighted by the fact that 13 of these 18 meetings were hosted here. 2015 is poised to be another strong year for Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), with many large national and international events and a record number of enquiries for the coming year. We are very excited about associating with AIPC and look forward to a mutually beneficial relationship”. 

Neil Paterson
General Manager

Juliana López Bermúdez
General Manager
A Gala Venue in a Sophisticated New Tower Designed by Renzo Piano in Turin

A Gala Systems electromechanical solution for flexible multipurpose halls has recently been integrated into a prestigious 44-floor office tower built as the new headquarters for the Intesa Sanpaolo banking group. World-renowned Italian architect Renzo Piano is the name behind this new urban landmark, inaugurated in April 2015 in Turin’s historical centre. Designed in the interests of environmental sustainability and opening up to the city, the transparent 166-metre tower of glass and light-coloured steel is composed of three sections. Concentrated in the middle are more than 2000 office workstations, while the upper and lower sections incorporate accessible facilities for the Turinese public.

At its base, the building houses a multi-functional ‘suspended’ hall equipped with a Gala transformable seating system for 364 patrons, which allows for a large variety of configurations within the allotted space. Occupying part of the fourth, fifth and sixth floors, the public hall built in cooperation with Tecnologie Industriali can be quickly transformed – within 10 to 15 minutes – from a raked seating layout to a flat floor space, making it equally suited for seminars, banqueting, presentations and entertainment functions.

As opposed to standard venues with an underfloor concrete pit, the Intesa multifunctional hall is hung above ground level without vertical supports to offer an unobstructed view of the city. Despite these exceptional architectural constraints, every effort was made to create a state-of-the-art, multipurpose 350-square-metre hall equipped with the latest solution in venue transformation technology. Gala Systems’ equipment – enabling seats to be deployed via an automated platform and rotation system, or stored in an inverted position under the floor when they are not required – was chosen to transform the hall quickly and automatically, without sacrificing audience accessibility or comfort.

Described as a “bioclimatic building”, the skyscraper was conceived as a showcase for exemplary environmental performance: it ensures no polluting emissions in normal operating conditions thanks to a wide variety of sustainable design strategies – such as geothermal heat, ventilated ceilings and 80% LED lighting. There is no doubt that Renzo Piano’s tower will play a dynamic role in Turin.