Grab Those Opportunities!

When's the best time to invest some time in connecting with government decision-makers? Whenever you get the chance!

With everything else we have to do in our busy lives these days, finding the time to take on the seemingly endless task of educating our government representatives can easily slide to the bottom of the pile of priorities. But what this means is that months, and sometimes years can go by without making the effort to carry out this most essential element in the process of convincing those who own or not manage some 85% of convention centres today why we are a great investment.

It's not to say this is easy. Ours is only one of countless areas of responsibility that government representatives need to be dealing with and most of their attention generally goes to things that represent problems that must be solved rather than opportunities to be exploited. But the fact is we can be one of those rare things – a “good story” – if what we do is put into the broader context of economic and community development policies that governments everywhere rely on to varying extents to get elected.

But sometimes these opportunities present themselves – or can be generated through our relations with other groups – and when that happen, we need to take full advantage of them, however busy we may be. I'm saying all this because we recently had such an opportunity in my own country of Australia by way of a high level Forum that opened doors not always available to senior government officials (see article, page 4). In this case it was a matter of being able to enhance arguments around the value of the overall travel sector by underlining the role of convention centres as catalysts for benefits that extended far beyond the usual tourism arguments. By making the effort to get involved – and by seeking support from other industry colleagues that could reinforce the message – we were able to make a real impression on those whose opinions matter for future decisions that will impact our industry over the long term.

There are two lessons to all of this. The first is to keep an eye out for such opportunities, and for potential partners that can help you access audiences that might not otherwise be available. The second is that you need to be sure you are in a “state of readiness” with data and arguments presentation-ready rather than losing opportunities through having to scramble at the last minute. Many of the required materials are readily available through industry organizations like AIPC – but it's also important to have your own data in place and up to date as well. Things like a good and recent Economic Impact report fall into this category, and help you take your arguments out of the general and into the kind of specific detail that carries weight with government officials.

Opportunity does in fact knock, even for us as convention centre managers. The key is to keep a watchful eye out and to be ready when the door opens!

Geoff Donaghy, AIPC President

One of the most highly rated sessions at the 2015 AIPC Annual Conference in Boston was a presentation by renowned city development specialist Greg Clark, Founder of the Business of Cities and an adviser to many governments and global organizations on the ways that cities evolve and the implications for changing business and planning policies and practices. A core element to his presentation was the idea that convention centres can and should be core elements in this evolutionary process as they represent a vehicle for engaging with many of the forces shaping global economic and professional development, not to mention the role they play in facilitating the movement of both ideas and talent.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
Nantes Awaits Us in 2016!

Once again, the AIPC Annual Conference will deliver a very powerful educational and networking experience – and as always, it will at the same time do so in a uniquely exciting location. Here’s a quick look at Nantes, our 2016 host destination – not just as a venue but as an educational component of the conference!

Dear AIPC friends and colleagues,

We are only a few months away from the AIPC 2016 Conference in Nantes, France. I can hardly wait to welcome you in our beautiful city. The birthplace of Jules Verne, Nantes shows audacity, imagination and collective spirit that make it a highly attractive destination and the first economic hub in the west of France. Our city attracts the largest number of newcomers per year in France, by successfully combining a booming economy, a thriving cultural scene and superb quality of life.

Europe’s Green capital in 2013, Nantes is an eco-friendly city with a hundred parks, 3 rivers, the Atlantic Ocean and French Brittany at its gates. The City center is mostly pedestrian and offers plenty of shopping opportunities, along with great French cuisine (and Muscadet wine!) just at walking distance from the hotels and our convention center, La Cité Nantes Events Center. You will certainly enjoy every minute of the Nantes way of life!

Nantes is also a historic city, with the castle of the Queen of France “Anne of Brittany”, the gothic cathedral, the Bouffay district dating from the Middle Ages, the “Passage Pommeraye”, a shopping arcade, and the botanical garden, both dating from the 19th century.

In the early nineties, the city started its transformation with an ambitious cultural strategy. Inheriting Jules Verne’s inspiration and mindset of crazy and imaginative ideas, Nantes has now become an audacious and daring place, where all forms of artistic creation come together. You will especially enjoy the Art and Culture Festival “Le Voyage à Nantes”, which reshapes our city every summer and offers a unique encounter with art, culture, sport and gastronomy.

Today Nantes is in full development. The heart of the economic growth is research, strongly organized around clusters and directly linked to the industry. The Jules Verne Institute for composite materials and the Airbus plant are one of many examples showcasing our ability to work together. Aeronautics, renewable marine energy, health/biotechnology, agrifoods, engineering and digital industries are also among the key sectors in Nantes development, and represent great assets to host international large-scale events at La Cité Nantes Events Center.

Sustainability, our most welcoming staff, and collective commitments are three overarching values that are consistently demonstrated towards event organisers and delegates and that make Nantes and La Cité clearly stand out as one of the very first MICE destinations in France. Not surprisingly, La Cité became the only French congress center to have successfully achieved the “Gold level” in the AIPC Quality Standards Certification.

It will be an immense pleasure for all of us at La Cité to welcome you in July. You are now about to understand why Nantes was once called “the loopyest city in France” by the Sunday Times...

Sincerely,

Paul Billaudeau | General Manager, La Cité Nantes Events Center
**Two Very Valuable Lists Delivered by an Expert!**

| CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 |

Great, but how do we actually go about using this to advantage in practical terms? Clark had an answer to that too – essentially laying out a template for engagement that recognized the reciprocal advantages that cities and their respective centres could enjoy with the right kind of relationship.

The template took the form of two complementary lists of actions – on the one hand Things Convention Centres Should Be Doing to Optimize Their City and on the other the Things Cities Should Be Doing to Optimize Their Convention Centres. Together, these two lists supply a host of ideas that can either be used by centres themselves or be used as arguments as to why and how cities should be making better use of the leverage a centre offers in the highly competitive world of cities pursuing the right kind of future and attracting those capable of supporting this effort.

Here are the two lists – and with them lots of food for thought for any centre manager gearing up for discussion with owners or local government as to their contributory value to the community.

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**First, 10 Things Convention Centres Should Be Doing to Optimize Their City:**

- Understand your city type and strategic goals. Who are the wider competitors and comparators? What are the priorities? What is your city’s strategy?
- Know the strengths and weaknesses of your city’s governance system and its points of influence. Enjoy the complexity and the strategic intrigue!
- Form a strong team with your convention bureau and work on joint relationships with city hall.
- Volunteer your support for city strategy and initiatives, and at metro level. Brand, Tourism, Connectivity, Destination, Knowledge Economy, District Management.
- Share the credit with city leaders.
- Provide accessible, robust evidence on your impact, moving beyond old formulae.
- Join the city economic development “team”, work with other members (Universities, Airport, City Centre Team, Development Agency) and build your networks there.
- Help the city to understand how conventions can link / leverage business and tourism brands.
- Support other contests that the city is involved in (EXPOs, Olympics, Summits and Awards).
- Bring business leadership and groups into dialogue with the city.

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**Secondly, 10 Things Cities Should be Doing to Optimize Their Convention Centres:**

- Recognize that growth sectors and high value sectors are most mobile and most likely to have conventions and congresses.
- Understand that congresses are huge sources of high value relationships in a hyper mobile world.
- See the convention centre primarily as a shop window, “front parlor” stage, and networking platform for the city with high value audiences.
- Task the convention centre with high value strategic priorities.
- Understand the convention cluster and its many dimensions and impacts.
- Solve problems actively.
- Make a point of knowing who is in town and why and make the welcome personal for them.
- Follow up post-convention with high value opportunities.
- Keep the convention centre in the core team and at the top table.
- Celebrate convention centre success.

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**All in all, two very attractive and useful lists, from someone who knows!**

Maybe it’s time to see how you could put them to use for your centre!
This is a very big year for the AIPC Academy which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary and an evolutionary process that has turned it into what has now become the pre-eminent professional development program specifically serving the needs of international convention centre managers!

Along with delivering what is certainly the most comprehensive curriculum for convention centres today via an extensive complement of faculty and guest presenters covering the full range of key topics, the Academy will be gearing up to receive some special activities and guest alumni from its development phases to celebrate what has been achieved over the past decade.

Under the overall flag of “Addressing Today’s Centre Management Challenges” the program will revolve around four interlocking themes, each with a set of sessions to address that theme and tie it into the others. These four themes are:

- Delivering, Measuring and Communicating Performance
- Addressing Current Market Challenges
- Managing the Product: Optimizing Facilities and Services
- Organizational Structure and Leadership in a Convention Centre

Specialized subject areas will include:

- Our Changing World; Today’s Key Issues and Challenges
- How to Do Business in a Global Marketplace
- Financial Management and Performance Measures for Centres
- Benchmarking for Success
- Communicating Value to Owners and Stakeholders

But there’s a catch – attendance is limited and each year, the Academy has been a sell-out. Now is the time to act to ensure your centre is well represented at our industry’s most important professional development and strategic management program, particularly in a year that will be a special occasion with added benefits! Contact the AIPC Secretariat now to register for this important centre advancement opportunity.

AIPC’s senior executive delivered the industry message at the highest level of the Australian government last month as President Geoff Donaghy and Vice President Aloysius Arlando presented to the Leadership 2015: Tourism, Aviation & Transport Summit, an annual dialogue with senior representatives of both the Federal Government and Opposition that takes place at Parliament House in Canberra Australia. This was the first time that business events industry representatives have been included in the program as a distinct sector.

“As this was one of the first chances we have had to present the Business Events story to such a senior political audience, we took full advantage”, said Donaghy, who is CEO of the ICC Sydney as well as AIPC President. “Sharing this platform with my AIPC Vice President and colleague from Singapore provided a further ability to position this sector in a broader international context, and to underline its importance as a vehicle for international trade and knowledge exchange”. 

| CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 |
AIPC, South African Members Staging Second Regional Summit at Meetings Africa

With a highly rated inaugural session under our collective belts, AIPC will again this coming year be convening a specialized convention centre seminar and workshop as part of a new initiative to support and engage in regional development activities. As with the previous event, AIPC is working with local centre members and the organizers of the Meetings Africa trade show scheduled for Sandton SA in February of 2016 to deliver this centre-specific program as a key element within this major industry event.

"By all reports, last year's session was a really beneficial one and a great addition to the overall Meetings Africa program" said AIPC President Geoff Donaghy. "This has strengthened our resolve to keep delivering this kind of content and shared expertise into areas that want to avail themselves at it and, in the process, that create forums that can facilitate more efficient and effective local action."

Once again, the program will include components dealing with both global conditions and developments as well as workshops and strategic discussions on local opportunities and issues. The agenda will also be devised in response to the recommendations arising from the 2015 Summit, which included ways to make sure that local issues were clearly identified as early in the program as possible to make subsequent discussions more relevant and enable the development of new regional strategies.

The AIPC Apex Award: You Only Have Until November 30 to Sign Up!

Yes, it's an AIPC Apex Award year again – and with that of course comes not only the opportunity to distinguish your facility as having the highest client rating received by a convention centre but to at the same time get highly analytical information about how you measure up to other facilities and where you could most profitably make improvements in your facilities and services.

What makes this Award so important and respected is that to ensure ongoing independent oversight of the selection process, Ipsos, a recognized international market research company is responsible for the design, administration and verification processes.

HERE'S HOW TO ENTER:

> You must be able to provide references for at least 45 qualifying events held within the last two years (January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2015). These references may be of any event type but must include at least 15 congresses, conventions or conferences (with a minimum of 100 participants), at least 10 of which must be international (defined as those which either rotate through or have more than 25% of delegates from one or more countries other than the host country). These numbers are a minimum – a competing centre can submit more references than this if they wish to increase the likelihood that they will qualify for the response threshold of 25 completed client returns (see below).

> You must be able to provide accurate and up to date client contact information for the qualifying events, including email addresses. Client references with invalid email addresses will be disqualified if the address is rendered invalid by delivery failure, and the submitting centre will not be advised of such delivery failures.

> You must submit the completed entry form, including client references, by November 30, 2015.

To start the participation process, contact secretariat@aipc.org to receive the 2016 Competition Entry Form and be sure to return it to the AIPC Secretariat no later than the November 30 deadline when it will be validated to ensure all conditions have been met. You will then receive confirmation of participation when the validated entry form is transmitted to Ipsos for processing.

There’s no time to delay! Make your plans now to take advantage of the significant benefits this program offers to all participants – and the prospect of achieving the ultimate recognition for your centre!
Panel discussions focused on the ways that Business Events are a major economic driver for the economy, reaching well beyond immediate tourism benefits such as delegate and event expenditures and venue utilisation to broader and more enduring gains including driving business relationships, knowledge transfer, professional development and industry investment. Arlando, who is CEO of Singex Venues Pte Ltd., referenced the highly complementary interface between the tourism and knowledge economies. “These two sectors are not in competition, but rather synergistic; they generate a wide range of benefits and can and must support one another in today’s highly competitive market. Governments that understand this have a big advantage over their competition”. Both executives agreed on the critical importance of government understanding and support for the sector. “Only when governments see the full package of benefits arising from business events are they prepared to invest, and it’s our job as an industry to make sure that happens”, said Donaghy. Arlando noted that a strategic approach is the best route to getting government attention. “We target events in key industries and reach deep into these verticals by working closely with government agencies, companies, academia, trade and professional bodies to attract these to our centre”, he said.

Many of the range of senior industry and government attendees in attendance were hearing the sector-specific arguments for the first time. “As long as we can access this kind of key audience, we will make every effort to share our message”, said Donaghy.

The AIPC Asia Pacific Summit was held in partnership with the Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organizers & Suppliers (SACEOS) and took place at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre during the TravelRave trade show that brings together many elements of the broader industry community. It was organized as a full day event that included an overview of global industry conditions, a CEO perspective on industry development, a look at international centre standards and expectations and the latest sales and marketing tactics for addressing a challenging marketplace.

An additional important feature was a panel of regional and international clients who shared their perspectives on current event-related challenges and the ways that centres can best attract and support their business. The AIPC Asia Pacific Summit was held in partnership with the Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organizers & Suppliers (SACEOS) and took place at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre during the TravelRave trade show that brings together many elements of the broader industry community. It was organized as a full day event that included a wide range of participants and topics, including an overview of global industry conditions, a CEO perspective on industry development, a look at international centre standards and expectations and the latest sales and marketing tactics for addressing a challenging marketplace.

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MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS!

GEORGIA WORLD CONGRESS CENTER, ATLANTA
Located in the heart of downtown Atlanta, the Georgia World Congress Center Authority – which includes the 3.9 million square foot convention center, the 71,250-seat Georgia Dome and 21-acre Centennial Olympic Park – ranks among the top five largest convention destinations in the country as well as one of the best sports and entertainment campuses in the world.

The Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) features 1.4 million square feet of prime exhibit space, 12 exhibit halls, 106 meeting rooms, and 2 grand ballrooms, and is comprised of three buildings. The GWCC has played host to a variety of events including Trade Shows, Corporate Events, Consumer Events, Sporting/Specials Events and Meetings. The center’s flexible space allows for events of varying sizes, shapes, and genres – reflective of the diversity of business and people in the State of Georgia.

“For almost 40 years, the Georgia World Congress Center has hosted numerous international events,” says Mark Zimmerman, GWCC General Manager. “We see joining AIPC as a global opportunity to connect with other venue managers and organizations around the world to share ideas and perspectives, something that we probably wouldn’t be able to do if not for this avenue. This world-wide network gives us a broader outlook of our industry and can provide valuable insights, including ways to improve our operations and enhance the customer experience.”

HAWAII CONVENTION CENTER
Located within walking distance of Waikiki, the Hawaii Convention Center is like no other in the world. Open to the outdoors – with terraces, lanais, courtyards, waterfalls, and fishponds – this remarkable facility combines the latest in cutting edge technology with authentic Hawaiian ambience. Facilities total 1.1 million square foot of multi-functional space, with a full range of event services available on demand. The Hawaii Convention Center is ranked as North America’s most attractive convention center and has won multiple Prime Site Awards.

“Our vision is to be recognized as the world’s most desirable convention & meeting location”, says General Manager Teri Orton. “Our cultural diversity and legendary spirit of aloha encourage attendees to see the world in a new light, so it’s no surprise that people accomplish more when they meet in Hawaii. Best of all, the warmth of Hawaii and its people continue to inspire, long after meetings have ended.”

“We have decided to join AIPC to network with Global Convention Centers to gain access to valuable knowledge to help us share best practices and improve our facility operation and service. I’d also like to take advantage of educational programs to further our education and professionalism within the industry.”

ICE INDONESIA
Located at Serpong City, South of Jakarta, ICE INDONESIA (Indonesia Convention Exhibition) is the new emerging destination of the MICE industry in the region. As the largest venue in Indonesia, the venue is designed to be the most spacious exhibition and convention centre in the area offering the flexibility to accommodate a full range of business events in addition to the core business of meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions.

It offers 10 exhibition halls of 50,000 square meters and an additional 50,000 square meter outdoor exhibition space, a 4,000 square meter convention hall divisible into 4 rooms, 33 meeting rooms and over 12,000 square meters of convenient pre-function space. The Convention Center is centrally located within the complex, and can operate as either an independent international standard facility or a fully integrated space attached to exhibition halls via the pre-function areas. It can accommodate 10,000 delegates on three levels and has specialized spaces including VIP rooms, medical rooms, and outdoor spaces for any event types.

Aage Hansen, Managing Director, says “Joining AIPC was really about aligning ICE to a quality brand that has its own distinct identity and that creates an outstanding international platform to discuss current trends, challenges, best practices and business opportunities within our industry. Having the opportunity to engage with industry colleagues and take part in a global network is invaluable. Another ‘draw-card’ is the annual AIPC Academy, as it is essential in any business to develop and retain talent, and the academy gives one an effective and comprehensive learning experience which plays an important role in developing tomorrows leaders and managers.”
Studies have shown that more than 70% of people believe meetings aren’t productive. Why do you think so many find meetings difficult?

Meetings are not inherently good or bad – they’re simply an opportunity. When you gather smart people together, you can harness the collective wisdom toward making better decisions. However, many leaders don’t know how to create the type of interactive dynamic that generates insights. This creates a paradox wherein while increasing the number of attendees increases the collective wisdom, it also increase the difficulty of extracting that wisdom.

Instead of leveraging the wisdom of the crowd, leaders often default to speaking at their audience instead of with them. However, if the opportunity to share is opened to the group, it can be overrun very quickly by vocal attendees who dominate the conversation. Both can produce disengaged attendees, so it’s no surprise that many people feel their meetings are unproductive. From the perspective of employees, it’s demoralizing to not be able to share feedback and opinions during meetings, and leaders need to take responsibility to avoid these issues at meetings.

How can leaders avoid these problems at meetings?

Leaders need to realize that their meetings will produce far more insight and better decisions if they enable more people to contribute. This isn’t just what we believe; research supports the notion that giving employees a platform to express their opinions increases employee enthusiasm and engagement levels. Convention centres can share this philosophy with their clients so they can get more from their meetings.

We created Meetoo, our real-time polling and messaging app, to make it easy for everyone to participate at meetings, whether they are in the room or in another country. Its goal is to turn passive attendees into active participants who can easily contribute questions, ideas and feedback – all in the moment.

Leaders often struggle to get honest feedback at meetings from people who are protecting their reputations, egos and opinions. This leads to employees telling the leader what they want to hear instead of providing the type of feedback that can improve the business. With Meetoo, we removed the reputational pressures through optional anonymity. By having the ability to comment and vote anonymously, people focus on the idea instead of the potential consequences of sharing feedback.

Is it easy for organizers and centres to benefit from technology at meetings?

We haven’t seen a meeting so small or so large that it couldn’t benefit from an audience response app like Meetoo. One financial client used Meetoo to engage more than 1,000 participants at an all-staff meeting, and were able to collect hundreds of questions, see which ones were most popular and respond in the moment. Not only did this engage attendees, but it enabled leaders to see what the audience was thinking in real-time. Without Meetoo, generating that type of interaction and insight would have been impossible.

We’ve seen convention centres offer added value to their clients by licensing Meetoo and making it available to them. Such centres not only profit from the licensing, but also because Meetoo increases attendee engagement and enjoyment, creating a more favorable impression of the convention centre experience.

How can leaders learn more?

We want every leader and convention centre to have the opportunity to develop and offer a better meeting experience. That’s why when you visit http://meetoo.io, we are currently offering a free 30-day trial of Meetoo.