It's not easy to look too far ahead when today's challenges are so all-consuming. But unless we do at least a bit of this kind of thinking we risk being taken by surprise by things we should have seen coming. Having said that, there's only so much that can be done by way of predicting the future, and anything or anybody that pretends they can tell us exactly what will be going on in our industry ten years from now is kidding both us and themselves. But there are some pretty obvious conditions already in place that, if acted upon now, will give us all a real advantage in the next few years – and that have little adverse consequences should things turn out differently. Here are a few of them;

**First, demographics don’t lie** – and they are telling us that there will be a real dip in the skilled workforce once the current generation of managers have the confidence to start retiring in predicted numbers. The answer to that is pretty obvious: we need to be investing in the development of capable replacements so we’re not all competing for the few people who already have the experience and skills required for centre management when the economy recovers and an entire cadre of managers starts to leave. This is one investment that has very little downside – regardless of how rapidly the demand for replacement workers develops, the result will be a higher level of management skills available in the interim to meet the challenges of remaining competitive in a tough market.

**The second is competition.** In our recent member survey, this was shown to be the number one concern of centre managers around the world, and with good reason: not only have we seen huge increases in available space over the past decade – increases in many cases far in excess of growth in market demand – but new development has continued right through the recession, meaning a lot more product is already in the pipeline. Keeping pace will mean new investment in existing centres, which may be harder to do until the economy improves. It will also mean looking for every possible form of business in order to round out what we can expect from our more traditional markets.

**Finally, we have adaptation.** We all know that event formats and planner expectations are changing as they continue to work at ensuring their meetings and conventions remain relevant – and inevitably, that alters their expectations of us. Yet we inhabit buildings that are inherently not all that flexible. The only answer will be to use a combination of innovative uses of space, combined with new services and technology, to do the best job we can of adapting what we have to offer until such time as we have the opportunity to rebuild for a new generation of business.

Whatever else we may or may not be able to predict about the longer term future, these three are grounded in reality – and therefore something we need to take very seriously in our plans for the immediate future. Looking forward into a new and uncertain year, this is probably a very good place to make a start!

With that, let me on behalf of the Board and management of AIPC thank you for your participation and engagement over the past year and encourage you to participate in our programs in the year coming up. Our best wishes to you, your staff and your families for a prosperous and stable year!

Edgar Hirt, AIPC President

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**Review of AIPC Apex Award Re-affirms Purpose; Updates Process**

With a new round of competition for the prestigious AIPC Apex Award almost upon us, the results of an extensive review of the Award, its purpose and its procedures have confirmed its rationale, clarified procedures and led to the retention of a global market research firm to ensure the most accurate assessment process leading to selection of the winner. Driving the review was the fact that the value of the AIPC Apex Award has grown steadily over its more than ten year history, having now become a highly respected and valuable prize for centres everywhere. Amongst its benefits, it offers both the overall winner and runners-up valuable marketing advantages while stimulating staff dedication and morale. In addition, all participants benefit from the valuable insights they get from the analysis of ratings as to where they can improve performance in the future.
More details from “Evolving Industry” Survey

Initially debuted as a “Top line” presentation at the 2011 AIPC Annual Conference in San Diego, the final results of our annual centre confidence and performance survey have been consolidated and are available online at www.aipc.org. Entitled “An Evolving Industry” to reflect the many changes centres are facing today, the results document changes and progress during a period of uncertain economic recovery.

While the survey results show some modest gains in business activity and confidence levels, they do not support the idea that there has been the kind of overall robust recovery many had been hoping for. At the same time, they demonstrate significant regional variations that correspond to different levels of economic performance in various parts of the world.

“This kind of information is always of value to us as centres who often are somewhat isolated from the kind of direct comparisons that many in other sectors such as hotels take for granted”, said AIPC President Edgar Hirt. “However, in tough times such as we are facing in most parts of the world today, it is absolutely essential to get some kind of idea of how others are faring, and with a 70% response rate from 170 AIPC member centres representing 53 countries around the world, the survey provides a highly reliable and geographically comprehensive picture of global convention centre conditions”.

Some of the key findings which were elaborated in the final report included:

> The majority of centres in Europe and North America reported only modest revenue growth (2.3%) in 2010, although Australia and Asia indicated stronger growth during this same period (9.3 and 21.6% respectively). As a result, Asian centres have much more optimistic expectations of future business revenues and price increases than other regions.

> Members felt that “the jury is still out” on the impact that virtual meetings are having and will have in the future, with many centres seeing them as largely complementary to existing activities and others seeing them as competitive and likely to reduce facility business over the long term.

> In general terms, centres identified three major challenges to future business growth: increasing competition from new facilities, an uncertain economic recovery and potential increases in transportation costs. However, there were again significant regional differences, with for example North American centres most concerned about transportation costs and Australian centres identifying growing competition as their top concerns.

> Government policy changes were also identified as a potential threat in most areas, including decisions to reduce investment and / or discourage meetings amongst their own staff. North American centres expressed a high level of concern with respect to the impact of government policies re: visas / access on event attendance.

> Centres are spending more time interacting with local government and communities, particularly in terms of their key role in economic development with over 70% reporting that they are putting more emphasis on community, government and business relations.

The survey will be repeated again next year in order to continue tracking the progress of business conditions and the impacts they are having on centre performance and practices.

> Associations remained the strongest business sector in most areas, with some increases in corporate business corresponding to the strength of the recovery in various areas.

> Centres noted a number of changing business practices that had resulted from the recession. These included more negotiations, shorter booking times and slower overall business growth than in previous recoveries. Respondents also noted an increasing expectation for discounts and incentives although this was much stronger in North America and Australia than amongst European centres.

> New construction and planning has slowed somewhat, with a shift toward renovation / refurbishment of existing facilities. However, the growth in supply has still been greater than any increase in convention and exhibition business which suggests the intensity of competition will continue. The most new building and expansion activity was reported by Australia, which corresponds to another finding that centres in Europe and North America see their respective governments as less inclined to invest in new facilities than previously.

> The areas of greatest increase in client demand / expectation reported by centres include:

  - More and higher quality meeting rooms
  - Higher levels of technology, including AV and connectivity, and
  - More variety and quality in food and beverage offerings

> “As long as we get such extraordinary participation in this survey by AIPC members it will continue to provide and excellent source of benchmarking information for all of us”, said Hirt.

“I’d encourage all members to take a close look at the results and see what kinds of insights they can gain that will help them both plan for the future as well as put their own experiences into context with other colleagues around the world”.

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Don’t Forget to Enroll Your Representative in the 2012 AIPC Academy

For both today and the future, the best investment you can make is in education and professional development – and the upcoming AIPC Academy program will offer two levels of opportunity consisting of the Management Symposium as well as the ongoing Professional Development Program.

The Professional Development Program provides a comprehensive industry overview and is an efficient and effective way for centres to address the need to expand the perspectives of staff preparing for more senior management responsibilities.

The Management Symposium has been designed to meet the needs of existing managers who already have significant centre 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 needs. Together, these programs will more than ever deliver the best possible returns on investments in the creation of fully professional management staff with a positive role to play in the future of member facilities.

www.aipc.org

Review of AIPC Apex Award
Re-affirms Purpose; Updates Process

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But as this value grew, so did the responsibility to make sure that the AIPC Apex Award procedures are as relevant and accurate as possible, and for this reason, it has seen an ongoing process of scrutiny and improvement every year it has run. However, this past year has seen a major review and assessment – one which will raise credibility to even higher levels – and out of this process have come some important changes competitors – and would-be competitors – need to be aware of.

The overall review was carried out in two parts; first, by a management consultant and secondly with the participation of Synovate / Ipsos, an international market research company with offices around the world.

The management consultant utilized the results of two sets of surveys amongst previous participants and administrators, and incorporated many years of practice in enhancing performance and measurement in corporations. This review clarified and, in most cases confirmed, the bases on which the AIPC Apex Award is built; it also identified areas where further improvements could be achieved in ensuring the fairest and most accurate assessment of client-based survey results. Amongst these were an arms-length administration of the Award, an overall objective of judging centre performance rather than other destination factors and an assessment based on client input rather than other factors such as peer opinions.

The resulting recommendations were then passed to Synovate / Ipsos in order to have them translated into procedures that would have ensure the correct weighting and produce the optimal statistical validity.

Amongst the outcomes of these processes were a number of recommendations that are being applied immediately. These include:

> An increase in the number of client references (which will be accommodated by extending the period of time from which they can be drawn);
> Adjusting scoring criteria to better reflect the primary focus of the Award on centre performance and experience rather than any factors beyond the control of centres;
> Removing competing centres from any follow-up activity with client references to eliminate any possibility of influence, and
> Utilizing the latest in statistical procedures to address the issue of “compression” of scoring due to a continuous improvement in quality amongst top performing centres.

These outcomes will be ensured by a decision to retain Synovate / Ipsos on an ongoing basis to manage the process of receiving and analyzing client survey data.

Members will see the recommendations reflected in the 2012 AIPC Apex Award competitor instructions and scoring procedures. The most immediate effect will be related to the number of references competitors must submit, as well as the longer period (past two years) these can be drawn from. As previous winners have discovered, the AIPC Apex Award can be a major source of positive profile and prestige for a centre amongst clients, peers, owners and even staff. These further procedural and statistical improvements will maintain and enhance these benefits into the future.
AIPC Board Member Receives “Trailblazer” Award

Carol Wallace, President and CEO of the San Diego Convention Center Corporation and a member of the AIPC Board of Directors, has received the 2011 Leadership California 20th Anniversary Trailblazer Award, one of only five such awards to be made to San Diego women.

The Award was made by Leadership California, a network of more than 1,200 accomplished women dedicated to advancing the leadership role of women and their influence in the state.

Wallace has led San Diego’s highly successful convention center since 1991 and played a pivotal role in the facility’s expansion to its present 241,547sqm, resulting in even greater convention business. She is also at the forefront of the current effort to expand the building again in order to increase its economic impact and add another 6,880 new permanent jobs to San Diego’s workforce.

“I’m deeply honored to receive this award,” said Wallace. “I’m also very proud of the SDCC’s accomplishments and of the exemplary team of professionals I have the privilege of working with every day.”
As global economic uncertainties continue, a shift in perception that has taken place within the meetings industry over the past few years is becoming more important than ever. That shift – to a view that meetings are primarily about economic and professional development and only incidentally about leisure travel – is critical in a time when both businesses and governments everywhere are setting priorities on the basis of which investments are most likely to result in measurable contributions to economic recovery.

In this environment, meetings, congresses, conventions and exhibitions and the roles they play in promoting innovation, investment, knowledge transfer, research and business development need to be seen as key elements of an economic strategy – particularly by governments who have made major investments in infrastructure like convention centres – rather than just a way to increase visitor revenues.

There is no industry sector to whom this is more important than convention centres, given the high level of government ownership of such facilities in most parts of the world. But recognition of these benefits is not enough. To be convincing and able to compete with other government and business priorities, they need to be demonstrable – which in turn requires a credible and defensible means for measuring and presenting the values such events contribute to the overall economy. The catch is that these broader values simply don’t easily lend themselves to direct measurement.

This challenge – and opportunity – was the focus of a very unique conference held earlier this year at the Royal College of Physicians in London, organized by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC), of which AIPC is an active member. This event brought together not only senior representatives of the industry but a range of academics, government policy experts, media, medical and other professional organizations and those familiar with the economics of business in order to take a multi-dimensional view of the situation and to make recommendations as to how the industry could better measure, document and present its value proposition.

The purpose of this wide range of participation was to ensure that the value questions were addressed not only from an industry perspective but also through the eyes of those who represent both the major "users" of meetings and those with the skills required to both calculate and communicate the value proposition. The results are of importance to everyone in the industry as they suggest the steps that will have to be taken to create a credible and comprehensive assessment of the role we play in supporting and advancing the global economy.

Over the course of two days, participants reviewed a range of both current and potential value estimation models, including both economic impact measures and those associated with meetings “outcomes”.

Amongst the major conclusions were that:

> The industry needs to advance a strong, consistent and defensible value proposition in order to compete successfully for government funding and policy attention

> There is a need to link the industry value measurement process to current government and business priorities for economic growth and diversification in order to demonstrate relevance

> Although meetings “outcomes” represent the real reason meetings and conventions are held, not enough attention has been paid to their value because they are not as easy to measure

> The current wide variation in economic impact models, particularly at the local destination level, means data is often inconsistent and therefore less credible.

The Conference concluded with a workshop session in which participants collaborated on developing a series of recommendations as to how the industry could advance its value proposition in both the economic impact and value-added outcomes areas.

Amongst the key recommendations were:

> To carry out an inventory / comparative analysis of existing valuation models and develop a means for achieving greater consistency amongst these

> To encourage the development of local applications for economic impact models in order to generate better data for use in individual communities

> To create a protocol for assembling value-added “output” values with emphasis on the use of case studies and examples to illustrate major areas of benefit

> To identify key audiences along with their priority information requirements and develop a communications “tool kit” to assist in this process, and

> To encourage event owners to assume a more active role in measuring and communicating value

The Conference achieved its objective, which was to get a broad-based assessment of current value-measurement methods and to identify the steps that should be taken to make them more effective and compelling to key industry audiences. The challenge now will be to use the insights and ideas assembled in this way in order to move forward in a coordinated way to advance a better and more prominent value proposition for the industry as a whole while at the same time devising the tools and strategies to support local industry representatives to tell their own story as effectively as possible in their respective communities.
About Amsterdam:

Attractive and open to the world, Amsterdam is a city that reflects the personality of its people. With its blend of historical beauty, upbeat new districts, cultural attractions, and top-class modern business facilities, Amsterdam offers an unrivalled location for the hours around a congress or exhibition.

Amsterdam is the ultimate ‘small big city’ and combines all the advantages of a cosmopolitan capital with a compact, easy-to-navigate size. You are never stuck for something to do here. Amsterdam is home to many world-class cultural facilities such as the many theatres, museums, numerous restaurants and last but not least the lively night life.

An Invitation from Amsterdam!

Welcome to Amsterdam!
AIPC’s Annual Conference is a great opportunity to meet, learn and share. We are proud that Amsterdam RAI will be hosting the AIPC Annual Conference 2012.

We welcome you to our city Amsterdam: ‘The ideal place to experiment with different business areas’ and ‘one of the most attractive cities of the European continent’, according to the American magazine Marketing. This status is reflected in our worldwide top 10 position in the ICCA rankings, and of course this attracts global business. Last year we hosted a total of 590 events at Amsterdam RAI, of which 48 were large international events.

In the years to come, Amsterdam RAI’s calendar is well-filled with ‘travelling’ events, including medical conferences with oncologists, pharmacists, gastroenterologists, as well as professionals from the ICT industry and analytical chemists. With 110 years of experience in organising and hosting events, Amsterdam RAI has high ambitions in the field of corporate social responsibility. We intent to be the most sustainable convention centre in Europe by 2013.

Besides CSR, innovation is high on our agenda. We invested over 100 million euros in upgrading our complex over recent years. In addition to the superb accessibility via Schiphol Airport and the appeal of the city of Amsterdam, the new distinctive Elicium building is one of the main stimuli for organising conferences in a new environment.

Let’s contribute, together, to a conference full of new experiences, opportunities and meaningful moments that truly matter.

See you soon in Amsterdam.

Hans Bakker | CEO and President Amsterdam RAI
WELCOME TO NEW AIPC MEMBERS!

ATATURK CONGRESS CULTURE CENTER
The Atatürk Congress Culture Centre, with a total area of 120,000 m², was built by the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and was officially opened in June 2010. Since the opening some 800 events took place, including 12 international congresses, national congresses, symposiums, seminars, festivals, plays, ceremonies, concerts, art performances and many little meetings, all totaling more than 600,000 visitors.

Bursa is a truly great European and world city, a centre of not only industry but also history, culture and art, and attracts the interest of Congress tourism through these advantages. A main objective is to make the city more attractive for international meetings tourism and to become an outstanding place for organizers who are looking for new congress destinations.

Says Mehmet Semih PALA, General Coordinator “During the establishment process, we were in search of an experienced consultant organization to guide us in the international meetings market and we knew that AIPC would give the biggest support to us. With its worldwide 170 members, AIPC is an authority in convention center management and can supply us the most valuable information to develop our skills of operating our congress center efficiently and safely. With the support of AIPC and the opportunity to share experiences with other member convention centers, Merinos ACCC will increase its competitiveness to one of the most preferred congress destinations in Turkey”.

JOHN B. HYNES VETERANS MEMORIAL CONVENTION CENTER
The John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center in Boston’s Back Bay neighborhood is one of the most desirable venues for meetings and events in North America. With its proximity to one of the world’s most famous shopping districts on Newbury Street, its connections to top hotels, and two new world-class restaurants bookending the building, the Hynes has all the elements required to achieve highly successful, productive meetings and events – superior facilities, a user-friendly layout, plus the knowledge that it has achieved AIPC’s Gold Standard.

Says James E. Rooney, executive director, Massachusetts Convention Center Authority: “The Hynes is and will continue to be a significant part of our success as a major destination city for meetings and conventions from around the world, and having the Hynes achieve the AIPC Gold Standard will only help further its reputation as a superior facility in a world-class city. Working with AIPC, we plan to further enhance our position while working with AIPC leadership and members in promoting the value of meeting face-to-face.”
AN INTERVIEW

with Simone Sfeir  Director of Sales of BEDOUK

Part of the Infopro Communication Group, a leader of professional information and services in France, Bedouk Meetings & Events Media provides the leading search tools and services to MICE professionals looking for hotels, congress centres, special venues, convention bureaus, destination management companies (DMCs), incentive agencies, professional congress organizers (PCOs), and other suppliers in the meetings industry. Guides, an exhibition and magazine, e-newsletters, websites and Venue Finder Service compose the plural offer dedicated to corporate, association and agency meeting planners. The Bedouk Guide is now distributed to 35000 meeting planners around the world and also available online as a way of creating international exposure.

Help Yourself!

See anything you’d like to use from this or any issue of Communiqué? All content is available to AIPC members for their own newsletters or presentations – and there’s even more to select from at www.aipc.org. Whether it’s articles, opinions or research results, if you want to adapt anything for your own purposes, go ahead. We’ll be flattered and it will help spread some of our key industry messages to a wider audience. www.aipc.org

As a leading supplier to the industry, what are your impressions regarding the industry today?

We have learned a lot from the crisis, and we are still learning. We had to change our habits, and adapt therefore our offer: greater ROI, more focus on clients’ specific needs and new services. In that sense, we have injected new resources into Bedouk, to comply with an evolving MICE industry as well as to offer tailor made solutions for meeting planners and venues alike.

What organizational changes have you implemented and what have been the results?

It’s been almost 2 years since the Bedouk organization divided into 3 divisions including Guides & Websites, Magazine and Trade Show. My role was to develop the Guides and Websites side, and I’ve seen a number of changes in this time, particularly a better client relationship! The fact that my team is totally dedicated to a specific service allows us to spend more quality time with each and every client. We have also gained from both our team work experience and our handling of a large number of database contacts, communications, emailings, web & digital knowledge… We brainstorm and think “outside the box”!

Can you measure these changes?

Yes, in the form of our clients’ satisfaction! Although Bedouk has always enjoyed a very good reputation, we still need to innovate and create a new level of service. Launching the Lead Generation Team and the Venue Finder Service was a big challenge for us. All of almost 15 people (by the end of 2011) calls every type of almost 15 people (by the end of 2011) calls every type of meeting planner (events, incentives, congresses, conferences, conventions…) to “collect” their RFPs. The VFS (Venue Finder Service) receives the RFPs and sends them to a selected number of venues (6 to 8 per city). We follow up with the meeting planners and the venues to make sure that an answer is sent within 48 hours. In this way, we have generated over 10 000 leads so far!

To whom are these leads sent?

Our clients/partners are all qualified as MICE professionals, but we also list venues that are not our client’s to give meeting planners the choice in their sourcing process. The exclusivity is first offered to our partners, of course, if their venue satisfies the meeting planners’ requirements, and 75% of RFPs are awarded to the first responder.

We let the venues deal with the client directly, and contrary to similar RFP providers, we are against “RFP sprinkler” politics. Unique demands are sent to a limited number of venues, in order to guarantee a high conversion rate.

Do you take any commission or charge any fees?

Absolutely not. Our business model is based on advertising revenue only, and meeting planners are not charged for using either our RFP service or our VFS.