Increasing Competition Can Be an Opportunity As Well As a Challenge

These days (and according to our 2011 AIPC Member Survey) the number one issue with centre managers is increasing competition. And with so many new products entering the market these days in the form of new builds, expansions and even whole new destinations, that is likely to remain an issue for some time to come.

So why are so many centres proceeding with expansion and renovation projects in the face of these conditions? Simply because when competition is intense, you can’t make a go of it with anything less than a fully competitive product. And this applies not only to facilities but to services as well. This is where the opportunity comes in. Competition has a way of making everyone work a little harder and become a little more creative, which is just what we need in the face of industry change. Here are just three areas where this applies:

First, increasing competition forces us to strengthen our “sell”; to define more clearly what distinguishes our particular product and then work on both improving and communicating this more effectively. This is where all the ideas around branding come into play; defining our business proposition and making sure we’re delivering the promise that goes along with that. Such an exercise can’t help but improve not only how we present ourselves but what we do to maintain the qualities that make us unique in the market.

Secondly, it encourages us to seek out appropriate standards and certifications and use these to advantage. When there’s a lot of choice in the market, clients are going to be paying more attention to centres that have gone to the effort required to identify and achieve relevant qualifications. This is one of the reasons that so many AIPC members have availed themselves of the AIPC Quality Standards certification: it not only creates a more focused approach to measuring and enhancing performance, but does so in a way that can be communicated to clients and owners in a credible and recognizable way.

Third, it challenges us to clarify our value proposition for our respective communities – and encourages us to promote the idea that we represent more than just the benefits associated with delegate spending. This is important to making sure the community recognizes the full breadth of what we do and how we support not just the local hospitality industry but also everything from universities and business organizations to professional groups and even the whole local economic development strategy. Doing this can help broaden thinking about what the real benefits are in times when financial results may be challenged – but it is also a great long term investment in a centre’s image.

Growing competition brings a lot of ongoing challenges – but if it also serves to sharpen up our operations and business approaches, it can benefit us in ways we might not otherwise have thought of.

Edgar Hirt, AIPC President

2012 AIPC Sales and Marketing Summit Awaits at IMEX!

With intense competition the “new normal” for convention centres, the role played by the AIPC Sales and Marketing Summit at IMEX is more important than ever as a way for members to catch up on the latest experiences and strategies for centre marketing – and after six successful years, this upcoming edition will be no exception. The seventh Summit will be held May 20, 2012 in cooperation with IMEX, and will once again offer a proven formula of creating a forum for exchange amongst senior-level convention centre sales and marketing executives while providing input from client representatives and marketing specialists to inform participants about new developments in their respective areas.
2012 AIPC Academy Breaks New Ground With Management Symposium

This year’s AIPC Academy in Brussels was the sixth successful edition of this evolving professional development program for centre staff – and once again demonstrated the value of sharing experience and expertise across a wide range of centre functions while creating on-going global networks of industry professionals. But it was also the first year of something completely new – a “Management Symposium” which was intended to create a forum for senior –level centre managers to workshop and arrive at recommendations for some of the most pressing issues facing our industry today. The idea of the Management Symposium was to create another level of interaction beyond the professional development objectives of the Academy. By bringing senior managers together in conjunction with the Professional Development group, there could be common sessions and interactions that would strengthen both programs, as well as a further transfer of management amongst all participants. The issues selected for consideration by the MS group were those that had emerged as top concerns in the AIPC Annual Member Survey for 2011, which meant they were the most relevant possible. They were:

- **Addressing Competition Part 1:** Responding to new business models and Client Expectations, which focused on questions such as how centres can evolve their marketing to respond to new conditions, ensure a better allocation of risk and reward, achieve new forms of revenue and respond to increasing client expectations;
- **Addressing Competition Part 2:** Managing Costs and Product, including how centres can maintain a competitive product with growing competition / limited new investment, better manage operating / staffing costs, reduce operating cost controls without impacting the client experience and manage outsourcing under these conditions;
- **Organizational Development for the Future,** including such topics as ensuring the organizational model supports the strategic plan, developing appropriate succession plans, recruiting and retaining key staff and ensuring quality performance;
- **Dealing with External Factors and Forces,** including the organization of an ongoing corporate relations program, influencing local government and community attitudes; developing key messages and backup data and creating relevant local alliances and partnerships.

Participants work-shopped issues for two days in teams and refined their conclusions into a series of comprehensive presentations that were made to the group as a whole on the final day of the program.

Meanwhile, the Professional Development group was absorbing the information provided by nine faculty and guest presenters and assembling this into their responses to a challenge set out at the start of the program in which they were to provide a plan for development of a hypothetical centre. A panel of judges from the faculty group assessed the responses and provided feedback to the teams with one of their members being awarded the distinction of best overall plan (see sidebar Team of Distinction).

Adding to the excitement was the filming of key elements of the Academy by International Meetings Review which captured not only the reasons participants had for joining the Academy program but their views on issues and developments from around the world.

With a successful first year of the Management Symposium now completed, attention will turn to how this component should best be handled in future years. This will benefit from the experiences and insights of participants in this initial program and help shape not only the Academy but also the ways in which the accumulated insights can shape programs and information for the membership as a whole.
AIPC Apex Award 2012
Attracting Major Participation with New Procedures

As the first year of the AIPC Apex Award being carried out with the benefit of new competition protocols and evaluated by a recognized international polling and market research company, the 2012 edition of the AIPC Apex Award has attracted plenty of participation. There are now 26 member entries and a total of almost 1600 references supplying evaluations to the process.

THE ENTRANTS ARE:
• Aberdeen Exhibition & Conference Centre
• Adelaide Convention Centre
• Belfast Waterfront Centre
• Boston Convention & Exhibition Center
• Bregenzer Festspiel- und Kongresshaus GmbH
• Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre
• Cairns Convention Centre
• Cape Town International Convention Centre
• The Convention Centre Dublin
• International Convention Center Durban
• Congress und Messe Innsbruck
• Cape Town International Convention Centre
• The Convention Centre Dublin
• International Convention Center Durban
• Congress und Messe Innsbruck
• Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Centre
• Kyoto International Conference Center
• Lisbon Congress Centre
• The Royal College of Physicians
• Bahrain Convention and Exhibition Centre
• Kursaal Congress Centre
• Coex Convention and Exhibition Centre
• Tampere Hall
• Metro Toronto Convention Centre
• Uppsala Konser & Kongress AB

TEAM OF DISTINCTION
Winners of this year’s AIPC Academy Challenge with an exemplary centre development strategy and presentation:

Daniel Ang
Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre
Killian Carroll
The Convention Centre Dublin (The CCD)
Nagendran Naidu
Borneo Convention Centre Kuching
Susanne Massingberd-Roinila
Helsinki Exhibition & Convention Centre
Hitesh Panchal
Cape Town International Convention Centre
Ruban Das
Hyderabad International Convention Centre
Kai-Uwe Ludwig
ICM - International Congress Centre Munich

“We went to a lot of effort to bring the AIPC Apex Award procedures up to date, with a review led by a business process consultant and new procedures designed to ensure the fairest possible evaluation process”, said AIPC President Edgar Hirt. “Now, we are seeing the value of this work in what is shaping up to be one of the most hotly contested Awards we’ve ever seen”.

Process changes included restricting access to centre “referees” and increasing the required numbers of references for qualification. The results will be tabulated entirely in confidence by international pollster Ipsos and only revealed when the Award is made at the 2012 Annual Conference in Amsterdam.

“The Apex Award is an important symbol of our AIPC mission to support and recognize excellence in convention centre management” said Hirt. “This year’s participation under a new process shows that it continues to be a priority for members who want to demonstrate their capabilities and reputation.”

IMEX Scholarships
Support Participation
Special support from IMEX provided full scholarships for three Academy attendees: Fawzi Tolefat of the Bahrain International Exhibition & Convention Centre, Maddie Woo of the Coex Convention & Exhibition Center and Nagendren Naidu of the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching meet with Richard Allchild of the IMEX Group.

2012 AIPC Sales and Marketing Summit Awaits at IMEX!

Participants have referenced the benefits of accessing experiences from different parts of the world that have applications to their own circumstances as well as the kind of exchanges that take place with high level corporate and association executives on how their expectations of centres and destinations are evolving. At the same time, insights into how the latest marketing techniques and technologies are evolving provides context for some of the key issues in today’s market.

Both first-time attendees and Summit veterans always find new information and fresh ideas to work with, and the timing couldn’t be better: it’s a great preparation for the interactions to follow on the IMEX show floor. If you’re coming to IMEX, be sure to include the Summit in your itinerary.

DATE AND TIME
Sunday May 20, 2012 | 10:00 until 17:00 hrs
VENUE
Congress Center Messe Frankfurt
REGISTRATION
EUR 125 | including lunch and coffee break
You can register now for this event by emailing:
marianne.de.raay@aipc.org
In a time when every week seems to bring an array of new challenges, our gatherings as an industry are valued opportunities to exchange perspectives and get input for our decision making from both colleagues and global experts. We recognize the need to take the fullest possible advantage of these opportunities.

As a result, this year’s Annual Conference program is being designed to respond to the very latest developments and to provide a high level of quality content to support members in their ongoing efforts to maintain and build business in the face of new challenges. Amongst the areas now being developed for our program in Amsterdam are:

**TAKING THE BIG PICTURE: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW**
with sessions including global economics and industry performance, regional reports comparing centre and business conditions throughout the world and a perspective on how meetings are evolving and what we as centres need to do in response;

**IMAGE AND BRANDING IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES**
with sessions including the role of branding in addressing new customer expectations; industry image: a media perspective and building benefits through improving the centre-client interface;

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING**
with sessions including a new centre-based model for economic impact measurement, progress on measuring and documenting the measurement of community and policy benefits and what counts from a government perspective;

**TACTICAL RESPONSES TO TODAY’S ISSUES**
including balancing risk and reward, creating new business incentives and new event development as a revenue strategy;

**INDUSTRY PARTNERS: STATUS AND LESSONS FROM INDUSTRY PARTNERS**
dealing with how areas such as airlines and hotels are responding to new economic challenges, and

**RESULTS OF THE AIPC MEMBER SURVEY 2012: OUR VIEWS AND HOW THEY COMPARE**
in which we will be presenting multi-year trend data as well as comparisons with data being generated by other sectors.

These sessions will be used to support member interactions including workshops in which centres will be able to explore the implications of this array of information on future industry prospects and strategies. At the same time, we will be updating AIPC program activities which have been designed to respond to the most urgent priorities of members.

Keep watching the AIPC website for more details as we approach conference dates!

www.aipc.org
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.

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.

Amsterdam mixes cosmopolitan style and relaxed atmosphere, and its hospitable nature attracts an excitingly diverse population. Whether admiring the Golden Age gabled merchants’ houses of the old city centre or marvelling at the sleek skylines of the new Zuidas and harbour areas, you will see that Amsterdammers pride themselves on the city’s rich history while keeping focused on the future. Creative energy and innovation abound, strengthening and inspiring the established international business community.

Home to some of the world’s most acclaimed works of art, with more canals than Venice, more bridges than Paris and nearly 7,000 monumental buildings, our compact floating city offers a variety of historical and cultural treasures that has led to it being named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here are some quick facts you will find of use:

**GETTING THERE; GETTING AROUND**
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol – considered one of the best in the world – is just 20 minutes from Amsterdam’s compact city centre, which has an outstanding public transport service and a network of canals that offer a unique opportunity to move via the water. With 750,000 inhabitants and 600,000 bicycles combined with flat landscapes and some 15,000 kilometres of specially designated bicycle paths and routes, cycling is not only practical, but also very enjoyable.

**KNOWLEDGE CENTRE**
During the 17th century Amsterdam was a stockpile of trading goods; today knowledge is also being generated. With two highly developed universities and several laboratories, Amsterdam is now firmly on the world map as a centre of knowledge. The city attracts many prominent academics and has become an attractive meeting place for those involved in science and research. Due in part to its central location on the edge of Europe, Amsterdam now offers a new ‘market place’ for the free and efficient exchange of ideas and knowledge.

**BUSINESS CONNECTIONS**
Home to the world’s first multinational company, the Dutch East India Company, Amsterdam is also the new address for Google and AKZO Nobel headquarters. A consistent high score in the European Cities Monitor for companies may be a reason why several international companies have their head office in Amsterdam. Advertising and design firms prefer Amsterdam for its ability to attract creative people. Because of its compact size and excellent infrastructure, Amsterdam combines and does business on the level with other European capitals, but with the ambience of a small town. The city of Amsterdam is in the top ten of the world’s most preferred conference cities.

**CLIMATE**
Amsterdam has a moderate, maritime climate largely influenced by the North Sea and other surrounding waterways. Average temperatures are 17°C (62.6°F) in mid-summer (July); rainfall occurs an average of 120 days annually and is spread evenly throughout the year.

**LANGUAGE**
The mother tongue is Dutch and English is the second language in Amsterdam. In addition to this, many residents speak additional modern foreign languages.

Destination Amsterdam!

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Darwin Centre Scores Gold in Quality Standards

The Darwin Convention Centre recently completed its AIPC Quality Standards accreditation with a “Gold” rating and Centre Manager Malu Barrios sees this as a way of not only demonstrating performance but also motivating staff and attracting more attention from the market.

“Consistently aiming for high standards helps us differentiate our venue from our competitors, and our clients, staff and stakeholders deserve nothing less”, says Malu Barrios. “In a short 4 years of operation we have surprised colleagues and industry observers with what we have achieved and the accolades we have received. Pursuing QS qualification re-affirms that the Darwin Centre is befitting of these recognition, and validates our venue’s capability to provide world class standards.”

Barrios said that pursuing QS qualification was also a testimony to the Centre’s culture of continual improvement. “Pursuing QS certification is consistent with AEG Ogden’s industry reputation for delivering international standard venue management services, and as part of that network we felt it made sense”, she said. “Having been ISO certified, completing the audit was relatively easy as we had all the required processes in place to meet the requirements of the AIPC QS /Gold Level”.

Going through the exercise provided staff with the added confidence that their operations meet world class standards, she added. “Sometimes, we overlook the impact of what we do and initiate, and completing this audit made us believe in our abilities and reinforced the importance of our culture of continual improvement. The accreditation will boost staff morale, and inspire them to keep doing well to ensure that we maintain our certification level. It will make them proud of working and being associated with the Darwin Convention Centre and hopefully, this is translated to low staff turnover and the Centre being recognised as a preferred employer”.

Looking to the future, Malu Barrios sees a number of ways the accreditation can be put to further use. “I will share this recognition with staff, the AEG Ogden family, stakeholders and clients. At the same time, I will use it to measure our progress and ensure we continue to maintain our gold level status”.

We’re Worth Much More Than We Think!

Ernest Vincent | Chief Executive, The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

While many estimates have been made of the value of the global meetings industry – more than £25 billion to the UK alone – the fact is this industry is a significant creator of wealth is still not widely recognized. As a result, there is a need for all of us involved in convention centre management to keep shouting from the rooftops that our industry – both the events themselves and the venues that host them – continue to provide very significant levels of economic impact to both the local and global economies.

When I entered the meetings industry some 35 years ago, the economy was reeling from the after-effect of a secondary banking crisis. Such periods of economic uncertainty seem to inspire enlightened cities to grasp the notion that conventions, exhibitions and meetings are potent drivers for regenerating regional and national economies.

I experienced this first hand whilst working for the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham in the early 80’s, when the marketplace for events was as difficult as it is now. Over time, occupancy of those massive halls grew; new halls were built and a huge part of Birmingham’s economic regeneration and success today can be directly linked to the creation of Birmingham’s NEC and subsequently their International Convention Centre.

Another lesson came from experiencing the miraculous growth of the Asian Tigers in 1986. As one of the founding directors of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, I was part of the team that opened the first phase of this venue to world-wide acclaim in 1988, and it became a success almost overnight. Behind that success was a clear intention on the part of the government of Hong Kong to attract more inward investment and business tourists, and while the economic benefit to the SAR from the HKCEC was significant then it must be even bigger today.

In yet another example, the Royal Thai Government in 1991 won a tremendous ‘coup’ to host the IMF/World Bank meetings outside its traditional home in Washington DC, and while the Government was not required to build a new convention centre for these meetings, they did so. The objective was to gain maximum economic impact from this influential international meeting of financiers and economists and while helping the Thai government open the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre, I watched it serve this purpose very effectively.

More recently, I was with the City of Toronto and SMG at Exhibition Place in Toronto, a multi-functional 200 acre site for trade shows conferences sport and entertainment attended by over 4.5 million visitors every year. Here again, the mayor and his city councillors were a never ending source of support for this hugely successful complex simply because the economic benefit to the city and its residents was, and still is, clear for all to see.

Now responsible for the British government’s Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, London, I am witnessing how a conference centre packed with 300 – 400 high profile events a year has produced a significant income to the central London economy over the past 25 years. The venue costs the government nothing but earns a considerable sum for the community it serves - in fact paying a healthy dividend each year!

Seeing how convention centres impact their respective communities is the greatest attraction of working in this exciting industry - a resilient and a proven wealth creator. But much more needs to be done to gain broader recognition of the massive contribution convention centres make to the global economy.
A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW AIPC MEMBERS!

CENTRO BANAMEX

Centro Banamex, Mexico, is an internationally recognized convention and exhibition centre with outstanding facilities and a highly skilled team of professionals who have made it an industry’s leader for expos, congresses, conventions, business meetings and social events. Says Banamex CEO Maricarmen Basurto Garcia Rojas “Our creative and flexible approach to operations and services allows for simultaneous events for groups of as many as 50,000 people, with the ability to serve food and beverage offerings to up to 10,000 people at any given time”. Centro Banamex’s 2 million square feet (185,000 m2) of space includes 365,000 square feet (34,000 m2) of exhibit space on a single level, divided between four 39-foot (12 m), column-free halls, allowing for events of all types and sizes; 25 meeting rooms and conference halls distributed over 75,000 square feet (7,000 m2), with full services and up to the minute technology and 3,000 indoor parking spaces (plus a further 7,000 within the rest of the complex). Additional services include a business center, photocopy center, special services staff, Galería Restaurant and fast food outlets, all dedicated to ensuring a great experience for organizer, exhibitor and visitor alike. Full details are available online at www.centrobanamex.com.

SOKOLNIKI EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION CENTRE

Sokolniki Exhibition and Convention Centre is a newly developed state of the art convention and exhibition facility designed to serve business needs in the heart of Moscow. The complex’s infrastructure meets the highest international quality standards and hosts more than a hundred major events a year for clients ranging from major Russian and foreign companies to corporations and government agencies. Flexibility in every area lets clients customize their events in 40,000 square meters of contiguous exhibit space, including 5,000 outdoor (10 fixed and 10 mobile pavilions), 5 configurable meeting rooms and 5 convention halls, some registration areas, and a spacious free parking for 500 cars. The Centre can accommodate a wide variety of meetings, conferences and presentations while exhibition pavilions can host up to 5,000 visitors. It offers cutting edge technology, internationally acclaimed food & beverage, dedicated and experienced event management, superior service and operational excellence. Alexey Shaburov, President of Sokolniki Exhibition and Convention Centre says “Our primarily objective is to establish permanent strategic relationships with organizers of the exhibitions and conferences at both National and International levels and to support and promote activities that serve environmental, charitable and humanitarian activities. We joined AIPC because membership offers the ultimate opportunity to engage with industry colleagues and take part in a global network of international convention and exhibition centre professionals. It also provides a means for learning about and participating in the key issues and opportunities facing the industry, both today and into the future”.

MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

Located in the heart of Miami Beach, the MBCC boasts over 1,000,000 square feet of flexible space, including over 500,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space, 100,000 sq. ft. of versatile pre-function area space and 70 meeting rooms. The dynamic and international City of Miami Beach is a unique, sophisticated, urban paradise, offering world-class business amenities and cosmopolitan facilities in a laid-back tropical atmosphere. Though Greater Miami and the Beaches is known as a gateway to Latin America, visitors from around the world convene at the Miami Beach Convention Center where combining business with pleasure is as effortless as convening an event on a waterfront terrace. Located in the heart of the electrifying and historic South Beach/Art Deco District, the Miami Beach Convention Center is a meeting, conference, convention, and tradeshow paradise, while white sandy beaches, warm ocean waters, award winning restaurants and exciting nightlife complement the event experience. There are over 2,000 hotel rooms within walking distance and the Center is only a brief 15 minute drive from Miami International Airport. Says Bob Balsam, General Manager “On behalf of Global Spectrum, proud management company of the Miami Beach Convention Center, we are thrilled to have joined AIPC and look forward to expounding upon current relationships while fostering new partnerships throughout this organization. AIPC provides us an avenue to network with top industry professionals and expand our brand worldwide through excellence in Convention Center management”.

PAGE SEVEN
Quinette Gallay is a global leader in seating solutions. How do you see this area evolving, given the new demands of clients and technology capabilities?

Congress centres have changed a lot in recent years, which means that seating has also evolved. Seats must be adaptable to different auditorium configurations while, at the same time, retaining all their elegance and comfort. They can be mounted on retractable tiers or mobile floors, or designed for easy dismantling and storage, so that an auditorium can be transformed from a plenary conference centre by day into a gala dinner venue by night. At the same time, the style of a seat, and the rare fabrics and materials that go into it, put a stamp of elegance on a congress centre. Leather is fast becoming a "must have". It comes with a high-quality finish and saddle stitching, and will often breathe life and character into a huge auditorium.

Seats can also be adjusted to meet the requirements of being able to take notes. Each seat becomes a veritable office, enabling participants to take notes in comfort, and the seats are connected, so participants can communicate with each other via video screens in the seatbacks, and enter their votes using the purpose-built controls in the armrests. They can also use their computers for long periods of time, thanks to the electric points fitted securely into each seat.

What are the biggest changes in demand you’ve seen over the past ten years? Congress centres are offering better quality, more sophisticated services to keep pace with tough competition in all market segments. At the same time, exhibitors and organisers are becoming more and more professional, which means that the needs of congress centres are constantly changing. There is also a broad demand for internet services before, during and after major events. With all these huge changes going on, controlling costs and prioritising investments have become major challenges. Seats, therefore, have become an important factor in achieving profitability. The latest models have become an essential strategic tool, thanks to their flexibility of use and their built-in equipment.

So have you created new seat models for 2012? What kinds of innovations do they feature?

For more than 60 years, Quinette Gallay has innovated endlessly to keep pace with the tremendous changes in the needs of congress centres. 2012 marks a new milestone in this field. We are offering even more flexibility to make sure that our designs are in harmony with the architectural requirements of your projects. We are using noble, innovative materials to make our seats easier to handle, dismantle and store.

Our partnerships with leading companies like Sony enable us to integrate the very latest technologies, such as screen technology in particular. In recognition of these efforts, Quinette Gallay has received the prestigious Design Observer award in 2012 for its new I-One cinema seat.

How does the demand for seating vary in different parts of the world? How do you accommodate this in your products?

We are seeing two major market trends right now: the fast-developing countries are allocating substantial amounts of money to their infrastructure programs: the Middle East and most countries in Asia. These new congress centres are at the cutting edge of technology, and are often very upmarket. In Europe, there is a high demand for renovation work. European countries are aiming for higher quality too, but the constraints are tougher so there is less room for manoeuvre.

Can you give us some recent examples of recent projects you’ve done or are in the process of doing?

Quinette Gallay is especially proud to have helped design, manufacture and install seats and telescopic tribunes in the Qatar National Convention Center in Doha. This congress centre, which is one of the biggest in the world, is becoming a benchmark for technology integration and very high quality finishing.