

**October 2010**

## **New survey shows resilience remains defining feature of association meetings market**

The Association Meetings Forecasts and Trends Report 2011, an annual research survey which is conducted jointly by IMEX in Frankfurt and ICCA, shows that resilience remains a defining feature of the sector and that many association meeting planners believe the most dramatic cuts and changes are now behind them.

When asked if the economic downturn had had a significant negative impact on their association during the past year, 74 per cent answered 'no', compared to 65 per cent who confirmed they had felt the impact during the same period in 2009.

On the subject of which cost-savings they are currently employing as a means to respond to economic challenges, 49 per cent are still tending to select lower costs destinations and venues, although virtually the same number are not taking that route to reduced spending. 51 per cent are also opting for lower cost delegate accommodation whereas 46 per cent of respondents are not.

### **Contract trends**

Similarly when asked if they "intend to renegotiate existing contracts for future events", 40 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed, whilst 33 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. A further 33 per cent said they have no intention of renegotiating existing contracts, possibly suggesting that the hardest cuts and contract revisions have already been made, with little remaining margin to be won from existing suppliers. Similarly 35 per cent of respondents declared they do not intend to significantly cut down on costs at future meetings (e.g. cutting out banquets, receptions, number of days in the programme); although 40 per cent do expect to cut such costs. However, with 22 per cent unable to state a clear intention either way, results in this category (and generally in other parts of the survey) suggest that perhaps many planners are still unsure about what the future holds. Nevertheless, 68 per cent still expect to hold about the "same number of meetings" in 2011 as this past year. An encouraging 19 per cent expect their meetings calendar to be slightly busier, whilst 13 per cent expect to be planning fewer meetings.

IMEX Research.

Copyright Regent Exhibitions Ltd.



45 per cent of planners said their attendance numbers for their largest annual meeting were in line with expectations, although for nearly 10 per cent, attendance at their main annual event was significantly higher than previously, and for 19 per cent it was slightly higher than before or what was expected. Looking at the total number of meetings and events planned for 2011, 48 per cent anticipate no change in attendee numbers compared to 2010 and 87 per cent also expect those meetings to be of the same duration.

### **Knock-on effect**

When asked anecdotally to describe the impact of the changing economic climate on their association activities over the past few years many confirm “no significant or serious impact”, although some comment that sponsorship and additional revenue sources now take more time and are harder to identify than in previous years. They point towards the corporate sector’s struggles as having a knock-on effect in some cases. Many offer up comments on how their continuing drive to deliver quality and value for delegates has ensured good attendance. The use of electronic, social media and online communication tools is also mentioned in parts, although this appears to be impacting more on internal meetings, such as board meetings, rather than larger external events.

As in 2009, none of the association planners had been forced to cancel their largest annual meeting for any reason. Given a challenging year in terms of air transport disruption through strikes and natural disasters, in Europe in particular, this suggests that planners and their suppliers have become enormously resourceful and creative in the face of logistical and operational set-backs and, once an important meeting is planned, a ‘can-do, must-do’ attitude takes hold.

### **Views on CSR**

Respondents were also questioned about other long-term trends and corporate social responsibility issues (CSR). “How to attract higher attendance” remains “very important” for 51 per cent of respondents. A further 45 per cent rated this factor “quite important.” The constant need to deliver “conference programmes that appeal to the broadest audiences” is also very important for 63 per cent of those asked. The single issue of “how to appeal to younger delegates”, however, was deemed “not at all important” by 50 per cent. Concerns about security also appear to have faded away, with 83 per cent currently considering them unimportant.

19 per cent also see the issue of climate change and managing their carbon footprint becoming more important in their meetings planning, although the majority, 63 per cent, believe its ongoing importance has remained “the same” (compared to 61 per cent previously).

IMEX Research.

Copyright Regent Exhibitions Ltd.

151 association meeting planners, managers and directors working in the association sector responded to the survey. They represent a cross-section of global markets including the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, India, various Asian countries and Europe, including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland amongst others. For 35 per cent of those respondents, their largest annual meeting of the year was for between 200 and 499 delegates. For 22 per cent it was 500 – 999 delegates, and for nearly nine per cent their largest meeting saw over 5000 delegates attending.

## **ENDS**

### **Media Contacts:**

FOR IMEX:

Kit Watts: [kit.watts@imexexhibitions.com](mailto:kit.watts@imexexhibitions.com)

Tel: +44 (0)1273 224956 Mob: +44 7968 417518

FOR ICCA:

Mathijs Vleeming, Manager Marketing & PR

Email: [mathijs@icca.nl](mailto:mathijs@icca.nl)

Tel: +31 20 398 1962

Website: <http://www.iccaworld.com>

### **Editors' notes:**

The next IMEX will take place 24 - 26 May 2011 at Messe Frankfurt.

Follow IMEX on Twitter #imexfrankfurt

- All IMEX press releases can be viewed or downloaded from [www.imex-frankfurt.com/press.php](http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/press.php)
- High-resolution photographs of the show are available at [www.imex-frankfurt.com/imexphotos.html](http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/imexphotos.html)
- Visitor and buyer statistics can be viewed at [www.imex-frankfurt.com/stats.html](http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/stats.html)
- IMEX is a previous winner of the AEO Trade Show of the Year Award and AEO Best Visitor Experience Trade Show Award. The show was also shortlisted for the UFI (the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) Best Innovative Web-based Application for Exhibitors Award 2009.
- The IMEX Group has launched IMEX America - America's worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events. It will take place at the Sands Expo and Convention Center at the Venetian/ Palazzo from 11 – 13 October 2011. [www.imexamerica.com](http://www.imexamerica.com) and on Twitter #imexamerica

IMEX Research.

Copyright Regent Exhibitions Ltd.

