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**MEDIA  
PLANET**

No. 3 / Mar. '11

# CONFERENCING AND EVENTS

**4**  
TIPS  
FOR A SUCCESSFUL  
CONFERENCE



## CHANGING ITS FACE

**A new environment:** How the industry is adapting to incorporate new technologies and the challenge to become green

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## CHALLENGES

Far from being the death knell of the meetings industry, new technology and economic concerns have been incorporated into conferences offering more value

# How the conference industry reinvented itself

**T**he business climate remains challenging so brands need to work harder than ever to engage their clients and win new business while energising and communicating efficiently with their teams.

And when it comes to both internal and external engagement, live events are increasingly seen as the marketing tool of choice with companies turning to conferences, award ceremonies, product launches and other face-to-face meetings to communicate their brand messages.

The days of death by PowerPoint are long gone. The meetings market is dominated by in-house teams and creative agencies working with new technology to create interactive events that deliver results.



**Yasmin Arrigo**  
Editor, Conference & Incentive Travel,  
Citmagazine.com

Venues too are valuing the events industry and highlighting spaces for hire - today's annual conference can be held in purpose-built venues, academic halls, museums, galleries, football stadia and hotels.

The downturn has, however, heralded a heightened scrutiny on overseas events while the environmental impact of business travel has also played a part. Yet when one of the UK's leading retailers wanted to inspire its man-

agers it took them to Florida and when a communications giant wanted to reward their top sales teams they created an aspirational event in St Lucia.

When it comes to inspiring teams to hit their targets, travel remains a huge motivator and reward.

Social media plays an increasingly important role in the conference sector now with the use of LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook on the rise for either pre-event planning, marketing and audience participation. A Q&A session with the company chairman is just as likely to be aided via Twitter, while Facebook is increasingly used by brands to promote events, with YouTube then hosting content.

But are virtual meetings replacing annual conferences? No. The market-leading brands know that business won't thrive if they stop meeting their key audiences.



## WE RECOMMEND



**Chris McQue**  
On travelling to  
Switzerland

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"Snowboarding in Verbier or helicoptering down the north face of Eiger isn't very boring"

## MEDIA PLANET

We make our readers succeed!

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## NEWS



**Question:** Can Scotland offer a tried and tested venue yet fit in with my company's limited budget?

**Answer:** Scotland has a wealth of experience in hosting conferences, is affordable and easy to reach

# SCOTLAND OFFERS CLASSY VENUES IN SCENIC SETTINGS

■ With business tourism worth around £900 million a year it is no wonder Scotland takes conferencing very seriously.

Among UK cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow rank second only to London in the number of international association conferences they host and research from Visit-Britain highlights that Scotland's two biggest cities are both in the top three most competitive European destinations based on price.

These days British companies don't want to be seen splurging on overseas trips but if they fancy something a bit exotic which is still close to home they should consider going north of the border says Neil Brownlee, Head of Business Tourism for Visit Scotland.

He says: "We push value for

money and work very hard on the requirement from all companies now to demonstrate a return on their investment for any meetings.

"Value for money doesn't mean cheap, it means value for what you pay."

This is one reason why so much investment is taking place. The Scottish Exhibition Conference Centre, in Glasgow, is adding in the 12,000-seat Scottish National Arena, set to be ranked one of the top five arenas in the world.



**Neil Brownlee**  
Head of Business  
Tourism for Visit  
Scotland

It should be ready by 2013, and will be a key venue for the 2014 Commonwealth Games while the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) is undergoing an £85m expansion to be ready in 2013.

Scotland's large cities can take thousands of delegates, says Neil who added that it has always had a good cross section of venues. "We can also do the no-nonsense business meeting next to the airport."

Then there are the pretty countryside getaways and famous historic hotels like Gleneagles. "It does very prestigious conferences, like the Forbes CEOs a couple of years ago," says Neil.

Investment in this sector is also keeping pace. The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Ayrshire,

which opened in January 2011, offers historic settings for meetings and events.

Stirling Castle's royal court is currently restoring its 16th-century palace ready to host corporate groups with a medieval theme from this summer.

Scotland's food and hospitality are world-class, says Neil. "We have the whiskies, the golf, the tartan, the castles and stunning landscapes. But it is a contemporary nation, we have some stunning architecture."

Plus it has the all-important experience. "When someone brings a huge convention it's not the first time we have done it."

MATTHEW TAYLOR

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**WHY BUSINESSES SHOULD CONSIDER SCOTLAND**

**Easy access**

**1** Transport costs to Scotland can be much lower than for international destinations and, with good accessibility from across the UK and Europe with airports in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Prestwick, Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness, Scotland is easy to reach for your conference or event.

**Scotland is tried and tested**

**2** The UK accounts for 73 per cent of business tourism expenditure in Scotland while 29 per cent of all International Association conferences held in the UK are hosted by Scotland. The main overseas markets for business tourism to Scotland are the USA followed by Germany, France, Netherlands, Spain and Canada.

**So much to choose from**

**3** Scotland has a range of conferencing options from state-of-the-art city venues to historic country retreats in picturesque countryside.

**BEAUTIFUL EDINBURGH**  
Scotland is a good option for those wanting a change of scene within the UK  
PHOTO: KATE CONNES/SHUTTERSTOCK

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## NEWS

TIP

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EXPLORE NEW  
MARKETS

**A SMART CHOICE**  
Doing business in  
Hong Kong could open  
your business up to  
the expanding market  
of China

PHOTO: HONG KONG  
TOURIST BOARD

# Hong Kong: the gateway to China

■ **Question:** Can staging a conference in Hong Kong help my company reach Chinese markets?

■ **Answer:** This is the overwhelming reason why so many international associations are choosing Hong Kong

Once a far-flung outpost of the British Empire, Hong Kong has re-emerged as the perfect gateway to Chinese business opportunities. And that is one of the reasons it's such a great venue for conferences.

Ms Suvi Saxen, Director of Institutional Division and Congress Management in MCI Hong Kong's office, said: "Hong Kong's geographical location vis-à-vis mainland China, makes it an ideal and unique destination for international meetings, congresses and business meetings, in attracting participants from mainland China."

Almost, without exception, the international associations and organisations coming to Hong Kong are interested in tightening relationships with the mainland Chinese, said Suvi.

"Close cooperation with the mainland counterparts is vital in



**Suvi Saxen**  
Director of  
Institutional  
Division and  
Congress  
Management, MCI

achieving this goal.

"Hong Kong is carefree as a destination and does not require licenses and other formal permission procedures."

She said the island also offers stability and flexibility with a pleasant climate. Its advantages have also been noticed by the British Council which chose Hong Kong for Going Global, a international education conference for over 1,000 delegates from more than 60 countries.

## FACTS

■ **After 156 years** of British colonial rule Hong Kong's sovereignty was transferred to China in 1997.

■ **It has a high** degree of autonomy from the mainland and is politically stable.

■ **Direct flights** from London take about 12 hours while local public transport is highly developed.

Peter Upton, who is Director for the British Council in South China, said: "Going Global is dealing with the challenges facing education worldwide and Hong Kong, one of the most prominent and bustling cities in Asia, will provide a perfect backdrop to the issues that will be debated."

Hong Kong has an international quality and is genuinely at the cross-roads to Asia, said Peter.

"Whether it's the HK Tourist Board, Invest HK, or the Education Bureau of the Office of the Chief Executive - all have been unfailingly helpful in making sure that Going Global is a success.

"Hong Kong has a cultural fluency that you see all around you. This means that you can work across languages, across cultures and communities."

This is exactly why so many people come for a year and stay for 20, said Peter.

"Hong Kong has world-class companies, innovative start-ups and a strong financial and services sector - but, above all, it has energy. This is truly a city that never sleeps."

MATTHEW TAYLOR

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## WHY CHOOSE HONG KONG?



### Easy to get to

➔ Hong Kong is easily reachable on direct flights from a large number of countries and it is visa-free for more than 170 nationalities. The island has a good infrastructure and English is spoken widely. It has multi-purpose venues such as AsiaWorld-Expo, the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, and the Hong Kong International Trade & Exhibition Centre as well as nearly 60,000 hotel rooms.

### Wealth of experience

➔ Hong Kong, being the Asia Pacific headquarters of many international companies, offers a number of business opportunities. Hong Kong has a strong Tourism Board to support conference planners and business travellers and has an old and established tradition in servicing and hosting international meetings. A conference planner will profit from the support offered by the Tourism Board, and existing professional congress and destination management services with local know-how and contacts.

### So much to do so near

➔ Within its 426-square miles, Hong Kong can offer visitors the sea, mountains, nature, vivid city life and cultural and gastronomic experiences. It offers a nice mix of serious business, high-level research and academic life and a blend of east and west.



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## INSPIRATION

**Question:** How can a conference planner pick a venue which offers a rich sample of Europe's nations?

**Answer:** Switzerland blends the cultures of three neighbours with its own identity in a stunning setting

# Switzerland: A cultural feast in a picturesque setting

## LEADER TO LEADER

Visiting a country where everything runs like clockwork might not be ideal for adventure-seeking youngsters. But when you are hosting conferences, Switzerland's orderliness comes into its own.

But it's never dull says Chris McQue, of Creative Direction and Motivation Ltd, who has been taking corporate clients for years - in the winter and summer.

For a country not much bigger than Wales, Switzerland offers such a huge variety says Chris.

"People say Switzerland is boring. I have found exactly the opposite. Snowboarding in Verbier or helicoptering down the north face of the Eiger isn't very boring."

And there is so much variety the trip organiser is spoiled for choice.

"The variety of this land-locked country surrounded by all these other cultures is amazing. It's taken the best

bits from all the other countries around them. It's brilliant but most people in the UK haven't discovered it."

Switzerland's wonderful topography adds to the experience of getting about. "The valley region has the biggest concentration of 4,000-metre peaks in the whole of Europe."

It makes for incredibly scenic train journeys. "The transportation is part of the experience whether it's boat, plane, helicopter, horse and carriage, bus or panoramic train."

Chris is enthusiastic about the benefits of Swiss attention to detail. "Staff will use your name when serving you coffee. It's that precise."

With almost 80 flights a day to Switzerland from around a dozen UK airports, it has unrivalled flight availability for meeting organisers.

It's not cheap but group bookings are more reasonable than you might think, says Chris. "There are some great deals



'Staff will use your name when serving you coffee. It's that precise'

Chris McQue  
Creative Direction  
and Motivation

at the moment and it's far less expensive than London."

Switzerland also has, at 8 per cent, the lowest VAT in Europe, of which nearly all of it is refunded to meeting planners based in the UK within one month after the meeting.

And tour organisers are unlikely to regret their outlay because of the value they receive.

"You can rely on the infrastructure of the country at every level, not just at the five-star hotel. You get the same standard of delivery from people running the paddle steamer or people responsible for the chair lifts.

"It's a very smart place which matches the profile very often of the kind of place that UK PLC is trying to entertain and impress to a really high standard."

MATTHEW TAYLOR

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QUESTION & ANSWER



**Claudio Zemp**  
 Manager of UK and Ireland, Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau

■ **What does Switzerland offer for conferences?**

! The opening of the Waldhaus Arena makes the mountain resort Flims one of the leading conference destinations in the Swiss Alps. Located just 90 minutes from Zurich the Waldhaus offers first-class facilities for events up to 2,000 participants. Davos has invested 100 million Swiss Francs in its Congress Centre, the home of the famous World Economic Forum. The modernised and extended facilities provide a truly unique and unforgettable experience.

■ **What are Switzerland's particular advantages?**

! Reliability, punctuality as well as political and economic stability. The short distances and easy access of picturesque lakes and dazzling white glaciers, romantic palm-filled gardens and dramatic castles give the destination that sought after 'wow factor'. Most people are surprised about how affordable Switzerland can be and how many conference venues are at places where other people spend their holiday.

■ **How can conference planners get the most out of Switzerland?**

! Start by using the services of the Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau. We offer free independent assistance in planning your event. The fact that such a small country has a population which speaks four different languages and subsequently has four very different cultures comes as a big, pleasant surprise to many. And again and again our guests are astonished that it is really true: Everything runs like clock work!

**THE WAY TO TRAVEL**  
 The beautiful backdrop of Switzerland means that even traveling to the venue is an experience  
 PHOTO: MARTIN LEHMANN/  
 SHUTTERSTOCK

## INSPIRATION

TIP

3

THINK OF  
ALTERNATIVES

**CLOSER TO HOME**  
The newly built Cardiff School of Management is one of the many options in Wales  
PHOTO: RUTH WALTON

## Wales: a host of interesting venues on your doorstep

■ **Question:** Can Wales deliver the sort of sophisticated conference venue your business needs on a limited budget and within easy reach?

■ **Answer:** Yes, Wales has a host of exciting options that won't break the bank

### HOW WE MADE IT

Incredibly, given it is part of the UK, some business leaders here view Wales as too distant to travel to for conferences. Yet those who make the trip will find it shorter than expected and worth the effort says, Clare Dwight, Product Marketing Manager of Visit Wales.

"We have got some wonderful, world-class venues very professionally staffed, including modern stand-alone venues and conference hotels," says Clare. "But we also have a very good range of the more traditional exclusive-use country hotels and historic residences.

"Given the market now with people not travelling so much overseas it is a good time for business events organisers to discover



**Clare Dwight**  
Product Marketing Manager, Visit Wales

Wales and just how accessible and great value for money it is."

Group train tickets from London can make travel even cheaper and are available though most conference hotels.

"It is probably fair to say we haven't attracted as many large conferences from outside Wales as we would like," says Clare.

But Wales is certainly taking conferencing seriously and there has been plenty of recent investment. The new £20m Cardiff School of Management building at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) opened late last year and has already attracted conferences.

The £30 million Cardiff City Stadium offers two large conference spaces that can be combined to accommodate up to 1,200 delegates with parking for all.

And delegates can quickly swap the buzz of the urban areas for the

beauty of the national parks very quickly, says Clare.

"A lot of the venues are in stunning countryside or coastal locations. Hospitality is one of our strongest things - the warmth of the Welsh welcome."

There is plenty to do with one recent convention group cramming in Whisky distillery tours, deer safaris and rafting at the Cardiff International White Water centre.

"We have great mid-size venues and large venues which are perhaps a little bit unexpected such as Venue Cymru in the north of Wales and Celtic Manor Resort in the south which are both capable of taking large conferences."

Resort was voted the top UK conference hotel by Conference & Incentive Travel magazine for the last four years.

Clare said Wales offers a touch of the exotic without feeling alien with Welsh being spoken even in the cities. "Once they have got over the idea of Wales being difficult to get to they discover there's a lot here to offer."

MATTHEW TAYLOR

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3

WHY CHOOSE WALES FOR YOUR CONFERENCE?



### So easy to reach


1 Venues are more sophisticated and accessible than people might think, for example Cardiff and Newport are around two hours by train from London and Birmingham and not much more by car. Swansea is less than three hours by train from London. Llandudno, a popular conference destination in North Wales which can host up to 5,000 delegates, is just over an hour from Liverpool and less than two hours from Manchester by train.

### Planning is made easy

2 Visit Wales has a dedicated website for conference organisers [www.businessevents.visitwales.com](http://www.businessevents.visitwales.com) which includes a venue search tool, with enhanced search criteria, testimonials, incentive and ideas, together with multi-media resources such as video footage, fact files, suggested itineraries and top ten lists.

### Wales has so much variety

3 Wales can inspire your delegates as it offers stunning scenery and places of interest including 1,200 miles of coastline with sweeping bays, 641 castles and five areas of outstanding natural beauty. There are 200 golf courses including the 2010 Ryder Cup course. With three national parks, Wales is also a great place for team-building events which can be tailored to your needs, from fun corporate events to management development programmes and leadership training.



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## NEWS

# Canada is experienced yet is still affordable

TIP

4

EXPLORE  
GREEN  
OPTIONS

■ **Question:** What are the advantages of choosing Canada as a conference host?

■ **Answer:** It has a large world-class venues while the lack of import duties and a good exchange rate make it affordable

As the second largest country in the world Canada isn't short of options for conference hosting.

And making the trek could be easier and cheaper than you might expect says Susan Frei, Director of International Meetings and Incentives, for the Canadian Tourism Commission.

She explained: "We make it easy to bring even large congresses because goods can be moved into the country tax and duty free. We have some great customs brokers who clear the goods on the convention floor so they aren't held up at the border."

Conference planners coming from Britain also have a pretty good deal because of the exchange rate, says Susan. "Four- and five-star hotels are going to be a heck of a lot less than in London."

With major state-of-the-art venues, Canada certainly isn't a novice



**GOING GREEN.** The roof of the Vancouver Convention Centre is a six acre 'living' roof

PHOTO: VANCOUVER CONVENTION CENTRE

at hosting events and has attracted some landmark conferences, such as the G8 and G20 back-to-back in

## FACTS

- **Direct flights** from London to Toronto take about eight hours.
- **Canada is a popular** spot for British visitors who are the second largest tourist group behind Americans.
- **Canada has** two official languages – French and English.
- **Toronto's Direct Energy Centre** (formerly the National Trade Centre) is the third largest exhibit facility in North America with more than one million square feet of exhibit space

Huntsville, Ontario, in June last year.

"We have flexibility in venue space, from little to big, we have conventions centres that can handle 10,000 people in 400,000 square feet."

There has been plenty of investment in this sector including the Vancouver Convention Centre, built to exacting environmental standards, which features a six-acre 'living' eco-roof with more than 400,000 indigenous plants and grasses as well as four beehives. Drainage and recovery systems are designed to collect and use rainwater for irrigation during summer months.

Susan says: "Then there is the natural beauty of sitting in the Vancouver conference centre looking at the Pacific ocean and the snow-capped mountains."

Canadian cities boast plenty of large four- and five-star hotels which can host big groups in-house.

"Ottawa is opening a new conventions centre in April which we are very excited about," says Susan. It will be within walking distance of 6,000 hotel rooms while that same month the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls is also due to open.

Then there are the venues in the middle of the country including a string of picturesque hotels dotted along the old railway line linking the country.

"We have so many traditional venues, unique undiscovered gems but it isn't on many people's radar."

She says the word is spreading after a PR push with bookings from Europe healthy right into 2015 and beyond. "We have really seen a pick-up in activity in the last 12 to 18 months."

MATTHEW TAYLOR

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Canada

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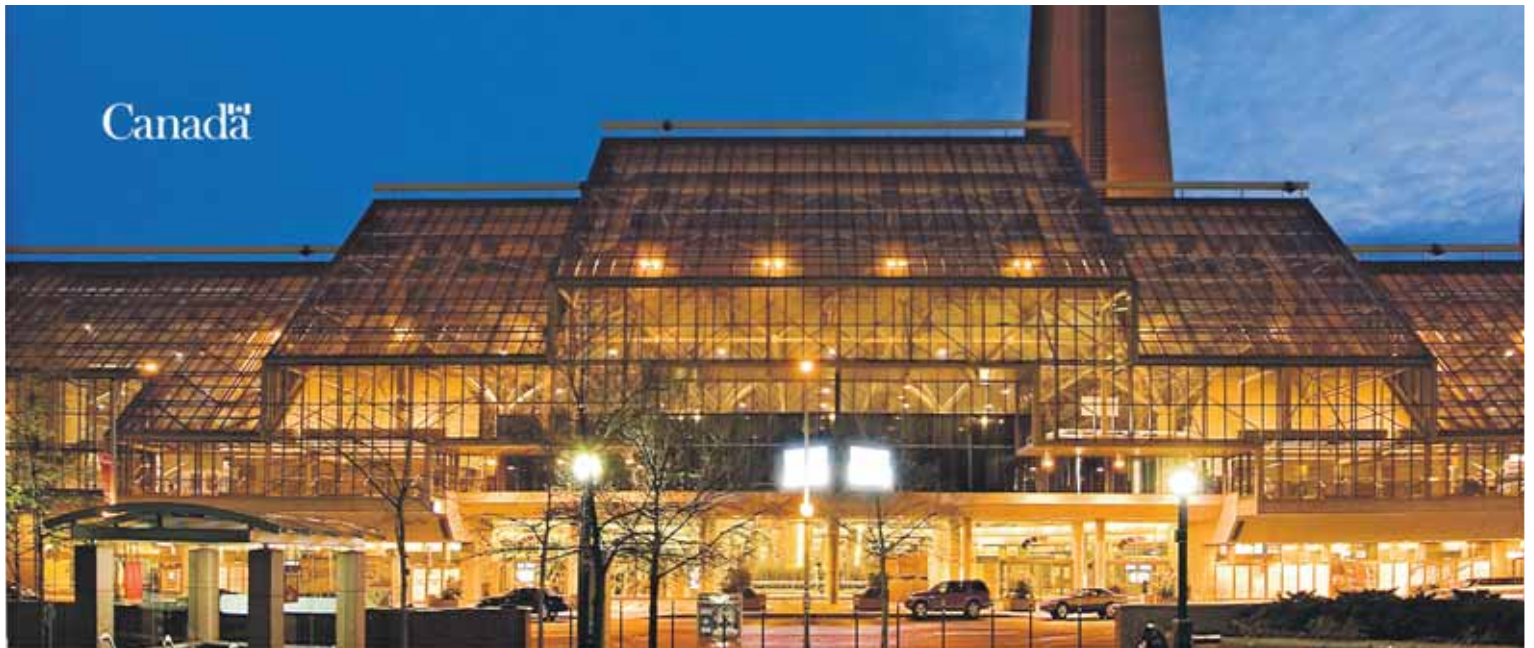
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Canada   
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# Canada's Conference Call

*Canada is an inspiring location for conference and events delegates — as the organisers of a major medical congress discovered.*

When the organisers of one of the world's biggest medical conferences needed to find a vibrant and stimulating destination for 12,500 international delegates, they came to the right place.

Canada.

Coast to coast, Canada offers a range of diverse and exciting locations and world-class, hi-tech venues, whatever the size of the event. From the west to the east, whether it be Victoria and Vancouver, or Toronto and Niagara to Montreal and Quebec or even the Maritimes, delegates can be treated to exceptional conferencing facilities, leading hotels, gourmet dining, the best shopping and world-famous culture. Settings include lively urban centres and dazzling, breathtaking natural wonders.

So in 2009, when the Brussels-based International Diabetes Federation (IDF) was looking to host the 20th World Diabetes Congress, they knew Canada was the ideal destination for their event.

## Perfect

In the planning stages it became obvious that the Congress was going to be vast, featuring participants from over 160 countries.

"We looked at a range of Canadian cities including Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal," says Luc Hendrickx, Executive Director of the IDF. "We decided on Montréal in the end because of the interesting cultural mix in the city; plus, it was perfect for our international delegates. In terms of flight times, Montréal is a very easy city to get to. Canada is so accessible. And the relative stability of the Canadian dollar against the Euro was also very useful."

Planners chose to hold the World Diabetes Congress at Montréal's Palais des Congrès, which featured a 12,000 sq metre exhibition area. This is an exemplary venue which immediately made an impression upon organisers and delegates alike. "The Palais des Congrès is right in the middle of the city," says Luc. "So many international conference venues are based outside city centres — but a central location made a real difference to the atmosphere of our event."

When it came to organisation and logistics, the IDF planners were not on their own. Montréal's highly efficient Convention and Visitors Bureau helped find leading players from Canada's conferencing and events services sector. "That was so important for us," says Luc, "because the Convention and Visitors Bureau was able to identify partners that we, from our desks in Brussels, would never have thought of."

## Exceptional

Away from the Palais' business halls, Luc and his team knew that delegates would have to be entertained and here, Canadian hospitality really came into its own.

"Delegates could pop out of the Palais des Congrès and stroll down to, for example, Chinatown for something to eat," he says. "They could visit the main shopping street and sample the local culture. It was all so nicely integrated."

"Many of the hotels were within walking distance — around 6000 — 8000 rooms, which was quite exceptional. Another nice plus for us was the Montréal Metro which was easily available for delegates, as we had decided not to provide shuttle buses."

It was great to do business in Canada, says Luc. "People are extremely friendly and it's very cosmopolitan. "And in Montréal, international delegates loved the fact that there was an enclave of French-speaking people. That was a nice touch."



## PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Conferences were once viewed by cynics as a wasteful anachronism but they have become more eco-friendly while adapting to new technology which, at one point, threatened to make them redundant. The next challenge for the meetings business is to justify its worth in a cost-conscious world where every penny spent comes under the microscope

# How conferences thrived amid green and technological challenges

So often conferences herald change - whether they are being held to unveil new products or to urge fresh strategies on sales teams. But how is the meetings business itself coping with new challenges?

Carina Bauer, CEO of IMEX, which runs annual shows for the meetings industry, has seen a definite increase in concern about corporate social responsibility and green meetings in the last decade.

She concedes any conference will involve emissions but minimising the environmental impact is now paramount. Reusable and recyclable badges are a start.

"We eliminated something like 20 tonnes of plastic just by doing that. A large conference can save tonnes of plastic and carbon emissions simply by offering tap water in jugs rather than bottled water."

And venues are being built in a more sustainable way using renewable energy sources such as solar panels.

A few years ago, some in the events industry were scared that Internet and technology such as virtual conferencing would damage or even wipe out the industry. Now event organisers are harnessing high-tech to enhance and extend the life of their meetings in hybrid events.

"We have always said the two were complementary," said Carina. "You can't recreate the personal connections you get at a face-to-face meeting - that 'eureka moment' where you brain-spark off other people."

That trend is sure to continue in the coming decades as social media become more embedded, say Carina.

"Your event starts online through social media channels - maybe six weeks prior to the main event.

"People are discussing things online so when they come to the actual event they already have some of those connections. It makes the face-to-face event more effective and can extend afterwards."

Indeed social media is generating business. "Conferences have sprung out of Facebook groups. The group

## INDUSTRY EXPERT

"You can't recreate the personal connections you get at a face to face meeting"



Carina Bauer  
Chief executive officer, IMEX

has decided to meet face to face and then sponsors and suppliers find out and it becomes a formal event."

Another trend is the bigger focus on return on investment which is forcing the events industry to justify itself.

It led to a recent study by accountants PWC which showed the conferencing and events industry contributed \$907 billion a year to the US economy, making it the tenth largest industry in the US, ahead of the motor industry.

Now the US meetings industry is reporting healthy levels of bookings for this year and next.

"That's great news as they are the biggest market in our global industry, both in terms of events organised in the States and events that Americans take outside the US. There is a real upswing."

Of the future, Carina says, "Meetings and events will become a maturing industry as it really works with the strategic goals of an organisation to make sure the events portfolio backs them up properly."

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## Hong Kong Stakes Claim as “Asia’s Mobile City”

Record numbers of mobile communications professionals from across Asia and the world attended Mobile Asia Congress 2010 in Hong Kong - underlining the destination's status as a hotspot for telecommunications innovation and as one of the world's leading conference and exhibition locations.

Staged in November 2010 by the GSMA, which represents the interests of the worldwide mobile communications industry, Mobile Asia Congress 2010 attracted a record 3,400 attendees. The event has grown tremendously since its Hong Kong debut in 2009, almost doubling visitor numbers and evolving into one of the largest events the GSMA has ever held in Asia.

Hong Kong's location and status as a gateway into mainland China, the world's largest mobile subscriber market, was key to the event's success. Five of the 15 keynote speakers were drawn from the Mainland, representing the world's largest mobile operators, technology manufacturers and digital service providers.

However it was Hong Kong's world-class infrastructure - conference facilities, hotels and excellent public transport - that most attracted the GSMA Ltd's Chief Executive Officer John Hoffman.

“The simplicity of getting delegates in and out, the transport, the ubiquitous use of wireless technology and the world-class facilities of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre were big factors,” he confirms.

“Add breathtaking sights, the city's energy and culinary delights - Hong Kong was clearly the place!”

Hong Kong's record as one of the world's safest cities was a further consideration, given the profile of the event's star guests. The centrepiece of the event was a thought-leadership conference

programme with a stellar speaker line up featuring some of the industry's most influential executives, including Li Yu, President and CEO of the world's largest cellular operator China Mobile, and Sanjay Kapoor, the CEO of India's Bharti Airtel.

For many, however, the highlight was App Planet, which made its Asian debut in Hong Kong. It attracted 800 eager mobile applications developers, many from across East Asia's application development hubs such as Japan, Korea and China.

Mobile Asia Congress 2010 received strong support from Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK). A division of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, MEHK was not only one of the event's Official Sponsor, but also supported the App Planet Closing Reception on the final day.

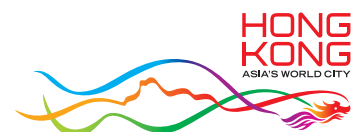
Hoffman says Mobile Asia Congress will remain in Hong Kong “as long as the components for success on the part of our attendees are available”, and also hopes to increase the event's scale. The 3,400-strong attendance in 2010 was a dramatic increase on the previous year's 1,800.

Hoffman's enthusiasm for Hong Kong is shared by others. Exhibitor Sebastian Barberis, Vice-President (Sales) for Vodafone's roaming division, praised the “really smooth” shipping and exhibition logistics, while Ian Struel of UK-based telecoms consultancy Analysys Mason, which sent a delegation to the Congress, was also impressed.

“Whatever is happening in consumer electronics in Hong Kong is an indicator of what will happen in other countries in the future. And it's just awesome to come to a city as impressive as this!” he said.



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