

## DMO's & Congress Centers - How to Make Your Destination More Attractive and Competitive in the Eyes of Buyers

**PANEL:** Patrizia Buongiorno, President IAPCO; + Karin Wouters, Association Management Consultant and former Association Director of the International Federation of International Moving companies (FIDI), + Luca Favetta, Senior Director Global Events EMEA SAP AG, + Moderator (Doug Price, Senior Vice President, DMAI)

**SESSION:** Today's competitive environment for large scale meetings and events is causing destinations to have to increase their service offerings to create a competitive advantage. At times this causes a strain on the relationship with a DMO and Congress Center because they have different missions and objectives. The working relationship between these two entities is critical to buyers, especially when comparing one destination to another. The open discussion will feature experienced buyers who will share their personal insights and wisdom of how to make your destination more attractive and competitive in their eyes

### Questions asked in the panel

1. Which elements are important to you in the relationship with a Congress Center?
2. How can you deal better with a CC?
3. Can a venue exceed a customer's expectations and how?
4. Let's transition to CVBs -- what are three to five generic elements that make a destination competitive? And if possible, let's break them down by mega city, large , mid-size and niche cities.
5. What can buyers do to improve the relationship with a destination CVB and vice versa?
6. Can you give an example of a great initiative taken by a CC & CVB to increase their competitive advantage (except reducing price.)
7. How about the opposite? Can you give an example of an initiative that did not work out at all?
8. Specifically for PCOs, what value do you need to perceive in a destination?
9. If you had one bit of advice to the audience to increase their overall competitive advantage in the eyes of a customer, what would it be?

### Notes

#### Congress Centers -- what's important?

Luca – Trust & partnership, working together for common objectives, transparency with no hidden costs and issues from venues, professionalism,

Patrizia – Flexibility, teamwork. Remembering that the delegate/participant is the **final** end user, not the organizer.

Karen – Service expected from conference centre with smile.

Keep in mind that for corporate meetings, the entire event, including centre costs, is an **expense** to the corporation; association meetings are usually **revenue** producing, so there are different approaches and considerations. Remember why an association decides to go to the destination and that in the end they pay the bill.

#### CVB

Karen – The CVB needs to be the “go-between” and all information should be funneled through the bureau. The CVB should be the expert, not play favorites, and always place the customer's interest first, not politics (Luka) .

RE: Attendance promotion –The role of the city (CVB)is to invite and then welcome the delegate. The CVB can assist by promoting the attractiveness of the destination. The CVB can help if you are

competing with another major event in the city and there is a premium on space. The CVB can create an awareness in the community of the value of the convention coming in.

Transparency -- A realistic portrayal of the destination is imperative – don't sell something that's not there. The planner/organizer should provide full information about the personality and purpose of the conference, not just the facility requirements.

#### Advice

1. Think about the long-term ramifications of the business (Karen) and not a one shot big revenue coming in. Peers also talk and share experiences.
2. Listen carefully and inform accurately (Patricia)
3. Be professional, create a partnership, show teamwork, flexibility and respect , fairness(Luka) .