



JOINT MEETINGS INDUSTRY COUNCIL

# Meetings for Success IMEX 2010

**Messe Frankfurt, Germany**  
**May 26, 2010**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Meetings for Success** was devised in 2009 to give senior corporate meetings executives an opportunity to discuss issues directly relevant to their business. Delegates attending the 2010 Forum agreed to continue to consider how best to identify and communicate their concerns and needs to the wider meetings industry.

## Objectives

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**To identify** the challenges corporate meeting planners are facing under changing economic, political and PR pressures.

**To share** experiences and successes within the workplace and consider how to promote the power of meetings more effectively to corporate executives and corporate boards.

**To identify** what the meetings industry can do to assist corporate meeting planners?

## 2010 Attendees

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**Moderator:** Eric Rozenberg, President of Swantegy, Belgium, and nominated Chairman Elect 2009-2010 of MPI (Meeting Professionals International)

Craig Ardis	Sr. Director Global Event Management	Mannatech Inc
Ray Bloom	Chairman	IMEX Group
Betsy Bondurant	President	Bondurant Consulting
Terri Breining	Managing Partner	Breining Group LLC
Rod Cameron	President	Criterion Communications Inc
Phil Cavanagh	Senior Director - Global Events	Monster Worldwide
Hans Den Dekker	Managing Director	Philips Electronics Nederland BV
Valeria Diodato	Director of Communication	Jaguar Mining Inc
Vivek Gandhi	Senior Vice President HR & Administration	Ansal Properties & Infrastructure Ltd
Larry Head	Senior Vice President of Global Operations	Hospitality Performance Network Global
Thomas Hinton	President	CRI Global, LLC + American Consumer Council
Alain Kachami	President	Motif
David Kliman	President	The Kliman Group
Karen Kotowski	Chief Operating Officer	Convention Industry Council
Polo Looser	Vice President	MCI Central Region
Kimberly Meyer	Principal	Meetings Analytics
Bruna Migliazza	Marketing Manager	Hay Group
Michael Nesbihal	Vice President Group Travel Incentive and Reward	Consumer Mortgage Group
Thorsten Renken	Head of Events Division	Vincentz Network GmbH & Co.KG
Karen Sole	Meeting and Event Planner	Starbucks

## **Results**

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Key points arising from this year's discussions included:

- The need for more industry advocacy and interaction
- Measuring the outcomes and effectiveness of meetings, not just the return on investment
- Which meetings should be measured?
- The use of corporate social responsibility to increase productivity and drive up business efficiency
- The rise of virtual and hybrid meetings
- Effective use of social networks both during and after a conference
- Signs of improvement in the meetings business in the next six months
- Competition from newly emerging meetings destinations
- Relations with senior management and shifting roles in strategic meetings management
- Relationships with third parties
- The desire for both senior management and third parties to help drive meeting outcomes
- The problems of cost cuts, staff reduction and outsourcing
- Training the meeting professionals of the future
- The benefits of moving a meeting to a different destination
- The challenges of consolidating meetings spend
- Adding value to a meeting with local intellectual content

## **Welcome**

Welcoming the delegates, IMEX Chairman Ray Bloom wished them all a very successful Forum. Mark Spivey, Director of International Sales, Maritim Hotels, which hosted the Meetings for Success breakfast, also welcomed the delegates and described the importance of meetings and incentives business to the chain both in its home country, Germany, where many of its properties are located, and elsewhere in the world.

## **Industry background**

Eric Rozenberg opened proceedings by inviting two international meetings industry leaders to give updates on new initiatives and trends likely to impact the activities of meeting professionals.

### **1. JMIC adopts a more proactive role**

**Speaker: Rod Cameron, President, Criterion Communications Inc, Vancouver, Canada, and Director, Programming and International Development, AIPC (International Association of Congress Centres)**

Cameron explained that the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) had existed for most of its 50-year history as a forum for discussion rather than action. Now, with 13 member associations, both international and regional, representing major meetings industry sectors such as convention centres, destination marketing organisations and professional congress organisers, it is taking on new roles and initiatives.

At JMIC's last meeting, just before IMEX, it developed a programme built around advocacy, encouraging more industry interaction, developing materials for advocacy and for the communication of the value of the meetings industry. "JMIC is going to organise some events to pull together key areas of the industry so we can, hopefully, for the first time come up with what would be presented as a consolidated opinion representing the entire industry," he said. He added that they hoped the Meetings for Success group would be involved in some of them.

- A forum or workshop has been scheduled for later this year where the possibility of coming up with consolidated statements and positions on behalf of the industry would be examined.
- A specific symposium or meeting will be organised on meetings value measurement, including both the economic value and meetings outcome value. "We systematically undervalue our industry by only talking about delegate spending, whereas in fact nobody holds a meeting in order to stay in a hotel – that's incidental. They really hold a meeting because of outcomes. Our problem is we have no way of valuing that so, when we go and talk to governments and communities, we can't talk of the real value of meetings, only what the delegates spend."
- JMIC has recently developed an advocacy guide of tactical ideas, key messages, sources for articles and information that anyone in the industry can take and adapt for their own uses. This will be on the JMIC website ([www.themeetingsindustry.org](http://www.themeetingsindustry.org)) or hard copies will be available.

## **2. Politicians Forum continues to evolve**

IMEX is one of the corporate partners which works with JMIC on special advocacy-related programming, including the Politicians Forum which it organises annually in collaboration with JMIC and two of its members, European Cities Marketing (ECM) and the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC). It brings together political, government and industry leaders for an exchange of issues and discussion on how the meetings industry can be more effective in interacting with governments and communicating its value.

Cameron reported that the eighth Politicians Forum, which took place the previous day, May 25, saw by far the largest government representation ever, both in terms of attendees and the presentations made. It was divided into two parts, the first with presentations by meetings industry representatives to orient the politicians and a tour of the IMEX show floor – "a highly educational experience for those who have never seen it before and wonder what the competition is in our industry" – followed by an interactive forum. He said it has been very successful and will continue to evolve. There will be a variation in Las Vegas at the first IMEX America in 2011 and it will continue to be an integral part of the programme of both JMIC and IMEX.

## **3. Signs of optimism – the size of the industry – trends to look out for**

**Speaker: Didier Scaillet, Chief Development Officer, Meeting Professionals International (MPI)**

Setting the scene for the rest of the morning's discussions, Scaillet followed up on some of the items he had presented to Meetings for Success the year before and added several new observations.

Business Barometer. Every two months, MPI surveys some 1,000 meetings professionals to track their mood and find out how things are going. Following last year's uncertainty there was good news this year, Scaillet said. The February Business Barometer had revealed that the number of respondents thinking the next six months would be worse had fallen by 50 per cent. In April, the number of people predicting the next six months would be better had grown to 54 per cent. "We are seeing signs of optimism and this is confirmed by other industry research by colleagues in the UK and France who are also looking at an increase of revenue," he said. "Certainly not anything major but definitely some improvement on the horizon for the coming six months."

Corporate social responsibility (CSR). There has been a significant shift in the approach to CSR and sustainable events. Instead of the attitude 'we're doing this because we're good citizens and it's good for the planet', research a few months ago showed that CSR is still very much in the minds of corporate executives but now more with the idea of using it to increase productivity, drive up business efficiency and use less resources, which will become more and more expensive, to produce the same result. "We are still seeing it happening but from a very different angle, which in my view is going to be far more sustainable because it is about business and driving productivity and efficiency within organisations," Scaillet said.

Virtual and hybrid meetings. He mentioned two recent cases which had attracted a great deal of interest. Last year's Cisco sales conference gathered 15,000 people in a purely virtual environment over four days. "It was pretty impressive but the level of engagement of that community, that sales force, was actually lower than usual and they missed their targets. But they were very open about the lessons they learnt," he said. The other was a recent SAP hybrid meeting, using technology and face-to-face to maximise impact. The two SAP CEOs, one in Germany and one in the US, were linked using streaming and video techniques and a specialist was hired to direct the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. As a result, they reached 20,000 people physically either side of the ocean and another 30,000 on the web. "There are a lot of lessons here and we need to look significantly at bringing our meetings outside the room," said Scaillet.

Strategic meetings management. Economic recovery is bringing a shift in its definition, which is good news for the industry, said Scaillet. Meetings were strongly associated with strategic sourcing for many years and now it's back to the value of the meetings agenda. "We still need to focus on strategic sourcing but also on the meeting's effectiveness," he said.

Global impact studies. Studies being conducted or updated in Canada, the US and France will soon reveal the size of the meetings industry and the size of its contribution to GDP. "By September of October we should be really getting some data we can present," said Scaillet.

Globalisation. He reported on continuous development of infrastructure in emerging economies and specially emerging meetings industry economies. He cited the Gulf region and particularly the growth in Dubai and its neighbour Abu Dhabi, but also in Saudi Arabia which has a government programme for the meetings industry. Destinations in Asia Pacific are also growing in leaps and bounds at the moment and becoming far more aggressive in terms of commercial practices.

## **Group reports**

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Before the Forum, Eric Rozenberg had invited the delegates to suggest possible topics for discussion. He received 18 which he grouped as follows. The delegates were divided into four groups and asked to choose any of the topics, discuss them in their groups and report back to the Forum in one hour and 15 minutes.

### **1. It's the economy, stupid!**

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Ways to assure management's support

Combining business travel and meeting volume spend to leverage savings

Negotiating contracts in international markets – best practices

Attrition in a down economy – how is everyone handling it?

Staff downsizing – how is everyone else doing more with less?

Justification of non-domestic travel and events in a down economy – how is it being addressed?

### **2. Convergence marketing – communication – meetings and events→strategic meetings**

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Meetings as part of the marketing and communication plan: which role in terms of budget allocation?

Venue selection and logistics management

Strategic meetings management – secrets for success

How to measure success post event?

### **3. What you should be watching in the next 12 months, or six at least**

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Trends in meeting structures, effectiveness and impact on company objectives: ie number of participants, length, schedule etc

Corporates: which are the biggest issues that suppliers have been facing in recent months and will be facing in the next months?

Green key investments in the meetings industry – hype or an economic need?

### **4. My daughter has 720 friends...and she's 12 years old!**

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Investments in e-learning, just that or combined with social learning?

Philips investment in >20 videoconferencing systems all over the world

Digital advertising – how is it impacting our industry?

Virtual meetings versus face-to-face meetings

Social media – how do you use them for your meetings and events?

### **Group 1**

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This group chose the set of topics concerning the economy and focused on business drivers and the need to understand the needs of the organisation, its roles and objectives. They want senior management to drive that but also for some of the people to whom they outsource tactical aspects of the meeting to come in as high-level thinkers to partner with company executives to drive the objectives, the business and the outcome. "For example," said the spokesperson, "when we talk to hotels they sell real estate. But we don't want to know the number of rooms they have. We want them to start thinking and help with the outcome of our business. The same with some of our third parties such as George P Johnson and MCI. We want them to come in and strategise with us, understand what our goals are and drive to those outcomes for the future." They also discussed investment in outcomes and the results of meetings.

They expect higher creativity and higher skill levels from suppliers in general. "Suppliers who come in to help us are being looked on as an extended workforce. The pressure's on them to be creative in driving our goals and objectives." The group sees this as a new development but one that is important. They also believe there is a void between their tactical and their strategic people which needs to be bridged.

They looked at human resource costs, people being charged to do more with less and working very long hours, so work-life balance isn't very balanced.

On the subject of non-domestic events, they said India has an interesting problem because of the growth there. They are spending more money internally and can do business outside India much less expensively.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, they said they are organising smaller meetings focused on very specific topics and measuring the outcomes is important. "If it's not going to drive outcomes or meet objectives, then we're not going to do these meetings."

Are green meetings a fad or something that is sustainable? The group agreed it's important to be socially responsible but, for the time being, in countries such as the US or India, management of natural resources such as water and air is antiquated and could be disastrous if it is not managed better. "At the moment it's a burden for us to be environmentally responsible but it's going to make money for us and drive business in some of our companies."

A member of the group added that although the people in the room came from different continents and different backgrounds, the trends they are observing, such as more business knowledge, more added value, less acting on a tactical level, are very similar and converging in the same direction.

### **Group 2**

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This group looked at staff downsizing, outsourcing models, how customers are going to react when dealing with third parties instead of corporate staff and the problems of working with people with little experience or knowledge of the industry. "A lot of our knowledge is leaving, as we are all aware. Probably half the people who were in the industry three years ago are in it now," said the spokesperson.

They had talked about intern development and bringing in college students for mentoring with experienced planners to better function in the business in the future. This included looking for students to help develop the use of social media, that is, marketing students rather than meetings or hospitality students.

This group also identified a need for:

- A better education policy to teach meetings management.
- A culture that interacts meeting departments with senior management, "so we're all on the same page. We don't seem to communicate with senior management so how can we have a successful programme if we don't know what senior management wants."
- Ways to increase and add to the culture by networking together, using and identifying third parties that have substantial buying power around the world – "We're losing our buying power by decentralising."
- An ability to "reinvent ourselves" to adapt to the changing environment. A particular conference lost 50 per cent of attendees within a year – what did it do that caused that?
- Cut back work to only what's necessary; focus on the main topics.

Justification of non-domestic travel and events: this is a good time to look outside your country because the pricing is right – "If you want to go somewhere you've never been to before, now's the time." You can also save on costs and they had some examples of this. A company moved a meeting that had been held in Miami every year to Jacksonville, because they were worried about Miami's (glamorous) image – in the event it was just as successful. Another meeting moved from Boston to Pittsburgh and was also as successful as ever although costs were much lower. But, the spokesperson added, if we hold a meeting in Hawaii rather than Pittsburgh, for example, we need to be able to create an ROI and articulate the value of the meeting and the added value of the destination – it's a matter of education.

Social media: you need to track its use and manage it properly; otherwise there can be problems. Among the benefits is the flow of energy which keeps the information and conversation going after the meeting ends and gives senior management a better understanding of what thoughts of their people really were. But you need to set, shape and serve the message to have control of it.

As a postscript on the subject of interns and opportunities in the future, Eric Rozenberg reminded delegates that more hotels, congress venues and agencies are opening all over the world and so far there are not enough people to operate them.

### **Group 3**

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This group talked a lot about the economy and the value of meetings and measurement as they were relevant to everyone. "We need to make sure we're being proactive when we're doing measurement," the spokesperson reported. "A lot of the time we're measuring post-meeting whereas we really need to develop objectives before we even start the meeting."

They said many types of meeting are not measured, eg sales meetings, as they feel they know intuitively that they will educate the sales force staff and increase sales, but they should be measured. There is no need to spend time measuring smaller meetings but the bigger the meeting, the more measurement is needed. Ideally, they said they would like a measurement template but realised outcomes varied from meeting to meeting and company to company, so it is a very challenging business.

They looked at the need to consolidate meetings spend. Some companies are very successful at this while others are struggling. It's challenging if you have a decentralised system and different people are organising meetings and it's also hard to get figures from their various accounts systems.

On the subject of downsizing, an example was given of a company which had stopped internal training at offsite hotels and brought it in-house. The money saved had gone towards offering more educational content and to the internal catering company. The downside of this is that people can be distracted and go back to their offices, "so there is something to be said for getting them to a chalet in the Alps where their cell phones don't work". The group was undecided as to what the norm would be for training in the future.

However, they were sure that virtual technology will become the new norm. Today's technologies such as Cisco's TelePresence are really effective, creating the impression you really are in the same room as other people. They also felt virtual meetings can increase attendance at face-to-face meetings as seeing some great presentations on the website could spur people on to be there in person the following year.

Eric Rozenberg agreed that virtual meetings are very good if you want to deliver information only but, when it comes to interacting, discussing and negotiating, people want to be face to face. "What is the right mix will be a very interesting question to discuss in the future," he said.

### **Group 4**

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This group chose to discuss convergence and the shifting roles in strategic meetings management. "There is obviously a very strong desire for meetings and conventions to be at the table to partner with procurement and to be established as a component of an organisation's overall success strategy," said the spokesperson. "However, we are noting that some SMMPs (strategic meetings management programmes) appear to be hitting a glass ceiling and getting stuck in procurement as opposed to being involved in that precious content discussion which is over in marketing or communications." Some organisations are doing it very well whereas others, especially very large organisations, are having problems breaking through.

One of the group had coined the phrase 'business genealogy', that is establishing a measurement of how business relationships develop results, possibly over a long term, and how meetings can be part of that.

Looking at convergence from a completely different angle, they felt there are far too many meetings industry associations and that maybe they should converge and cooperate more effectively. "How do you manage time to play in all these sand boxes? How do suppliers support them effectively? How do meeting professionals support them in terms of volunteering, education and time commitment?" They felt that, as many of these organisations are involved in documenting return on investment and on objectives, more cooperation between them would produce more cohesion and clarity on the subject of measurement.

Switching gears entirely, they talked about a desire for destinations to deliver local intellectual capital to meetings. If local suppliers could connect planners with an important organisation or company in the area, the additional local intellectual content it could bring would help drive the content of the meeting.

They also discussed compliance, meetings industry regulation and government regulation. They had no solutions but had identified this as an issue which impacted their activities.

## **Conclusions**

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Summing up, Eric Rozenberg said the common point to that arose from the Forum was that meetings mean business. Other key points he had observed were:

- Logistics have to be perfect
- CSR is here to stay
- The industry is changing because of the economy, technology and the need to justify what we do
- We are there to support the corporation and align meetings with its strategies and objectives
- We will have a seat at the table if we come with the figures, with the ROI and if we come by proving that what we're doing is helping the corporation - I'm sure, then, everybody will listen!