

Iceland - an emerging player in the meetings industry

Gunnar Rafn Birgisson

Managing Director, Owner Atlantik



Are we playing to win in the MICE market?

- In 1904 we got our first fishing trawler.
- In 2011 we are expecting the new Conference Centre.
- The TRH can possibly do as much for tourism as the trawler did for our fishing industry at the beginning of last century.



What we can learn from other industries?

- In travel you need both the patience and care which is vital in agriculture. You have to be a “long distance runner”
- And you need to leap into action and “run like hell” when you have emerging projects just as you need to process the fish coming ashore before it turns bad on you



Is MICE really important?

- When new investments are planned our industry is sometimes “taken hostage” and projects justified on the basis of benefits to our industry without even asking us.
- Sometimes the politicians talk about us in their speeches as the 2nd most important industry in Iceland, but at the same time think we can excel without real support.



MICE an excuse or a valid reason for building the TRH?

- The City Theater
- Haskolabio movie theater extension
- Höfði House
- Culture House
- TRH ?
 - Who will decide priority?
 - Opera is now at home in the house
 - Is there a contract between culture and business?



Where do we stand today?

- Iceland Convention Bureau was founded some 15 years ago but we are near the starting line.
- The people in our industry today are still belonging to a group of pioneers in our country.
- The Conference Centre (TRH) calls for changing times, new action and ideas.
- We all have the ability to develop from ducklings into beautiful swans.



Our weaknesses

- Budgets are small – ICIB – and elsewhere
- Fragmented market with many suppliers competing.
- Iceland: 10 companies 0 convention centres. Germany: 48 companies and 42 conference centres.
- Small capacities and uneven infrastructure
- Small domestic market
- Limited frequency and capacity of connecting flights
- Limitations of seasons
- Are we trustworthy?
- More



Our Strengths

- Iceland's Image (in spite of recent events)
 - Safe, Politically stable, Peaceful, Exotic
- New destination for meetings market
 - 4300 + ICCA events not been to Iceland yet.
- Focus on nature
- Centrally located between continents for international events
- Currently affordable due to weak ISK
- More..



What can Iceland do to achieve change?

- Analyse the market and conduct market research
- Identify the clients that appeal to us and go after them, don't wait for them to find us.
- Invest at the same time in infrastructure and marketing and sales.
- Streamline services and build consistency
- Develop new products that fit the picture



What can Iceland do to achieve change?

- Identify and eliminate bottlenecks
- Take advantage of international news and follow up free press with paid advertising
- Bring the local companies closer together
- Build and cherish relationships and trust
- Be patient and consistent
- Do not expect miracles overnight



What can Iceland do to achieve change?

- Communicate the importance of the industry to the public and to the authorities – jobs – turnover.
- Make every Icelander participate in the marketing and sale of Iceland as a meeting destination – we are all ambassadors and we all love our destination
- Exceed the expectations of our clients and guests
- Educate and motivate – build and train our combat field soldiers..
- Don't be afraid to be different or unique



How this can appeal to future leaders:

- It is a growth industry and with new opportunities
- Export Industry and a priority in the years to come in Iceland
- Working for the benefit of your country as a whole
- New industry and you can have a say in further development of the business
- Labour intensive and good opportunities to grow as an individual within the field



The positive sides of being in the MICE business:

- Diverse and constant new challenges
- Demanding, dynamic and exciting
- Constant interaction with people
 - both suppliers and clients alike
- Often instant feedback and gratification
- International experience and connections
- Diverse talents are needed



Why work in the MICE industry?

- A lot yet to be accomplished in Iceland and you can leave your footsteps in the ground
- Sometimes with a spark of glamour
- Can possibly enjoy things in life that are a part of your job, but perhaps considered luxury by others
- You are working with the best in the field
- Addictive – you either love it or hate it



The “negative” side of being in the MICE business

- Often long and irregular hours – look elsewhere if you are only “working 9-5”
- Constantly fighting deadlines and stress
- Servicing the “good, bad and the ugly”
- Uneven balance between family life and work
- Salaries were frequently better elsewhere
- People don’t understand what you really do



How this can appeal to future leaders:

- Creativity and strategic thinking is important
- It is not a JOB
- It is not a CAREER
- It is a LIFESTYLE



Your life in the MICE market

- We hope to see you building this industry with us and we would like to see you on our team, but....
- If you are merely looking for a JOB, don't enter the MICE business...
- At least not with Atlantik.... 😊

