



Sample Meetings Industry Article

The following article can be adapted for local use by inserting local community facts and figures in the appropriate places. Such articles may be placed in community media or used in “special sections” that can be created for events such as a Meetings Industry Week.

Meetings and Conventions: Touching Everyone’s Life

Here’s an industry you should know about:

Meetings and conventions have been around so long that they are often thought of as something that just happens without much effort on anyone’s part. In fact, the convention business is one of the most competitive in the world, with events won only through a strong combination of location, facilities, services and marketing skills. Every city that knows about the benefits a congress or convention can bring is trying to get more of this kind of business—and as a member of such a community, there are three very good reasons why you should have some idea of what this rapidly growing industry is all about;

The first is that meetings and conventions are a big factor in the local economy, and one with even bigger potential for the future. Here in (city name) they’re a big revenue earner, with annual economic impacts of (economic figure). They spin off business to almost every sector and region of the province. And they’re one of the “cleanest” industries imaginable, providing us with a means to capitalize on the cultural and community qualities we want to preserve for ourselves.

The second reason is because whether you know it or not, conventions play a critical role in the rest of your life. They’re a big part of how technology, communications, education and the professions grow and evolve. They attract new investment. They bring in the latest medical advances. They attract the very latest and best in every area of human development to our doorstep, and give us the chance to share our own achievements with the rest of the world. And in a time where global understanding seems more important than ever, they

provide a forum for nations and groups to come together and deal with the things that really count. But all this isn't something we can take for granted—and that's the third reason you should know more about our industry. Every major city in the world has figured out the benefits to be had from a healthy meetings industry, and all are competing ferociously to get a bigger share of the available business. Without the facilities to accommodate ever more demanding events and the determination to win the business, we'll lose all those benefits to our competitors—and that list is growing every day.

Delegates are very special visitors:

There are many different kinds of visitors, and each have their own impacts on the places they visit. In purely economic terms, convention delegates are in a class by themselves; in fact, meetings and convention participants are generally the highest per capita revenue generators of any category of visitors, with spending that is often 2-3 times as much as leisure tourists.

Global industry organizations estimate that the value of the more than one million meetings held annually throughout the world is about (convert figure of \$US 42 billion to local currency). And if that isn't enough to get your attention, consider that the industry is typically one of the most stable forms of tourism during global disruptions such as we've seen over the past few years.

All this spending spreads into practically every sector of the economy, and many different areas surrounding the host city. The reason is that conventions require many different kinds of services and supplies, not just to meet the needs of delegates but to stage the actual event itself.

The benefits get well distributed:

A delegate needs a place to stay, a place to meet and the means to get to the event and get home. That means hotels, convention centres and transportation spending. But these are only the beginning.

A convention is a highly complex enterprise that uses dozens of services to deliver the right kind of experience. Event organizers, audio visual companies, lighting specialists, decorators, communications suppliers, printers, security companies—these are only a few of the groups that get involved in staging even a modest event.

Then there's all the activity that surrounds the event; things like banquets, special presentations, side trips and entertainment. Convention centres where these events take place are often one of the largest food and beverage users in the area because of the number of meal functions they serve. Similarly, they are huge users of local services from maintenance and security to technical and communications.

Delegates are tourists, too!

And how about when the sessions are over? That's when restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues and taxis feel the impact. In fact, a large proportion of the expenditures by non-resident convention visitors are spent on things other than accommodation. And these non-resident expenditures are often "new" money coming into the community from outside.

Convention delegates also typically engage in what's known as "pre and post" travel, adding a few extra days onto their schedule for side trips to take in the local area—and some, particularly those from outside the country, take much more. As a group, convention delegates are amongst the most sophisticated of travelers, having often been to many different places in the world, and are often on the lookout for new opportunities and experiences.

In fact, the opportunity to have a better look at the host destination is routinely reported as one of the greatest factors in attracting delegates to a particular location. This means that regions well beyond the convention location can benefit as much as the host city.

What else do conventions bring to a community?

From the community standpoint, this isn't just about money. In fact, meetings, conventions and exhibitions offer other community benefits that are often well beyond the direct financial impacts.

Delegates don't just bring their credit cards—they also bring knowledge and expertise from all over the world, and much of this is available to local audiences that would otherwise never get to see it. Medical conferences, for example, often bring the very latest in research and practices right into the community—where it is much more accessible to local practitioners. At the same time, it creates better opportunities for local professionals to get exposure for their own work to top global experts.

Meetings and conventions also attract attention to a city—and can help promote everything from trade and investment to long-term tourism. If delegates like what they see, they often come back—as tourists, as investors and often even as residents! And typically, these are people who would never even get to see (your city), were it not for attending the event!

Finally, meetings and conventions act as showcases for local products, technology, culture and services. In this way, a host city gets more exposure for what it does and what it produces—again, simply as a result of hosting an event that attracts what is often a world-wide audience.

And even if you don't benefit directly, you still benefit. And that's because of something that few of us ever think of as a benefit at all: taxes!

All this delegate spending generates large amounts of tax revenue, and while these often come from non-residents, the benefits go to those of us who live here. The result is that delegates from elsewhere help pay for many of the services we enjoy as residents—an important benefit from a business that few people know much about.

We need your help!

The meetings industry is big business, with big benefits—but because it's made up of a diverse group that includes many different business sectors, it's often not as visible as many other industries. However, we're worth knowing about—because in order to keep all those benefits growing, we need your help, in a number of ways;

First, we need you to be aware of who we are and what we do. As we said, this is an industry that only thrives when it is understood and supported by its community.

Second, we need your support for specific initiatives that are needed from time to time to help maintain our competitiveness. This can involve an investment by the community, whether in new facilities and technology or simply an upgrade to what we have now—but it's an investment that pays big dividends!

Finally, you need to know that you're a part of the product! In fact, the support and friendliness of the local community is a big factor in defining a great convention destination. By helping us maintain our city's reputation, you're helping yourself to all the benefits that conventions bring.

So the next time you see a convention delegate, be sure you make them feel welcome—because whether you know it or not, you're sharing in the benefits they bring!

