

When the pressure's off, keep up the pressure

By Leigh Harry, JMIC President and Chief Executive, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre.

With some improvement evident in the global economy, the meetings industry is again showing its resiliency and adaptability with signs of recovery on many fronts.

However, that may just make this the most dangerous of times for industry advocacy. There is a natural tendency to respond to the positive news with relief while abandoning the serious efforts needed to enhance the industry's profile. Given what has happened over the past few years, that would be a mistake. The fact that meetings came into disrepute so quickly in the face of recession shows we have an image problem – and this situation could easily rise again.

Many governments have curtailed meeting activities with accompanying restrictions in business travel. At the same time, there are ongoing calls for fewer meetings.

Meanwhile, webinars, webcasting and other forms of remote meetings have gained traction, and while they may have actually helped enhance many meetings, in time they may become more of a competitor.

Governments and corporations



JOINT MEETING INDUSTRY COUNCIL

www.themeetingsindustry.org

seeking cost savings can cut meetings-related travel in the name of sustainability – and the technology to help them do so is improving every day.

All these are indications that there is still a lack of appreciation for the fundamental role that meetings, conventions, exhibitions and related activities play in overall economic growth and development.

On the positive side, a period of recovery is the best possible time to tell our story – we can point to business growth and expansion instead of declines. We are far better able to show why our sector has value, and why it generates value for other parts of the economy.

Fortunately, industry organisations are trying to help keep the momentum going. There are also new research and evaluation

programs providing a unified approach to measuring both the economic and outcome values of the industry. But like all communications activities, the best results are achieved at a local level where the industry has a direct effect, such as growth in jobs, spending, social benefits and professional advancement.

The Joint Meetings Industry Council is continuing to support such initiatives by developing materials, messages and strategies. It is also working to pull together industry-wide research in a form that can be used directly by anyone who wants to make a point with their own communities and governments. And it is working to encourage a greater exchange among the wide variety of organisations and interests that make up our diverse industry.

Now is the time for such moves, otherwise we will not be any better prepared to address industry criticism than we were the last time. And given the realities of economic cycles, there will indeed be a next time. 🇺🇸

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS



Don't take the risk

Organisers who have been in the events sector for even a short time understand the importance of risk management.

Those who fail to establish a comprehensive risk management plan or keep up to date with knowledge on OH&S practices are threatening more than just their event's efficiency. Should there be an accident without a plan to quickly fall back on, the severity of the situation will escalate while the organiser's credibility and reputation will take a dive. This will affect the ability to win new contracts and gain authorisation to work at particular sites.

The Exhibition & Event Association of Australasia provides comprehensive risk-management services to its members through the Risk & Safety Management System. The RSM System helps organisers and contractors comply with venue requirements and act in accordance with legislation, while providing access to a qualified risk-management consultant.

Key services and features under the scheme include:

- Risk management awareness and understanding
- Industry-wide accepted templates.
- Risk assessment, Permit to Work and Job Safety Analysis system guidelines and training
- An industry liaison contact point with each state work-cover body, ensuring OH&S requirements are reasonable and consistent
- An industry risk management competency program with a 100-point system that includes insurance details, OH&S policies and other details
- An OH&S manual
- Training programs as required

EEAA members must complete accreditation to the RSM accreditation system once every two years.



MATTHEW PEARCE
President,
Exhibition & Event
Association of
Australasia.
www.eeaa.com.au
www.gotapassion.com.au

You said it...

PCOs should listen and offer value

I am the CEO of a medium-sized not-for-profit organisation with more than 800 members throughout Australia, plus some from overseas.

We have just completed a three-day conference/expo in Adelaide, using our own expertise. We attracted more than 500 attendees with 64 exhibitors.

Therefore, it was interesting to read about the relationship between PCOs and associations (CIM, October). I support the contention that many associations do not know what they need, but level the same criticism at PCOs who, from my experience, are too quick to tell you what you will get from them before asking what you, as a potential client, might need.

Two years ago I looked at engaging a PCO for an event, and 95 per cent of the proposals were 20-plus-page documents full of testimonials and guff about their staff and previous successes. Most missed the key determinant – value. As a CEO, fully handing over an event to a PCO is not easy. After all, up front

we are probably going to have to fork out \$60,000-plus to a supplier.

Perhaps the business events industry could devise an event profile form for PCOs so they do not quote for unnecessary items. It might also help to identify the key details PCOs also need.

Sometimes it seems the PCO is more concerned about protecting/advancing their reputation rather than doing a first-class job for their client.

There is no doubt that many association boards have little idea of what is involved in planning and running a conference. Likewise, too many PCOs seem to have the philosophy of maximising the cost because the percentage stays the same.

A reality check by both groups might prove helpful.

Many PCOs might heighten their chances of winning work if they accepted our shortcomings and listened more attentively to what we need.

– Simon Fitzgerald.

Send contributions for You said it... to editor@rankpub.com.au marked "You said it..." in the subject line. If using a nom-de-plume, please supply name and details for veracity.