

# In search of value

THE JOINT MEETINGS INDUSTRY COUNCIL'S LONDON CONFERENCE EARLIER THIS YEAR ATTEMPTED TO INJECT NEW IMPETUS IN COMMUNICATING THE INDUSTRY'S VALUE PROPOSITION



Leigh Harry

The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) convened an industry-wide conference in London designed to address value questions through the eyes of both meetings 'users' and those charged with communicating the value proposition. JMIC President Leigh Harry speaks about the results of the meeting:

## What did you hope to get out of the conference?

We ended up with three overall outcomes of importance: first a good sense of what kinds of measurements are being used and how effective they are; secondly, some targeted recommendations for how we can move to improve things and, thirdly, expert advice as to how we can best develop and utilise value measures for better communications.

This was only possible because of the wide variety of participation we secured. There were four categories of attendees; first, representatives of international industry associations; secondly, representatives of major client groups who actually organise events; third, a range of academics and professionals engaged in the measurement process and, finally, some media and governmental advisors who represent the interface with some of our most important audiences.

## What information was presented?

A wide range, from perspectives on current government priorities and how these relate to the industry, through

specific techniques and outcomes in value measurement and how organisers see the importance of the meetings they organise.

A common theme was the need to broaden our value definition to incorporate not just the direct spending associated with visiting delegates, but also the benefits in terms of knowledge transfer, economic and professional development, innovation and investment that make up the real reasons people organise meetings and other kinds of business events in the first place.

## What else emerged?

There was a general feeling that there is a growing numbness to big numbers, but many of the 'stories' associated with successful events – the ways they contribute to knowledge, innovation and human development – were immediately understandable and engaging to many of our key audiences.

The focus shifted toward how such benefits can be organised to demonstrate consistent patterns rather than how they can be converted into financial equivalents.

## What were the recommendations?

To determine the variety existing in the various models being used and encourage some form of overall standards or definitions that would result in greater consistency. At the same time, it was suggested that the techniques associated with economic impact measurement needed to be more directly applicable to local requirements.

## Resolutions:

- To carry out inventory/comparative analysis of existing valuation models and develop a means for achieving greater consistency among these;
- To encourage the development of local applications for economic impact models in order to generate better data for use in individual communities;
- To create a protocol for assembling value-added 'output' values with emphasis on the use of case studies and examples to illustrate major areas of benefit
- To identify key audiences along with their priority information requirements and develop a communications 'tool kit' to assist in this process
- To encourage event owners to assume a more active role in measuring and communicating value.

There was a need identified to assemble a database of documented examples in a variety of categories that could be used as case studies and to identify key audiences, along with the specific language and formats required to address each.

## Where do you go from here?

We need to make sure there is broad support for the initiatives. ■

## The Joint Meetings Industry Council

was established in 1978 as a vehicle for creating a forum for the exchange of information and perspectives among international associations engaged in aspects of the meetings industry.