



:: Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC)

JMIC (the Joint Meetings Industry Council) was established in 1978 to provide a communications link amongst international associations engaged in the Meetings Industry and a means of collectively reviewing industry conditions and strategies and has met for this purpose twice annually since then. Today, JMIC's objectives are:

- To maintain a forum for the exchange of information and expertise amongst organisations that represent the various sectors of the Meetings Industry;
- To support and carry out activities that promote the profile of the Meetings Industry as a distinct and important part of the global economy.
- To provide a collective voice for the industry in areas of overall concern, and
- To formally recognise the achievements of individuals who have successfully advanced the positioning and professionalism of the industry on an international basis.

The Council consists of its member associations. At present, these are **AIPC** (the International Association of Congress Centres); **COCAL** (the Latin American Confederation of PCO and Related Companies); **DMAI** (Destination Marketing Association International); **ECM** (European Cities Marketing); **EFAPCO** (the European Federation of Associations of Professional Congress Organisers); **EVVC** (the European Association of Event Centres); **IAPCO** (the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers); **ICCA** (the International Congress and Convention Association); **MPI** (Meeting Professionals International); **PCMA** (the Professional Convention Association Management Association); **SITE** (the Society of Incentive & Travel Executives) and **UFI** (the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry).

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An improving economy is no time for apathy

With some improvement evident in the global economy, the meetings industry is again demonstrating its resilience and adaptability with corresponding signs of recovery on many fronts. But that may just make this the most dangerous of times for industry advocacy, still desperately needed in many parts of the world.

There is a natural tendency to respond to the first bits of positive news with a sigh of relief and a turning of attention to the business at hand. That would be a mistake.

The fact that meetings and conventions came into disrepute so quickly in the face of recession clearly demonstrated that we have an image problem – and one that could easily recur under similar circumstances in the future.

The kinds of pressures meetings and conventions came under during the recession are still playing out on a number of fronts. Many governments, most notably those in the US and the UK, have recently announced major cuts in their meeting activities and accompanying restrictions in business travel. At the same time, there are ongoing calls for reduction in meeting activities in the name of sustainability.

And let's not forget the growing role of alternatives driven by improvements in communications technology. While web-based activities like webinars, webcasting and other forms of remote meetings may have actually helped enhance many meetings so far, they may in time become more like competitors.

All this is simply a demonstration of the fact that there is still a lack of appreciation for the fundamental role that meetings and other related activities play in economic growth and development. Many groups still see us as a diversion, or a form of entertainment rather than a key element in economic recovery.

On the positive side, a time of recovery is the best possible time to tell our story because we have a much more powerful story to tell. When we can point to business growth and expansion instead of declines we are much better able to show why our sector has value. However, because it feels like the pressure has subsided, we are least likely to devote time to communications.

Fortunately, there are efforts under way by industry organisations which will help keep the momentum going. There are also new research and evaluation programmes for measuring the economic and outcome values of the industry.

But like all communications activities, the best results are achieved on a local basis where what we as an industry accomplish is felt most directly. Measures of jobs, spending, social benefits and professional advancement are at their strongest when people see that they are being delivered right in their own backyards.

JMIC – the Joint Meetings Industry Council – is continuing to support such initiatives by developing materials, messages and strategies that can be applied at the local level. It is also working to pull together industry-wide research in a form that is more directly usable by anyone who has an argument to make with their own communities and governments.

Now is the time to make this kind of effort – because unless we do, we won't be any better prepared next time to address industry criticism than we were the last time. And given the realities of economic cycles, there will indeed be a next time!

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