The study ‘Value Measurement beyond Tourism’ and its communication platform “The Iceberg”, initiated by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC), are to show the value of meetings beyond travel and local spendings by the delegates. Rod Cameron, JMIC’s Executive Director, on aims and obstacles for the project.

Who came first up with the idea for this worldwide study and what are the biggest challenges?
Rod Cameron: The focus on value measurement for the industry was initially a product of Joint Meetings Industry Council members realizing—particularly in the face of the last economic crisis—that we needed to expand the value proposition from one simply based on spending by delegates and organizers. This led to a series of conferences on value measurement and advocacy, and at the most recent one in Paris in 2015, it was agreed that we should pursue a rigorous process of documenting and wherever possible measuring examples of these broader values that could be used as examples in support of our value arguments to governments and communities.

How do you find suitable participants and how do you proceed with them — what is their motivation to participate?
The biggest challenge is and has been that events that took place in the past did not generally measure the kinds of outputs the study is looking to document. However, we have succeeded in identifying a wide range of the types of benefits that result from events like meetings, conventions and exhibitions. The entire industry has now accepted the importance of being able to identify and document these kinds of broader benefits, the greatest motivation for participants is to be able to show leadership in the industry and to be better able to use the results for their own advocacy activities in their respective communities.

To measure the impact of a conference on long term outcomes sounds a bit like a fantastic idea to me. How difficult was it to find a suitable approach?
It was always known that this would be a challenging process, particularly as compared with the economic impact measurements which had become a standard as they were relatively simple to do. However this ignored the much more important outcome benefits — the real reason these events take place — and so a change of focus was required. It was for this reason that we partnered with a major university who in turn set up an academic panel to assist in the development process, as this approach would lend the necessary level of credibility to the results.

When exactly will the results of the study be published and how?
We will be putting all case studies on the JMIC website and supplying them as well to “The Iceberg” for broader promotion. We will also be communicating results directly to industry members with the hope they will be able to use them in their own advocacy initiatives.

How many case studies will there be in 2017?
We are targeting 6 documented case studies by the end of the year as approved by the Academic Panel.

For you personally, what is the most compelling example of how conferences changed and shaped the world you have found so far?
It’s the role events play in creating networks that facilitate interactions and linkages that would never happen otherwise—we think of an event as something that takes place and comes to an end but it’s what results in terms of long term productive relationships in every imaginable area and make possible advances that no individual could ever achieve on their own.

www.the-iceberg.org

INTERVIEW FRANK WEWODA

Challen
Presentation to Politician’s

Rod Cameron, JMIC’s Executive Director

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