

JOINT APPROACH

Trends, threats and the evolution of the global meetings industry with Joachim Koenig, President of the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC)

Can you tell us more about the JMIC Association and its global reach?

JK: JMIC has existed for more than 50 years, first as simply a forum for industry exchange and subsequently to promote greater cooperation, achieve consensus on important industry issues and recognise excellence. Today, our primary focus is on expanding awareness of the industry and its values and creating the tools to support a more credible and consistent message. We currently have 19 members and partners, which together represent all the major international associations and regions active in the industry worldwide.

What are the current trends that you're seeing within the meetings industry?

JK: For the industry overall, there are two big issues. The first is a growing awareness of this industry as a key factor in most of today's top economic and community development concerns, including knowledge and innovation, economic growth and diversification, academic and professional enhancement and inward investment. These make the industry of critical importance, which goes far beyond the traditional tourism role that has characterised this area for so long. Such an understanding has all kinds of implications for how the industry presents itself and how governments regard its importance.

The second of these is the impact of global terrorist-inspired incidents, and the potential these have for disrupting events and the travel involved in accessing them. This is an immediate concern that we must respond to.

How can JMIC help address these concerns?

JK: Overall, JMIC provides a way for the industry to respond to the needs, as outlined, in a consistent and integrated way, which is often important given that in many respects we are something of a fragmented sector with many different elements, all with slightly different objectives. To do this, we need consensus, and achieving that – through ongoing industry interactions, the staging of industry conferences and the development of consistent messages and materials for member use – has become a top priority for JMIC. In addition, we are increasingly engaging with



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industry leaders and academic institutions to develop better and more credible measures.

What does the meetings industry have to do in order to be recognised as a transcendental industry for governments?

JK: Our experience has been that governments have no difficulty understanding the broader role of the industry in economic and social development once the facts are put before them. However, we have had to go through something of a transition of our own to organise these arguments and come up with the documentation to support them, and this job is far from complete. Now that we are finally getting these required resources we need to do a better job of reaching out to governments at all levels with our story,

What plans does JMIC have for the near future?

JK: We need to enhance industry unity, ensure consistency and credibility in our messaging and seek both vehicles and allies for delivering and documenting our industry values in ways that will resonate with governments. That means making sure our arguments relate directly to their own policy issues rather than ours, and that is the next big challenge we have to overcome.

To do all this we will need a lot of support from within the industry itself, not simply as a matter of resources, but because individual industry members are best positioned to understand and access government representatives in their respective communities and, in the end, will benefit most from the results. ◻



JOINT MEETINGS INDUSTRY COUNCIL

The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) is an organisation that represents the combined interests of 16 international Meetings Industry associations. It has provided a forum for information exchange amongst industry groups for over 50 years and has recently become more engaged in the process of articulating and delivering industry messages to wider community and governmental audiences as well as developing better mechanisms for documenting the value of the industry.

For further information please visit themeetingsindustry.org