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The Age of Continuous Connection

The title of this letter is not from us, unfortunately, but it's a good extension of the main topic of this issue, in which we explore what associations are doing to transform themselves digitally.

'The Age of Continuous Connection' is the title of an article recently featured in *Harvard Business Review* by Nicolaj Siggelkow and Christian Terwiesch, co-directors of Wharton's Mack Institute for Innovation Management. They argue that the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT) changed the way we interact with objects around us. Devices are no longer standalone devices but instead have become connected objects. They sense the world and they exchange information in a network, and they are always connected, creating for companies a strong relationship with customers thanks to frequent digital interactions, fewer frictions and continuous monitoring of users' behaviors.

The piece inspired some exciting new strategies to stay ahead of the competition. But we think it only scratches the surface of what is possible when it comes to associations.

Indeed, if you embrace a world in which you are continuously connected to your members and stakeholders, and you rethink your

business model, you will surge ahead. If you are slow to respond, you will fall behind. We are moving away from a scenario in which you have a periodic dialogue with your members into one in which you are continuously engaged with them.

The continuous connection opens, in this regard, new opportunities, and technology can change the way associations gain feedback about their target audience - they can now understand their members' behaviors through continuous research and big data. This scenario unleashes big opportunities for a deeper understanding of their needs - in other words for understanding how you can stay relevant to them - and for anticipating and predicting future evolution.

In this context, the challenge in the continuous connection is not about how to use technology - which has become a necessity and a given - but how to find a way to develop and manage a continuous relationship with your members. If you can find the key to this, and adopt a planned strategy for your members to realize they can't do without your input and insights, you will, for sure, stay ahead of the curve and become sustainable on the long-term.



Rémi Dève

Founder & Chief Editor



Cécile Volz

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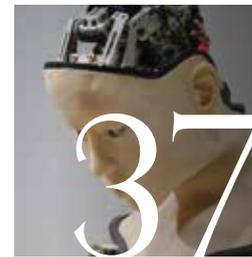
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Speaking the Language of Leadership

The inaugural AC Forum and Leading Centres of Europe (LCE) collaborative learning experience in July took the theme of the language of leadership, with delegates joining forces to improve their communication skills.

Words Chantelle Dietz

Clear, authentic communication is essential in the associations sector, so mastering how to get your message across effectively is a must - especially for those in leadership roles. The first AC Forum and Leading Centres of Europe (LCE) collaborative learning experience from 1-2 July united a small group of 20 members from both organisations to spend two days at the

Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow honing their communication skills.

The event marked the culmination of months of planning and discussions between the two bodies, which started with a speculative phone call. "AC Forum was looking for new avenues to collaborate with industry partners. They contacted the SEC to discuss possible partnerships, and I suggested

that the Leading Centres of Europe might be interested. After a number of exploratory conversations, we came up with the idea of a long-term partnership focused on a one or two-day educational event, with content that was of mutual benefit. By learning together, we build even greater industry insight from which we all benefit," says Kathleen Warden, Director of Conference Sales at the SEC.



PARTICIPANTS ARRIVING AT THE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

PINK ELEPHANT

The content of the inaugural event was designed to improve the performance of the individuals in both their business and personal lives through learning the 'language of leadership'. Both organisations agreed the theme would offer value to their respective members, and would provide a strong start to their events partnership: "We wanted to have something that was beneficial for both the AC Forum members and the LCE attendees," explains Carola van der Hoeft, Secretary of the AC Forum and COO & Congress Director at the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP). "For me it was a well-invested time to be with everyone - meeting my peers, networking, learning and reconnecting with all the members."

After arriving at the SEC Campus and checking into the on-site hotel, delegates enjoyed a brief welcome reception before getting down to business. Glasgow-based communications consultancy Pink Elephant, led the learning experience, beginning with an introduction to 'the golden rules of communication' - a set of rules with a purpose of helping those that use them to communicate effectively and with confidence, no matter what the situation. "The most important one for me was 'get to the point quickly' - within the first seven seconds of your communication ideally," says van der Hoeft. "Also, eliminate 'pink elephants' from your communication. We learned that 'pink elephants' are unnecessary negatives," she adds.

The second day of the event was all about delegates putting what they had learnt into action. Will Whitehorn, chairman of the SEC, kicked off the morning with an inspirational breakfast talk. In it he spoke about the value and importance of brand and innovation, drawing on his experience working with major brands including his time as president of Virgin Galactic and as a special advisor to Sir Richard Branson.

Delegates were split up into pairs - with one LCE representative and one AC Forum representative - and interviewed on pre-agreed scenarios relevant to their working environment, giving them the opportunity to practise their new skills. "They really had to trust each other to manage their way through the testing interviews," says Warden. "It also helped to break down the sense of buyer and supplier - everyone was equal, and that felt like true partnership."

Leading Centres of Europe members

- RAI Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona (CCIB), Barcelona, Spain
- PALEXPO, Geneva, Switzerland
- Scottish Event Campus (SEC), Glasgow, UK
- Lisbon Congress Centre (CCL), Lisbon, Portugal
- MiCo MILANO, Milan, Italy
- Internationales Congress Center München (ICM), Munich, Germany
- VIPARIS, Paris, France
- Stockholmsmässan, Stockholm, Sweden
- Austria Center Vienna, Vienna, Austria

www.leadingcentres.com

The interviews were filmed, then played back in front of the whole group to be constructively analysed. "Being interviewed live, and filmed, and critiqued in front of your peers pushed everyone out of their comfort zone. And everyone rose to the challenge," says Warden. By the second round of interviews all of the participants had improved their performance, demonstrating that new knowledge had been acquired and new

skills had been developed. The whole exercise inspired 'true learning': "When you are out of your comfort zone, your primal instincts kick in - fight or flight - and flight was not an option. So everyone had to rise to the occasion and there was a great feeling of achievement from all of the participants," says Warden.

EDUCATIONAL AMBITIONS

The feedback from the first event has been extremely positive, from both sides of the table, as new skills, that will benefit the participants in their business as well as in their personal lives, were learnt collaboratively.

As Adrian Ott, President of the AC Forum, concludes: "The virtual world has developed extensively, and the format in which people want to learn has also changed. As an organisation, we want to link strategic and operational considerations together. Through this experience in Glasgow, AC Forum's educational ambitions came a big step closer towards a natural synergy which fosters peer-to-peer education, innovation by sharing good practice, expanding thinking, and finally, neutrality by providing a forum free from commercial influence."

Plans for the next event are already underway. In October, the collaborative learning experience will travel to Geneva, Lucerne, and Basel and has been specifically designed for senior-level association professionals, with the exception of a featured workshop on congress management geared towards junior members. In 2020, AC Forum and Leading Centres of Europe will organise another workshop in the city of Milan at MiCo MILANO.

More information
www.acforum.net

A Global Focus with a Strategic Plan

Given the fact that BICSI's Vision Statement is to be *"the worldwide preeminent source of information, education and knowledge assessment for the constantly evolving information and communications technology community,"* it's easy to see why the organization would call itself a truly global association. In this particular case, being global is the direct result of a clear, planned strategy, as explains Paul Weintraub, CAE, Vice President of Global Development & Support at BICSI.

Words Rémi Dévé

Expanding any association globally is a big step that requires careful preparation. In order for the expansion to be successful, it is critically important to develop a thorough plan including objectives, market situation, entry strategy, financial and ROI analysis, goals and measurement. All this is very hard work, yet it comes with great opportunities for growth, such as getting and retaining new members, brand awareness, new products and services, and the possibility of making your organization truly competitive.

ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE

With membership spanning nearly 100 countries, a satellite office in Dubai and affiliate offices in Tokyo and Melbourne, BICSI, whose purpose is to advance the knowledge and success of its members, their customers and the information and communications technology (ICT) industry, has become global surely and rapidly.

"As with any organization, the journey toward becoming a global entity has not been without its challenges, though" says Paul Weintraub. "Language barriers, time zone differences, pricing, and other high-level considerations all require thought and strategy to determine best practices and courses of action when expanding your reach globally. BICSI has approached its entry into global markets by making global a focus of our Board of Directors' Strategic Plan; creating a task force to determine where to focus our efforts;

and developing objective decision matrices and a weighted point system to take a fact-based approach to global expansion."

Establishing a satellite office in Dubai has given BICSI the ability to better service its members and stakeholders who operate on a completely different time schedule from Florida, where the organization is headquartered. *"That includes Africa, Europe and, of course, the Middle East,"* explains Paul. *"Having support from the Dubai office means customers can call and speak with someone who can assist them during their normal business hours. It also means that BICSI staff are more "local" to them and more attuned to global concerns, such as differing communication styles, cultural nuances, and the process of relationship building. We have found that opening the Dubai office and having affiliate offices in Japan and Australia, has given BICSI a more global face and local reach."*

In Dubai in particular, DAC, the Dubai Association Centre, has been an indispensable resource in providing local market and cultural insight and "boots on the ground" to BICSI's expansion in the Middle East. *"DAC provided support and a clear, easy-to-understand process we followed when opening our office in Dubai. From there, they provided the required handholding to get things done locally like opening a bank account and establishing mobile telephone accounts, all the way to recruiting and managing of local staff,"* says Weintraub.



The Dubai Association Centre was formed in 2014 as a joint initiative of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) as a “response to the surge in the demand for association engagement in the UAE and the Middle East.” Now, more than 60 associations fall under DAC’s umbrella, which acts as a platform for dialogue and education for associations interested in expanding their presence and activities in the Middle East.

INCREASED DEMAND

There’s no doubt that, if executed properly, globalization can bring your association many benefits, the first and most obvious being getting access to a much larger base of members and participants for your events. If your services are proven added values, you can enjoy increased revenues while at the same time helping an exponentially greater number of people find the answers to the questions or challenges your association helps solve, this way improving your reputation.

In BICSI’s case, because information and communications technology (ICT) is everywhere, there is an increased demand for project design and that’s where the organization’s added values lie. “*There is an ongoing – and even rising – need for skilled digital infrastructure designers*

and installers experienced in Smart Cities and Buildings, Data Centres and Cloud Computing, 5G Cabling Systems, IoT and such are needed more.” says Paul Weintraub. “*BICSI trains and certifies ICT/ELV professionals using BICSI standards and best practices that are recognized worldwide and included in many tender and design documents for a variety of commercial buildings and projects including airports and stadiums.*”

And when asked for a piece of advice he would give an association wanting to ‘internationalize’ itself, Weintraub concludes: “*First and foremost, determine exactly why your association wants to expand globally and what the opportunity cost may be of not doing so. Make sure you gain Board support, and have a global focus included in the Strategic Plan. Remain objective, using decision-making tools including a SWOT Analysis, a points-based and weighted decision matrix, and a lot of fact-based research. Staff should spend time in the region of expansion and learn the local way of doing business. It also greatly helps to have enthusiastic volunteers willing to lend a helping hand in the regions into which you are expanding.*”

This piece is part of the exclusive partnership between Boardroom and the Global Association Hubs Partnership (GAHP), which comes as an innovative response to the increasing decentralisation of international associations, as they look to develop their activities globally. \ www.associationhubs.org

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#MEET4IMPACT

Managing Your Legacy Projects for Maximum Impact

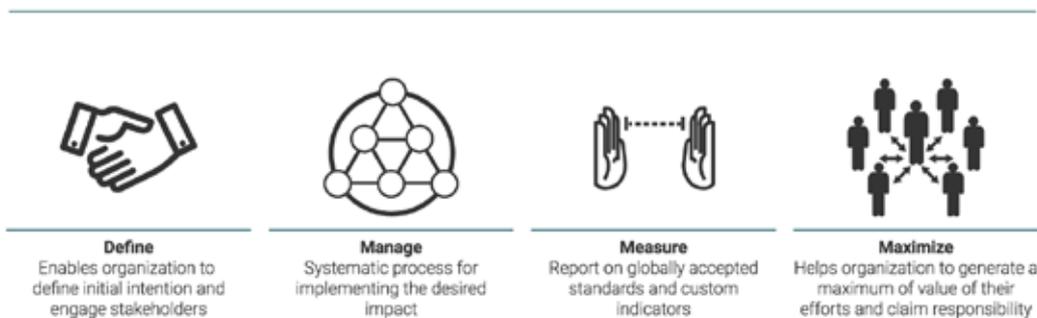
In this fourth installment of our #MEET4IMPACT series, **Geneviève Leclerc** explores the second – out of four – key step needed to achieve a successful impact practice. After defining your initial intention, how do you manage your social impact project? How do you move from theory to action?

When discussing legacy or impact, one is immediately faced with the prevailing discourse that there is an immediate need for measurement. But while impact measurement is necessary to communicate the value generated by one's actions and justify return on investment from partners investing time and money, it is mostly possible as a result of a well-planned and executed impact

management strategy. This article will focus on the key pre-measurement steps that will set the stage for unrolling a robust strategy.

Earlier in July, we discussed how formulating an initial intention of impact with clear desired outcomes would enable an organization to articulate S.M.A.R.T. objectives, while targeting what can be measured and what your organisation can claim

responsibility for. We also outlined the crucial efforts in mapping and mobilizing a broad range of stakeholders who have vested interest in what our organization is trying to achieve, and provided guidelines on how to build a logic model enabling us to go from an initial intention of creating impact to identifying all the necessary steps needed to fulfill our objectives.



A 4-step process is needed to achieve a successful impact practice through

Assign roles and train your stakeholders

When developing a project and wanting to generate measurable outcomes, it is crucial to engage all interested stakeholders to become facilitators, motivated actors that will help us overcome barriers and yield results.

Let's look at a fictitious example of an association working in mental health promotion amongst vulnerable demographic groups. It is holding its annual conference in a country where there is a need to build local capacity in the subject matter, support advocacy efforts, so that local organizations operating in that field achieve sufficient funding, and finally develop better training courses. This particular association wishes to develop and deliver a project in that city that would address those needs and create lasting impact, and ultimately would like to be able to measure and communicate the results of this project to a broad range of interested groups.

When doing a stakeholder mapping exercise, the organization would first identify the small team comprised of representatives from the organization (who owns the event) and the leaders of the local organizing committee and the institutions they represent. The representatives from the city's convention bureau are most likely involved in the project, and potentially the local and regional health authorities as well. The association will also count on the in-house and external professionals involved in delivering and managing the activities around the event.

Then there is a group of stakeholders who are very close to the project and who will be essential in validating various assumptions and initiatives: they are representing the target populations benefitting from the impact of your project and the local or national organizations delivering services to them. In addition, there should be teams tasked with the communication and the sharing of the value around the efforts and the results at various stages of the project, both within the organization and at the level of the local

convention bureau and hosting institutions. And, last but not least, there are what we could call the "investigators", i.e. the individuals involved in data collection and data assessment that will allow the measurement and reporting of the impact.

Each group of stakeholders can be both an enabler and a beneficiary of the impact project, and during the management phase, they would be involved, identifying what their interest is, what they can gain, what they can provide in terms of engagement or resources, and what their role during the project should be. The people directly involved or affected are often the ones that are the most motivated, so your responsibility is to educate them appropriately so that they are comfortable with your objectives, goals, and methodology.

At #MEET4IMPACT, we have developed several formats of stakeholder workshops, or "impact bootcamps" to deliver basic training on what social impact is and engage your leadership, immediate team and stakeholders in interactive learning experiences. We deliver these as part of stand-alone educational activities or of longer-term impact projects. Our workshops offer various levels of capacity-building depending on the audience, their roles and the scope of the project.

In a one-day workshop, participants will gain an overall understanding of an impact & legacy framework for associations and develop the relevant knowledge to identify impact opportunities in their own organization. We will propose areas of focus that an association could consider when wanting to create legacy projects and will provide examples of the type of legacies that could be generated for each area of focus. Our two-day bootcamps empower participants with sufficient capacity to start developing their own impact projects and lay out the right foundations to manage, measure and communicate them. In our three-day bootcamp, we accompany our participants in planning a real impact project and engage their external stakeholders in needs assessment and consensus building exercises.

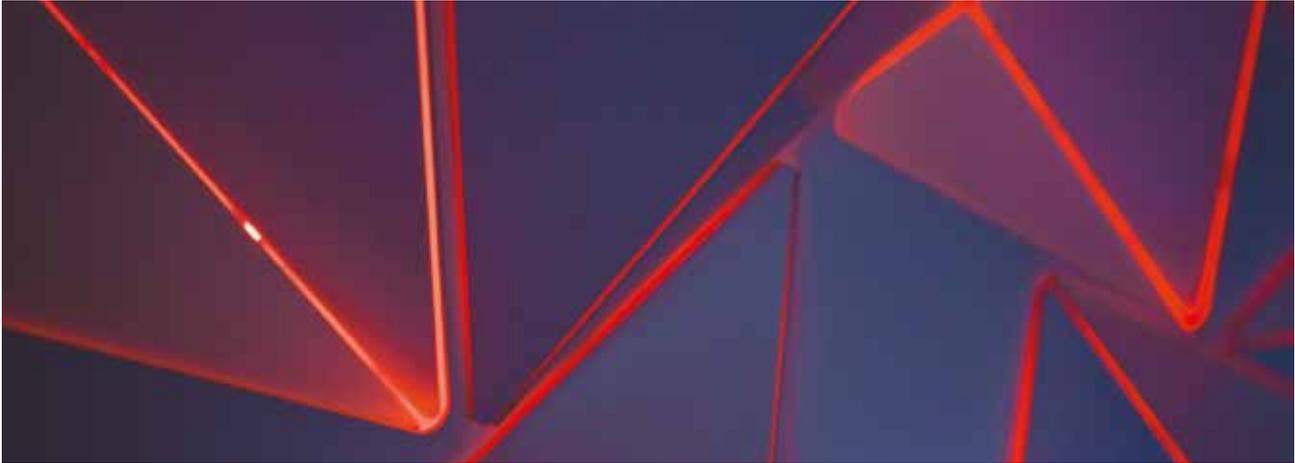
Plan your project with an outcome-focused perspective

When considering developing a project to generate and measure your impact, keep in mind that a social impact approach should be embedded as part of ongoing planning and must complement already existing activities and programs, thus aiming to enhance the mission of your organization.

This means you should build an implementation schedule as well as a communication calendar for your impact project. This will help secure responsibilities so that each stakeholder knows their role, involvement, tasks, the time it will take and the contingency plan if there is a problem. It will also serve to build a story to highlight the value that has been generated by the impact project.

Here, the logic model that you have built in Phase 1 comes handy, as it shows a plausible, clear, logical flow to describe how the planned intervention intends to contribute to the desired change, without any leaps of faith or gaps in logic. The difference between traditional project management as most of us have learned it, and using the logic model to map project steps, is the direction that one adopts when laying out the different steps. In activity-based project management, teams assess resources at hand compared to the outputs they must produce and lay out the activities that are feasible and desirable. In outcome-driven management, project managers are being asked to ensure that their projects are strategically aligned with expectations for very specific outcomes, and the chain is built by working backwards from outcomes to activities.

Which also means that success is not evaluated based on the delivery of the activity (as a vast majority of current initiatives are) but based on its effectiveness at delivering the expected outcomes. Reporting success with traditional performance indicators such as "we held activity or campaign X and Y number of people attended" will no longer be sufficient when one adopts an impact frame of mind. The tracking, evaluation and reporting of



success becomes entirely focused on the change (impact) that was generated, and the activity is a necessary, albeit insufficient, step to achieving this.

Select indicators

Once you have identified the chain of events that the conference will be putting in place, you can identify the potential impacts of these activities, as well as all the “high-impact areas”, i.e. the ones that will yield higher impact for lower effort. These areas are the ones that need to be measured. There are many ways that one can demonstrate that impact has occurred, and a successful legacy project would reveal indicators and results across a spectrum of methods.

We use four major methods to report on the creation of social value, or impact: 1) Storytelling, using qualitative information to relate how changed has happened and how it has affected positively those experiencing it; 2) through indicators that compile quantitative metrics and compare these results over time or against others; 3) quantifying the economic value of your action through generating an increase in well-being, health, quality of life or in any other social gain, done mostly with the help of the Social Return On Investment (SROI) framework;

and 4) using the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its set of indicators on report on the social progress achieved.

Assess and manage risk

Risk management in the context of social impact generation is paramount considering the quantity and diversity of the actors involved as well as the time it takes to collect data. Assessing and mitigating risks is not a one-time occurrence but should be an ongoing and iterative process and requires that one re-evaluates the risks while the project is underway. When assessing potential risks, the organization must emit a hypothesis of the likeliness that the risk occurs and the potential consequences if it does and draft a contingency plan for this.

In the case of a first-time impact project, when initiating practice, we recommend that organizations be particularly diligent in a) determining needs and expectations on the front end, and b) its allocation of resources and responsibilities regarding data collection and analysis at the other end, because this is likely where the biggest risks lie.

Need help in developing your legacy project?

#MEET4IMPACT is a global not-for-profit aiming to build a community passionate about social impact in our sector, helping organisations increase their capacity to generate impact through their activities, deliver more value on their mission and implement positive change.

Keep looking out for updates on social media following the **#MEET4IMPACT** \ **#Associations4impact** \ **#Cities4Impact** keywords; check out www.meet4impact.global; or write to community@meet4impact.global to tell your story.



Aligning International Associations & Local Hosts

Can venues play a valuable role in bridging the divide that sometimes lies between the international associations and local hosts/chapters? This is what wonders **Angeline van den Broecke**, Director of Global Business Development and Marketing, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Local hosts/chapters are often an integral factor in elevating the success of a major international congress. However, the capabilities and experience of local associations can vary wildly. In an ideal world the local host and global association will already be aligned in terms of vision and mission. But there is often a long delivery timeframe between when a bid is won by a destination host and when the congress execution takes place. Another dynamic that influences this relationship is when an intermediary such as an appointed PCO or Core PCO or AMC is involved.

Often the global association organisers, who are often full-time professionals may have different perspectives and expectations than their local counterparts. Host associations, often run by enthusiastic volunteers, may lack regular exposure to the organisation of events of this nature and scale. Communication issues (i.e. cultural and language differences) can also contribute to varied expectations.

BUILDING ENGAGEMENT

Venues can play a meaningful and valuable role in bridging the divide between the international associations and local hosts/chapters. They are often dealing with the local associations/hosts on their national or regional events and have a fairly good understanding of the status of the local association and the primary influences and local players. In addition, interpretation with respect to cultural nuances and local business practice are often an area where the Centre is used as a connector.

In destinations where a city bureau may not exist, such being the case in Kuala Lumpur, the venue is required to often provide a myriad of

destination information and a support interface beyond the norm and to work as a partner, not a supplier. This is one of the reasons the Centre set up the Kuala Lumpur Business Events Alliance (KLCCBEA).

In this respect, the Centre ultimately provides social value; as a partner that maintains a cumulative history, and business intelligence after many years of engagement and execution and client relationship management.

Venues can assist by sharing key learnings and best practices from previous successful events and really get to understand the different complexities and success factors across different demographics, geographies and sector specific demand drivers.

Case in point: the 29th International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) 2019, held at the Centre in July. As the Society of Conservation Biology's (SCB) Executive Director, Dr Debborah Luke, comments: *"ICCB is quite a challenging congress to manage because you have the international organisation trying to guide from their global perspective; the steering committee handling the scientific content; and the local chapter, who are generally the organising committee taking care of the on-ground management and ensuring there is a Malaysian flavour included in the event. Trying to integrate and make sure all three parties are on the same page at the same time can be quite tricky. What we learnt from our experience is making sure you define very clear roles, manage expectations and set realistic outcomes for everybody involved."*

By sharing these kind of insights venues can help ensure global associations and local chapters are aligned. *"We relied heavily on the venue to provide ideas when we needed input and a business perspective beyond the scope of the local host association,"* says Dr Luke. *"This related to how we could connect to local business*

chambers, what innovative ways a previous congress of a similar nature used to boost local participation, and to look at a western vs. a local perspective of the role F&B plays throughout the event. These were just a few examples that helped us to adjust and adopt flexibility once we were on the ground.”

The World Federation of Hemophilia’s (WFH) Director, Congress & Meetings, Jeremias Rodriguez, CMP, who is currently in the process of organising the WFH World Congress 2020 at the Centre, also shares his perspective: “Firstly, use technology to collaborate and share documents to help you communicate in real-time and more effectively. Increasing the number of face-to-face meetings will also help you tremendously to create stronger bonds between parties. Lastly, greater collaboration between the local convention bureau and the chapter is crucial, so they are aware of all the resources available to them.”

In this instance the Centre has really become a marketing and promotions partner of the event and a resource to connect the federation to several local entities and to facilitate some of the engagement when it has been difficult to gain access to the decision maker.

CULTURAL NUANCES

There are a variety of unique characteristics and cultural factors to take into account when organising events in different regions around the world.

As Dr Luke adds, “Local chapters may not have the time and resources to fully analyse the audience and, as a result, cultural norms can be overlooked. For example, in Malaysia we noticed that the variety and amount of food on offer was larger than expected, which caused concerns for some international participants. In Asia, the offering would not be considered out of place, but due to the profile of our attendees it was something we could have altered, or better communicated. In these kinds of scenarios, the venue has the opportunity to play a larger role in offering advice to ensure nothing is missed.”

Of course, knowledge transfer is a two-way street. Insights also have to be passed from local chapters to international associations, and venues can help facilitate this. As the National Cancer Society of Malaysia’s (NCSM) Vice President, Clare Ratnasingham, who was a key member of the national organising committee for the World Cancer Congress 2018, shares: “One of the biggest factors that needs to be addressed by international and national associations alike is cultural differences. Every country or region moves at their own pace. For example, some countries face additional challenges in terms of government or bureaucratic regulations and others deal with the tendency of event registrations being very last minute, amongst many others. As such, there needs to be greater understanding and flexibility towards these differences.”

A SUSTAINABLE LEGACY

By collecting and sharing these golden nuggets of feedback and experience, venues can help educate and guide international associations in developing their communications and relations with local chapters.

The Centre’s General Manager, Alan Pryor, concludes: “Like any relationship, communication is key and venues are often the central lynchpin between all parties. As such, we have an ability to open up dialogue to ensure everyone is well informed. Relationships are our most important asset and by utilising this and our experience, built up over many years, we can help facilitate and foster better bonds between international associations and local chapters, which will in turn result in more successful events.”

More information on www.klccconventioncentre.com



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DUBAI ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2019

A Dialogue for Change

During the Dubai Association Conference 2017, participating associations and speakers discussed an important topic for further consideration: how to gain new insights and knowledge on the impact generated by their association's main activities. Now, two years later, the second edition of the conference, which will be held 9-10 December at the Dubai World Trade Centre, is looking to address these questions head-on, with a focus on the larger role that associations play in global society - offering the tools attendees need to drive forward real change that will significantly bolster *"the societal impact of associations."*

Words Lane Nieset

In our July issue, we briefly introduced the two-day conference and the first of its four pillars, which were designed to help participants develop a cohesive, systematic approach to creating long-lasting impact in their industry.

According to conference program curator Geneviève Leclerc, CMP, president of Caravelle Strategies and co-founder and CEO of #MEET4IMPACT, the Dubai Association Centre is offering education and inspiration through the conference, to give participants - association executives from around the world, government representatives, industry leaders, as well as university faculties and students - a better understanding of the true value generated by associations (beyond direct and

indirect economic gains). They will learn how to better communicate the positive outcomes of their activities for their communities; deliver a better return on public investments; and become more ingrained in the knowledge clusters and communities where they could directly serve as drivers of positive change.

Last December, the Dubai Association Centre hosted its first Association Leaders Getaway, a four-day event that brought together 25 participants from local, regional and international associations, in addition to Dubai Government representatives, university students and academics. The goal: curate themes and topics for the upcoming Dubai Association Conference.

"Following the inaugural Dubai Association Conference, the city has witnessed a marked increase in interest from association representatives, both regionally and globally," explains Issam Kazim, Chief Executive Officer of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing, in reference to the Centre's growth of 38 percent last year. *"The Association Leaders Getaway was an effort to harness this interest and create a platform for association executives to network, share knowledge and best practice, in an engaging setting, beyond the confines of meeting rooms. The Getaway was an invaluable experience for all attendees, while being a crucial step forward in our city's evolution."*



PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Over the course of two days, Dubai Association Conference 2019 will be built around four pillars: Impact and Legacy – Key Concepts; Designing an Impact Management and Measurement Programme; Organizational Resilience and Foresighting; and The Art of Collaboration. Each session will explore at least one of four areas of impact: Community Well-being, Business and Opportunities,

The Story Behind Dubai Association Centre

The five-year-old Dubai Association Centre was founded as a joint initiative of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, and the Dubai World Trade Centre as a response "to the surge in demand for association engagement in the UAE and Middle East."

"Crucially, through the establishment of the Dubai Association Centre and the Dubai Association Conference, associations understand that Dubai is not only an ideal host city for conferences, but also providing a dynamic environment in which they can build a sustainable, long-term presence in the city, giving them a platform to extend their reach not just here and in the UAE, but the wider region," explains Steen Jakobsen, Assistant Vice President, Dubai Business Events.

Acting as a gateway to the world's fastest-growing economies, the Dubai Association Centre assists associations interested in setting up shop in the region, helping them navigate the opportunities available and conduct business in the UAE—as well as the world. "Beyond the wider business events infrastructure that benefits them, as well as the other segments within the sector, associations recognise the strong opportunities they have in Dubai to develop their networks, expand their membership within a vibrant region across multiple professions, and tap into a knowledge economy that is focusing on the industries of the future," says Jakobsen.

Knowledge and Research, or Creativity and Innovation.

In the post-conference proceedings following the Dubai Association Conference in 2017, the importance of collaboration in building communities was one of the key takeaways. "These collaborations should involve as many stakeholders as possible, even going beyond local geographies," explained Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President of International Relations, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Associations are among the biggest contributors of economic growth and business activity globally, and they are crucial for generating the flow of innovative and creative ideas that can add value to our society."

Through **Pillar 2, Designing an Impact Management and Measurement Programme**, sessions will focus specifically on impact evaluation and indicators, answering the question, "How can impact be created by associations through their programs and activities for individuals; for the organization; and for the broader community?"

The pillar will combat the challenge the association sector has faced in terms of creating an impactful methodology for impact assessment. The current issue is that there aren't any benchmarks to serve as reference points of clear framework that demonstrate the cause-to-effect relationships that generate change. Case studies will shed light on how some associations are currently creating their own successful framework. By looking at these impact projects, representatives of each organization will be given a voice to share how they're actively engaged in strategies that aim to create more social value for their members and the community they serve. The city of Dubai will even act as living proof of how a smart platform can lead by example in demonstrating the role of technology as pivotal in a changing world.

"From discussing how to define indicators and metrics to measuring social impact, to



EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS SHARING THEIR VIEWS AT THE 2017 DUBAI ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

exploring how we can use design thinking methodology for greater impact, the sessions in this track serve to convert theory into action and provide actionable tools to participants," Leclerc explains. "A number of business cases will be presented over the different sessions, which can be approached from various angles, but will lead to the understanding of how the association sector can develop a cohesive and systematic approach to creating large-scale impact."

FUTURE FORESIGHT

Associations are facing stronger disruptions than ever, and, in order to succeed in a rapidly changing environment, they need to have clarity on their long-term strategies, building on their strengths and tackling their weaknesses. This is where **Pillar 3 - Organizational Resilience and Foresighting** - comes into play. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Resilience is a



broad concept, centred on the ability not only to resist and recover from adverse shocks, but also to 'bounce back' stronger than before and to learn from the experience. For organizations, this entails understanding the sources of risks and opportunities, and learning to cope with uncertainty. It also involves equipping people with the competences and support necessary to take best advantage of the changing circumstances in which they find themselves."

In this regard, "boards need to allot dedicated time to scanning the horizon and contemplating how existing or emerging trends could impact the profession or industry and the organization," says plenary speaker Gregg Talley. "This 'foresight' is critical to understanding and planning and is integral to their role as volunteer leaders. We will explore what this looks like and the value it brings to associations."

Throughout interactive sessions, participants will be broken up into smaller teams

to identify what the phrase "indicators of impact" means at various levels, and design a program that aligns with their association's purpose and changing needs of their members. By working in cross-functional teams, attendees will have the chance to solve real-life problems through collaboration and innovation.

Hazel Jackson, CEO of Dubai-based Biz Group, will serve as moderator for a plenary session called "Survival of the Fittest," helping associations prepare for change by learning how to recognizing threats and the signals of change and plan for both the expected and unexpected. By analysing the concept of "Foresighting," participants will learn adaptability while understanding how to implement local strategies that are scalable globally and initiate sector-wide responses to external disruptors. This pillar will also hone in on how - and why - organizations should use technology like blockchain and big data

Why Dubai

Three questions for Steen Jakobsen, Assistant Vice President of Dubai Business Events

What makes Dubai a great place to meet and conduct business events?

There are a number of factors that contribute to Dubai's popularity as a business events destination, and one of the key reasons is the easy and quick accessibility from around the world through the city's international airports—located within four hours of a third of the world's population, and eight hours of two thirds. For associations looking to bring together groups from around the world, as the hub between East and West, Dubai is the ideal destination.

Why do events like Dubai Association Conference thrive in Dubai?

In Dubai, there are opportunities to host events of all types and sizes, and whatever associations' needs are, they can be met, from small meetings that require intimate board rooms in a hotel to large scale gatherings that call for venues big enough to cater to them, as well as the room inventory to accommodate them. There is also a wide range of activities as well as socialising and networking options, from ballrooms and rooftop venues in the heart of the city, to desert camps replete with authentic Arabian food and entertainment under the stars.

Why do associations continue to return to the city?

Many associations have experienced the benefits of bringing their events to Dubai, often seeing them outperform expectations in terms of attendance and other key metrics, and this has resulted in a number of high-profile events returning to Dubai within a relatively short space of time. Often these events are also taking place in the Middle East for the first time, exposing the associations to a fresh new audience and allowing them to leverage the opportunity to grow their membership.

to create greater impact in their work and service delivery. As Leclerc puts it: "Our aim is to demonstrate that organizational resilience and planning for change is a core strategy for achieving impact and a powerful response to the pressure that associations are facing on their quest for relevancy."

For further information regarding registration, please contact Mr. Junjie Si via Junjiesi@Dubaiassociationcentre.com or visit www.dubaiaassociation-conference.com





Associations have
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FEATURE

The Digitalization of Associations

As the economic landscape continues to change, associations are experiencing a transformation in the way they do business and the way they engage with their stakeholders. The evolution of the digital world has challenged their traditional value proposition. But in what ways do associations need to embrace a digital mindset to remain competitive and bring added value to their members? Is going ‘all digital’ really necessary? What are the tools out there if you don’t have big money? And what are your peers doing? This is what this Boardroom Special Feature explores.

Embracing a Digital Mindset The Example of the EORTC

Head of Communication for EORTC, the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer, Davi Kaur develops the internal and external communication strategy for the association. She also currently serves on the PCMA (Professional Conference Management Association) advisory board. For Boardroom, she looks at how EORTC has transformed itself digitally and shares her insights for other associations to do so.

Interview Rémi Dévé

In what ways do you think associations need to embrace a digital mindset to remain competitive and bring added value to their members?

In an era of digitalization, where children are growing up in an environment where schools are embracing the “online” culture, it is essential that associations become digitally savvy. We live in an instant information world, where everything is at our fingertips: I need to know something I google it, I want to find out what my friends are doing, I check out Facebook, Instagram. I want to know what is going on the world I go to Twitter, Reddit etc. I read my newspaper on my iPad, I watch educational movies on YouTube and listen to podcasts.

Connecting members, providing information whether it is news or educationally, promoting the activities of the association ensures that the association stays at the forefront of its field, and all of this can be done digitally.

Assessing the digital readiness of an organization is often the first step to kick-start a digital transformation strategy that

will need to be implemented on a medium term. But is going ‘all digital’ worth and necessary?

Your digital strategy should assess which areas need to be digital as it will require a financial investment to implement the strategy.

You may decide that you want to have a better connection with your members, have a better understanding of who your members are; therefore, you may want to implement a CRM (customer relationship management) system; You may decide that you want to have an online conference management system taking care of your registration, programme, abstract management and exhibition and sponsors; You may decide that you want to focus on communicating better with your members and the outside world, so you may want to invest in better electronic communication platforms, invest in social media, change your website (optimising for search engines) etc.

All of this needs to be underpinned by a digital infrastructure, such as having the appropriate software and hardware (i.e. servers, office based or cloud based); and crucially, having the right people on board to manage and coordinate the digital platforms. Instead of going all out



The View of the Venue 'Digitalization Personalizes Engagement'

Aloysius Arlando, CEO of SingEx Holdings & President of AIPC, the international association of convention centres, says digitalization, ultimately, serves the long-term engagement of association members.

ON EMBRACING A DIGITAL MINDSET

"Embracing digital transformation for associations should have a two-pronged approach. One is to address functionalities that will allow the association to improve the way it is run and the manner in which it is able to service members. The second is to implement digital initiatives that will allow an association to add value to members by improving and increasing meaningful touchpoints with them. This is where we address the issue of remaining competitive and being relevant to their needs.

On a basic level, a suitable CRM system has to be in place to effectively manage database and membership subscription processes, alongside the proper accounting procedures. One of the challenges faced by associations is to manage the churn in membership, and that's where digitalization tools will help to implement best practices that will enhance membership retention.

Ultimately, this needs to be transformed into a holistic engagement platform for members to connect, learn, network. The goal is to be able to engage members in the same way that we want to engage our clients and event attendees and to increase our touchpoints with them so that they will remember us for having added value to their experiences.

Digitalization, then, becomes a tool to personalize engagements with members. Their needs have evolved and associations have to keep up and think about how they can be community enablers that nurture this community of members. Associations have a role to play in enabling and enhancing their development in the industry so that they are able to remain competitive and relevant.

With digitalization, we are able to activate a suite of solutions that will give them access to useful content and materials via mobile apps and social media platforms,

digital assess your organization needs and requirements and decide on your short term and long-term goals.

Also, do not forget data analytics, you need to assess whether your strategy has worked by measuring the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), this can be through google analytics to measure traffic on to the website, or social media management software such as Hootsuite. If you are not seeing a lot of traffic on your website or views through social media, you will have to understand why and adjust your digital strategy.

What are the tools out there? What is EORTC, as an association, doing exactly?

There are tools out there that do not cost so much. For instance, for electronic communication, we use Mailchimp, which is not so expensive, quite easy to use, and you can design the templates to fit the branding of your organisation. We also use Hootsuite to manage our social media, we can measure which platforms are doing well. There is a good website that allows you to compare different digital platforms, capterra.com; it has a special section for non-for profits, which means you can find some cost-effective digital solutions.

For EORTC, as a clinical research organization, our digital strategy is based on conducting and disseminating results of our research. Our

digitalized research tools enable us to assure the quality, solidity and integrity of the data. EORTC has a large scientific output; we produce over 75 scientific papers per year, of which some are practice changing. We need to be able to communicate this information to our members as well as other oncologists and health care professionals so that they can be informed on the best treatment and care for cancer patients. We need to communicate our activities to our ongoing and potential funders.

Our strategy is to be able to reach different audiences through digital platforms. Our tactics consists of communication and marketing through our website, social media (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) and electronic newsletters to our members, partners and supporters. We produce small inexpensive videos of interviews of our staff, board members and members of EORTC to promote our activities.

We currently implementing a CRM platform so that we can manage our contacts better especially in the era of data protection. In the future, we look to maximize our internal communication through developing a proper intranet for our 220 staff members and enhancing our membership experience through an extranet. We have a great IT department who work with us in the communications, to help us to source and develop digital tools.

for instance. Depending on the functions being developed on these platforms, members can benefit from content such as videos, podcasts, live streaming updates at events, and be connected to their community in addition to face to face activities. These are features that will appeal to tech-savvy members and those who are looking for new ways of engagement beyond the traditional options.”

ON GOING ALL DIGITAL

“To attain the desired level of digital readiness, a digital transformation strategy is necessary to kick-start the process of transformation and the direction it will take. But the concern is not about “going all digital” or otherwise. It is necessary, but it does not mean excluding non-digital strategies..

Just as associations need to harness digital transformation to empower their members, so too must it translate into experiential and engaging events that are organized

for their members. Business events are changing. Be it a conference, a forum, a workshop or a meeting, face-to-face events are becoming an interplay between the physical and the digital realms.

Digitalization complements the nature of face -to-face events. The traditional can and does co-exist with the virtual reality of digital engagement. They complement each other by continuing and extending customer touchpoints from offline to online, making it a seamless experience. And not just that, the digital element also extends the time frame of engagement; it can even be a year-round engagement.

In order for an association to organize a successful event, it must be one that is strategised to offer maximum return on engagement and experience. Digital transformation – in the context of business events – must enable a user-centric experience design and the building of communities

that leverage on technology to strengthen engagement and foster co-innovation.

An example of how creative experiential value can be enhanced by technology: the successful ‘festivalisation’ of Singapore Fintech Festival, the world’s largest gathering for the Fintech community. What is festivalisation all about? It is about injecting the appropriate buzz and energy via tools and formats into an event in such a way that it enhances the experience and engagement of exhibitors, conference delegates and visitors via their five senses. From unique content platforms and activities on the show floor to all-day dining to facilitate spontaneous networking and events beyond the show floor, technology was a key element that weaved these experiences together to create digital engagement that matters: personalization.”



European Industry Associations & Online Engagement

Digital technologies change the world and the way we interact with one another. Consecutive waves of innovation have created a new technological reality through which we communicate, advertise, vote, position ourselves and even build long-term relationships.

Words Attilio Caligiani

As there is almost no sector which is spared, digitalization is also transforming the activities of European industry associations. The majority of such associations recognize the importance of integrating the digital dimension in their day-to-day activities and engaging efficiently their audience online.

To remain competitive in an environment full of information and keep bringing added value to their membership, associations can consider integrating innovative digital tools to their strategy and its implementation.

DIGITALIZATION AS AN ENABLER

Most of the associations have three key roles:

- 1) Advocacy – with the aim to influence decisions-makers;
- 2) Communication – with the aim to spread key messages to a targeted audience and
- 3) Management – including the administration of the association and the acquisition of new members.

To fulfil those roles, an association implements several activities which could benefit from digital tools. Here are some examples.

COMMUNICATION & ADVOCACY VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are nowadays indispensable for engaging in communication and advocacy. For instance, out of 750 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), there are 666 active Twitter profiles¹! Social media can enhance advocacy capacity through legislation monitoring, economic intelligence, keeping up-to-date with industry news, networking and coalitions building.

Of course, before rushing into a chaotic creation of accounts and posting random messages, an association should carefully elaborate a social media strategy. In it, the association should, among other things, select the right channels to use, elaborate on key messages, identify its audience, prepare an editorial calendar, consider “live” posting and anticipate a regular analysis of the progress of the account.

Furthermore, the association should not disqualify the possibility to develop paid campaigns as it can increase the visibility of the account and the reach of its messages. Social media is also an invaluable source of big data whose collection and analysis could help associations tailoring their advocacy campaign to their audience.

ORGANIZATION OF EVENTS

Associations can make use of digital tools to increase the dissemination of their events and their outcomes. Information should be published on the association’s website before the event actually takes place, yet other websites specifically dedicated to the advertisement of events (e.g. Eventbrite) can be considered.

Moreover, associations could envisage the possibility to promote social media posts that will spread the event towards an identified audience. During the event, digital polling could be implemented to trigger more interactivity and engage the engagement in the discussion.

MEMBERS & COMMUNITY

Digital tools can enable associations to engage with their members more successfully or in targeted ways. Also, online platforms (e.g. Basecamp) can facilitate the communication within an association, as well as the information exchange and documents sharing. Others (e.g. YourMembership) provide a single place for the acquisition, renewal,

¹ EuVisions, MEPs on Twitter
More on: <http://www.euvisions.eu/mep-on-twitter-european-elections-parliament-2019/>



management, and communication with members allowing to save staff time and resources.

In fact, digitalization can easily bring people and groups together paving the way towards better community management of associations. This is especially useful for associations whose goal is to advance the interest of a particular profession towards decision-makers. Thanks to online tools (e.g. SurveyMonkey, SurveyHero), a professional association can conduct a survey among the professionals it represents to obtain their feedback and suggestions on how to proceed on a particular matter. Social media analytics (e.g. Sprout Social, Keyhole) are helpful to understand what animates the professional audience and enable the association to proactively address the issue.

Lastly, digital platforms easily provide a forum for professionals to mutually raise their awareness on a given matter affecting the sector, establish and maintain professional and social contacts.

NOT WITHOUT HURDLES

However, digitalization does not go without hurdles, and there are a few that can be identified.

The first one relates to the mindset of some organizations. Some EU associations lag behind in the process of digitalization due to the lack of understanding of how digital tools can be beneficial. Currently, 25% of the EU associations have yet to adopt online tools. By having an open-minded attitude about the benefits that digital technologies can bring, an association can open a new world of opportunities for its members.

Data protection and privacy can also be an issue. The use of online tools might involve the handling of personal data. National and European legislation (e.g. General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR) seek to protect the personal data of citizens and any infringement could entail

substantial fines. For this reason, associations wishing to embrace the digital path need to make sure that all personal data processed by them is respected.

In a similar vein, the use of digital technologies opens the risk of cyberattacks whose consequences could be devastating as they can disrupt the workflow, lead to a loss of critical data and harm the image of the association and its members. Therefore, the association should take the appropriate steps to protect the data it collects and processes and the integrity of its computing assets.

The last one concerns the investments digitalization may imply. While some digital tools are free, the use of others could bear considerable costs. Before kickstarting a digital transformation, the association should carefully assess its objectives and available resources in order to avoid unnecessary spending which would not bring results.

In the digital age, in conclusion, EU industry associations are challenged: new trends and new technologies require associations to adapt their operations while envisaging new ways of engaging effectively their audiences. While digital novelty brings uncertainty, it bears constant evolving opportunities and tools that associations can grasp to effectively engage their audiences. Amid disruptive technological changes, EU associations should ask how to properly tap into the potential the digital revolution offers.

This article was written by Attilio Caligiani, ESAE Board Member and Director General of the World Iodine Association (WIA), an industry association representing the interests of iodine producers, processors, formulators, distributors and end users around the world. In this capacity, he oversees the organization's advocacy towards international institutions and key stakeholders. Boardroom has an exclusive partnership with the European Society of Association Executives. For more information on ESAE, visit www.associationexecutives.eu

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A Brief Guide to Association Digitalization

Digitization is already underway, so embracing it is not a matter of if, but instead of when and how. In this article, **Frank M. Waechter** takes a look at the most effective strategies and solutions that associations can use to achieve this.

According to the World Economic Forum, digitalization is one of the key disruptors of the 21st-century¹. This process has caused profound changes in the way we interact and go about our lives, and has also transformed the nature of work and organizations. Ernst & Young suggests that the digital transformation is here to stay², and so it's essential for associations to jump on board, embrace the digital mindset, and bring added value to their members - especially to new generations who are digital natives.

SHOULD YOUR ASSOCIATION GO "ALL DIGITAL"?

The first step to kick-start a digital transformation strategy is deciding what to implement, how to do it, and in which time frame. Although it might be tempting to go "all-in" on digital, this isn't always practical or necessary. Implementation success

rates seem to be rather low - under 30% according to the McKinsey survey³.

On the other hand, those who are successful take an incremental approach to digitalization. Digital organizations don't become so overnight, they work and rework their strategy until they are able to create new and stronger forms of engagement with their members. Therefore, it is wise to make gradual changes strategically, using carefully chosen digital tools to enhance existing and more traditional operational models.

LOW-COST, HIGH IMPACT SOLUTIONS

Mindset is as important as tools when it comes to the digitalization of associations. The process starts with building digital skills into the association's culture⁴, bringing key stakeholders on board, and breaking down silos before going all out. You can achieve this with limited financial

resources - it all starts with the right mindset and with the disposition to make small-scale changes that have a significant impact.

Free content analytics tools are an excellent place to start. These tools enable data-driven decision making, which forms the basis for digital strategy. With this anticipatory intelligence, you can discover which content drives interaction best and which digital technologies your members are already using. The information can be used to predict what your members need and to formulate digital marketing campaigns using the format and channels your members prefer.

For example, setting up an online community on a social media platform allows members to share and network 24/7 using tools with which they are already familiar. Some organizations, such as the Association for Clinical Research Professionals,

¹ reports.weforum.org/digital-transformation/understanding-the-impact-of-digitalization-on-society/

² [www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/The_digitisation_of_everything_-_How_organisations_must_adapt_to_changing_consumer_behaviour/\\$file/EY_Digitisation_of_everything.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/The_digitisation_of_everything_-_How_organisations_must_adapt_to_changing_consumer_behaviour/$file/EY_Digitisation_of_everything.pdf)

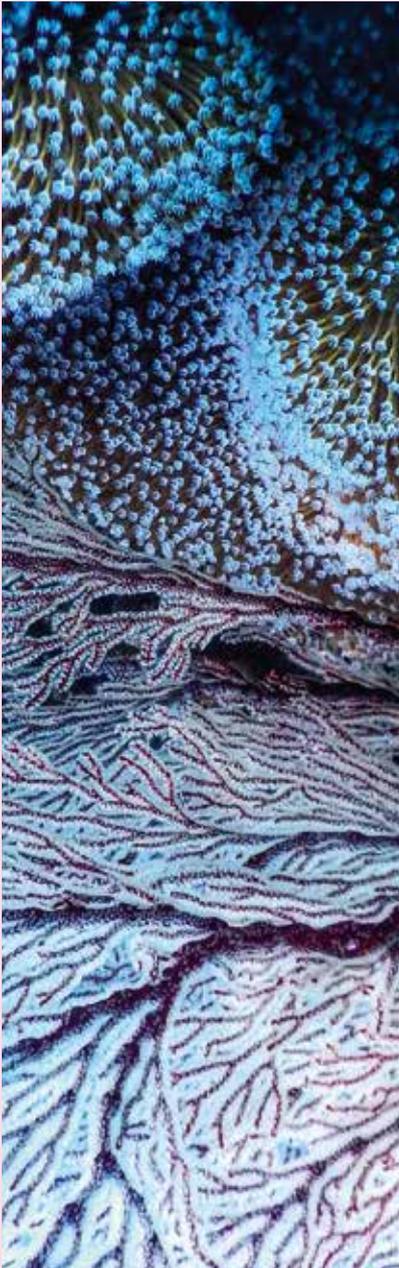
³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/unlocking-success-in-digital-transformations>

⁴ <https://www.delcor.com/resources/blog/how-associations-are-embracing-digital-transformation>

⁵ https://community.acrpnet.org/home?_ga=2.32365755.40168502.1565203227-613253853.1565203227

⁶ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/national/training>





have created their online community platforms⁵, whereas others (like Trades Union Congress) offer their members online training in a webinar format⁶, all through their website.

Another cost-effective tool is marketing automation. While not free, these software packages can save on labour costs and, at the same time, deliver highly targeted communications that reach the right person with the right message at the right time. Also, consider the products or services your association already offers and how can they be digitalized. With marketing automation, it is possible to segment members based on their interests and goals, and offer them tailored content.

Digital tools such as machine learning or artificial intelligence have enormous potential for success, and they don't need to be costly. Chatbots can be quickly built on social media platforms and drive a conversational approach to member interaction. And since they can learn autonomously and become more accurate over time, they are a sound investment.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Conferences and events are other areas of opportunity. Event apps are replacing printed conference guides, making them more portable and user-friendly. Organizations like the National Association of College and University Business Officers are building membership value into their events using year-round, multi-event apps that not only deliver smooth registration, networking and personalized content but also engagement, interaction and intelligence⁷.

⁵ <https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/association-event-appmep-on-twitter-european-elections-parliament-2019/>

Another example of how digitalization can strengthen the reach of events: BILD⁸, a Toronto-based land management association, went paperless for its annual awards event. To do so, they implemented a CSP (content services platform), which bridges the gap between digital experience management (DxM) and content management. For the annual event, this move allowed members to submit and manage applications on a self-serve basis, reducing greatly time-related inefficiencies and risks of human error. Content management systems can be pricey, but there are affordable options too. In the beginning, association leaders may want to explore basic packages and solutions, making sure their features target the most important goals for a particular event.

The digitalization of associations is complex and multi-faceted, but its benefits outweigh the challenges. Taking a gradual approach to digital transformation can help your association remain competitive, future-focused and member-oriented. Start taking steps now to give your association a strategic advantage and establish it as a trusted leader in your field. It is never too late to become digitally aware and lead transformation successfully.

This article was provided by IAPCO, the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Frank M. Waechter, founder and CEO of fmwaechter.com | Digital Marketing. IAPCO represents today 135 companies comprised of over 9,100 professional congress organizers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. info@iapco.org \ www.iapco.org



⁷ <https://advantagecsp.com/stories/bild>

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The Pros & Cons of Digital Advocacy

Margaux Rundstadler, Association Manager at Kellen, argues that, if going digital has become a prerequisite for associations, it also means it should be carefully planned and reviewed.



Embracing a digital mindset has become an essential and a daily feature of how associations communicate, persuade and inform, i.e. advocate. A successful (digital) advocacy is when the message you try to get across is well received, understood and acted upon by your intended audience. Going digital is key in order to remain competitive towards other associations and stakeholders. However, is going all digital the best strategy? How to be sure it brings added value? What are the pros and cons of digital advocacy?

THE PROS OF DIGITAL TOOLS

One of the main benefits of digital tools is allowing the '360 degrees approach', thanks to the various channels. These can be paid channels (e.g. social media advertising), earned (e.g. press coverage), shared (social media) and owned media (website). Integrating the four media types can drive messages in a very consistent manner and help establish a certain authority. The various channels also allow tailored

communication through a very granular and detailed audience segmentation.

Then, comes the significant roles played by measurement and reporting tools. Thanks to free tools such as Google and Twitter Analytics, it is now possible to measure whether an online communication strategy has had the intended outcome. Today, one can study whether the targeted audience has been reached, how many times an infographic or a white paper has been downloaded, how often a linked has been clicked on... It gives clear outcomes as well as concrete figures when reporting to the association's staff and board members, while increasing credibility and respect for the communication function.

Another real pro of digital advocacy is the 'democratic' aspect of it. Prices are often cost-friendly, tools can even be free, which is the case for newsletters, surveys, online invitation, etc. They do not require significant investment and are often flexible and easy to adjust, therefore accessible by anyone.

Overall, digital tools can constitute a real differentiator towards certain competitors on the market and they are an added benefit for the association through the rapid spread of information they allow. Yet, this opens up to a potential con of digital communication, namely 'digital fatigue'.

THE DOWNSIDES

One of the main issues of digital communication is the increasing 'digital fatigue', which is due to the rise in social media channels to follow. It therefore also makes it more difficult to stand out from others and fight for the attention of a target audience, especially as associations often target the same audiences, be they policy makers, prospect members or stakeholders. Communication styles tend to be more and more aggressive, increasing the difficulty for users to differentiate between false and true information.

However, the main challenge, or mistake, when it comes to digital communication in particular, is the lack of a concrete strategy. As digital tools are often accessible by anyone, they can be perceived as being easy to use and one could be tempted to manage as many channels as possible. This misconception can result in an excessive use of the different channels, without a defined strategy — online, as off-line channels, do require a strategy.

In addition, a solid governance and an operational planning are crucial. The more channels you use, the more difficult it is to update them all. For social media especially, there is a need for constant content feed. Hence, the strategy is key to a successful advocacy or member growth.

HOW TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE?

Digital mindset and digital readiness go hand in hand. However, as there exists two types of generations, the digital-savvy and the

reluctant ones, it is important to consider to what extent the members of an association are open to digital tools. Some audiences remain sensitive to more off-line communication styles. It is therefore important to combine on and off-line tools, in order to have a real added value for members.

The fact that digital tools allow the information to be spread quickly among the members of your target audience constitutes a real added value. To always remain competitive, it is also key to monitor the competition as well as those organizations that you work with. Keeping informed of the market is part of the digital mindset and necessary for improvements.

A BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

This past year, in view of the EU elections, one of Kellen's largest associations launched an advocacy campaign to reach out to policy makers. In February, a manifesto was released, aiming at conveying the 'wish list' of the industry towards newly elected or re-elected Members of the European Parliament. To maximize its impact, a high-level event was organised in Brussels, for which relevant digital tools were used: e-blast of invitations, promotion of the event via social media channels, information on the website of the association, live tweets during the event, to name a few.

Following the event, a press release was issued, the manifesto went online and links were shared via promoted tweets. The association measured the number of times the manifesto was downloaded via Google Analytics as well as the number of people reached by promoted posts via Twitter Analytics. Here, the '360 degrees' approach was achieved, because on- and off-line tools were used as the result of a pre-defined strategy with set goals.

The question is therefore not whether going digital is necessary to remain competitive; it has become a prerequisite. Digital tools have clear benefits especially in terms of reporting, evaluating and measuring KPIs, which are easier to do with online rather than off-line tools. It increases the efficiency of a communication strategy as well as the ability to remain 'in the game'. With digital tools, it is easier to evaluate whether the expected outcome has been reached, whereas in the past it was more difficult. It is equally clear that an all-digital strategy without careful review and revision might be insufficient because of the risk of 'digital fatigue'. It is therefore crucial to find the right balance between on and off-line advocacy tools.

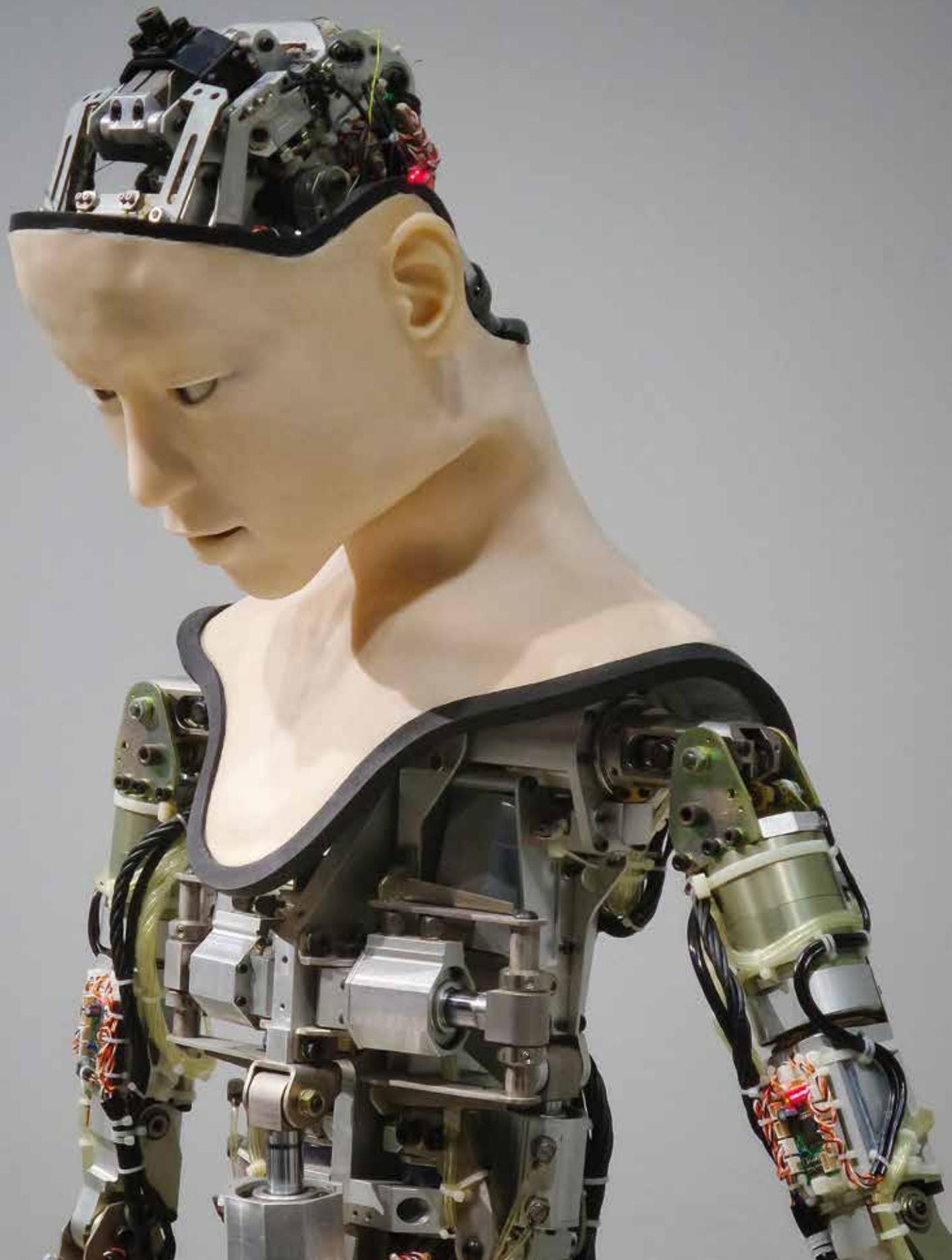
Margaux Rundstadler is Association Manager at Kellen, a global association management and communications company born to help build stronger not-for-profit organizations, so they can make the greatest impact (kellencompany.com)





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There's something about France (Part IV)

Designing a French AI Ecosystem

France has long been a pioneer in many fields of endeavour, as the next pages of this special French feature will show. There is one sector in particular where the country wants to lead the way: Artificial Intelligence. President Macron wants to turn France into a major player of the AI industry - the French government will spend €1.5 billion to reach this objective in the upcoming years, together with some private investors.

FEATURE RÉMI DÉVÉ

Artificial intelligence often sounds like a promise for the future, but we must not fool ourselves: if you don't innovate right here, right now you will just be left out, simply following your competitors on the way. It's all a matter of seizing the right opportunities offered by AI, while designing a framework to regulate it, as France understood it, maybe like no other country.

In a speech on "artificial intelligence at the service of Humans" delivered at the Collège de France early last year, French President Emmanuel Macron presented a strategy designed to turn France into a major player of the artificial intelligence sector, emphasizing that the country has *"the assets to succeed in artificial intelligence because [it already has] talents, as well as excellence in training, in computer science and in mathematics"*.

French researchers, indeed, have carved out strong international reputations for their contributions to the fields of AI and machine learning. As AI development has recently accelerated, France has proven itself an important source of talent for companies around the world: over the last couple of years, the country has been promoting itself as an AI hub as it seeks to gain greater recognition, nurture its own AI startups, and attract investment from large tech firms.

On the corporate front, there are definitely some good news. Samsung opened a Paris AI centre with 100 researchers, and Fujitsu said it would expand on its previously announced plan to invest \$61 million in an AI institute over five years. Meanwhile, London-based DeepMind, a world leader in artificial intelligence research and its application for positive impact, inaugurated, in September, a Paris lab with 15 researchers, with intentions to expand well beyond that. In fact, Paris is already home to some of the world's most influential AI research institutions, including public research centres like INRIA, the French institute for digital sciences, as well as CNRS, the Grandes Écoles, and an outstanding network of universities.

In this context, it's quite understandable France would host some high-profile AI-related conferences. France is AI, a not-for-profit group with the mission to support and promote the AI ecosystem at national and global levels, has been organizing yearly events since its launch in 2016. The second edition of AI Net, which positions itself as a leader event in AI and Machine Learning applied to the telecom area, also took place in Paris in April. Meanwhile, Transform.AI regularly attracts over 130 senior level executives in the French capital to share insight on how AI is evolving across businesses and enterprises.

Another - among many - examples is the Artificial Intelligence Platform (PFIA), which just gathered researchers, companies and students in Toulouse. The city stands proud in one of the pilot regions of the 'France pour l'Intelligence Artificielle' initiative aimed at helping to define the major factors in the creation of favorable legislation and regulations in the field. Areas for strategic application in Toulouse include robotics and drones, voice recognition and robots, Big Data and Machine Learning, intelligent and connected cities, intelligent mobility and transport systems and health and personalised medicine. The city now boasts over 150 companies, 7 laboratories, 9 cutting edge technology platforms and more than 1,500 industrial employees all created to support this growing sector.

As President Macron concluded in his speech: *"Artificial intelligence is a technological, economic, social and obviously ethical revolution. This revolution won't happen in 50 or 60 years, it's happening right now. There are new opportunities and we can choose to follow some innovations or not."*

More information

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The Green Goals of Nancy



THE MEURTHE RIVER RUNS THROUGH NANCY

© RÉGINE DATIN

France has long been a pioneer protecting the planet with environmentally friendly practices. Nancy in particular is stepping up on the sustainable scene and emerging as a premier locale for green meetings. The French capital of Art Nouveau — and capital of the Duchy of Lorraine — has made sustainable development one of its core missions, with the city convention bureau, DESTINATION NANCY, working hard to obtain the ISO 20121 certification, which was renewed this year.

It's not news that events take a heavy toll on our resources, society and the environment, sometimes generating significant waste and occasionally even igniting tensions with local communities. This is how the international standard ISO 20121 was born, guaranteeing best practices in sustainable event management and promoting the motto that every action counts, whether that be tap water vs. plastic bottles or taking public transport instead of private transfers. Thanks to initiatives like ISO 20121, Nancy is now making a name for itself as a responsible business events destination.

The proof sits in the centre of the city, where you'll find the Prouvé Convention Centre, which can accommodate up to 2,400 people. A roof comprised of 1,000 sqm of solar

panels, bees and honey, a trained staff with an environmentally responsible attitude throughout the entire event process, and an overall policy of sustainable development are just a few of the green credentials to brag about. But take a look at the Nancy Exhibition Centre, with a capacity of 4,900, and you'll be just as impressed.

The trend toward green initiatives has trickled through the city, with DESTINATION NANCY working hard to combat food waste, earning a Special Sustainable Development award by France Congrès et Événements last April as a sign of its success. Another area the convention bureau is honing in on is responsible purchasing: 100% of what Nancy sells and buys, whether it be a service or a product, has a CSR component to it. And, for the past three years, DESTINATION NANCY has worked attentively on waste management via a comprehensive food rescue and redistribution programme co-organized with a local association.

All of these elements are placed into a broader context in Nancy's 'welcome pack' (*pacte d'accueil*) for major events. For associations choosing Nancy for their next conference, they will be hosted by a city and a greater region that places sustainability and care for

its people—as well as the environment—at the forefront. In fact, the city developed a whole green ecosystem, or "EcoQuartier," in 2009 with help from the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Accommodation. In this pedestrian-friendly zone developed around the train station, the quality of life has been significantly improved for residents and visitors like conference attendees.

Next step on the horizon: Nancy aims to become an *international* green destination like a handful of its French counterparts, working within the confines of a programme launched by France Congrès et Événements, with the support of Green Événements and the G7 General Secretariat (only nine destinations in France are now engaged in this approach). At the rate the city is establishing its green footprint, it's no doubt Nancy will soon make its presence known around the globe as a hub for green events in Europe.

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Smart & Appetizing Lyon

Both the second-largest metropolitan area and the second-busiest convention city in France, Lyon is a UNESCO World Heritage city which has been attracting the attention of international associations for some time. Situated at the confluence of the Rhone and Saone rivers, it is a key location for biotechnology companies and headquarters to a variety of international organisations. It was recently awarded the coveted title of 'European Capital of Smart Tourism'.

But what does Smart Tourism actually mean? Well, practically speaking, it means implementing and promoting sustainable practices in several key areas of tourism. And that's exactly what Greater Lyon and Lyon Convention Bureau have worked hard to do for a number of years, developing responsible tourism and a range of activities that are adapted and accessible to all.

Lyon has, in fact, been performing quite well in four key areas, namely sustainability, accessibility, digitalization and cultural heritage. The city, indeed, promotes environmentally friendly and responsible transport, with its bike rental or car-sharing system, e-scooters, and the Vaporetto river shuttle, as well as accessibility for people with disabilities. Lyon's connectivity is also one-of-a-kind, with the development of, for instance, OnlyLyon Expérience, a destination CRM system that is unique in Europe, with which visitors can explore the city with personalised advice directly on their smartphone.

The emphasis is on eco-responsibility across the whole supplier chain as well. In that regard, the organisers of the famous Fête des Lumières (Festival of Lights) and numerous other festivals are committed to improving their carbon footprint. Meanwhile, restaurants that serve seasonal and local food are encouraged to come forward.

No wonder Lyon recently made the Global Destinations Sustainability Index, which recognizes the efforts of its members to improve

their commitment to sustainability by listing them on an index of comparison with other destinations. Many businesses use this index to assess the sustainability of possible partners and it has quickly become an invaluable tool for the meetings and events industry.

As Valérie Ducaud, Manager of Lyon Convention Bureau, puts it, Lyon's participation to the Index "aims to build on top of our selection as the European Smart Tourism Capital, and accelerate (the city's) efforts to boost digital innovation, accessibility and environmental stewardship, and to work to become an even more sustainable and smart events destination."

As France's second city for conferences, Lyon offers a unique combination of business and culinary pleasure that makes congress participants enjoy a truly French experience. The epitome of this? The Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie, which is opening this fall in the Grand Hôtel-Dieu, a former hospital, and which will examine how gastronomy plays an integral part in the world.

The site already houses exhibitions and cultural events, an Intercontinental Hotel, restaurants and shops, conveying a 'modern vision of gastronomy... as well as a conference centre. The project is an integral part of the Vallée de la Gastronomie (Valley of Gastronomy) which is currently being discussed at regional level. From Dijon to Cassis, it's set to become "an international destination based on experience." As such, it will rely on the gastronomic cities of Dijon and Lyon, as well as a range of activities around wines, local know-how and catering.

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EVENTS

Medical Success in the South of France

Located at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur region is not only an easily accessible destination, it also boasts 300 days of sunshine per year, rich culture and UNESCO-listed heritage sites. A key player in life sciences, it has been attracting the attention of European and international associations with its dynamic medical ecosystem that promotes opportunities in a variety of different ways.

In France, Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur ranks second in terms of patent filing and boasts more than 170 health and life sciences research laboratories. The region specializes particularly on research topics such as infectiology (infectious disease), immunology, oncology, neuroscience and ophthalmology, looking at these topics not only on a national level but on a European one as well. Four regional universities—Aix-Marseille, Avignon, Nice Sophia-Antipolis, South Toulon Var—as well as competitive clusters such as Marseille-based Eurobiomed with more than 280 members specialising in drugs, diagnostics, implantable medical devices, and e-health, fuel the region's strong research network.

The South of France also offers plenty of opportunities for sponsorships. The region is a well-trusted and competitive destination for many companies in the pharmaceutical and AI industry but also in the management of big data, digital biology and medical imaging, with some leaders headquartered in the region. As a getaway to the EMEA region, Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur has become a worldwide leader in the hosting of large medical events, which attract on average 20% more participants than anywhere else.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Cannes, Marseille, Nice and Toulon continue to draw more medical congresses each year that comply with the guidelines of the MedTech Europe Code of Ethical Business Practice, which regulate all aspects of the industry's relationship with healthcare professionals and healthcare organizations. Forthcoming examples include the Congress of the French Society of Vascular

Medicine in Cannes (1,000 delegates); the European Macrophage and Dendritic Cell Society Convention (2,500 delegates) and the European Public Health Conference (2,000 delegates) in Marseille; the European Congress of Pathology (2,500 delegates) and the Movement Disorder Society Congress (4,500 delegates) in Nice; and the conference of the French Society of Emergency (400 delegates) in Toulon.

In response, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur regional authority launched the 'Attract Congresses and Events' regional programme, aimed to improve the bidding and hosting experience for large international events. Designed to financially support events of a structural nature in sectors of excellence, such as healthcare, the goal is to generate substantial spin-offs in terms of economics and image. Eligible congresses and conferences include those that combine over 800 nights. The programme is managed by Provence Côte d'Azur Events, the regional convention bureau.

One prime example is the NeuroFrance, which was organized by the French Neuroscience Society in Marseille in May. The « Attract Congresses & Events » regional programme was a major factor in the organizer's decision to host the event in the South of France. *"The importance of the local community in neuroscience, the commitment of the South of France in the areas of research and health and the attractiveness of the city of Marseille were decisive elements in the selection of this destination for the 14th edition of our biennial conference,"* explains Lydia Kerkerian-Le Goff, President of the French Neuroscience Society. *"All in all, it was an easy process, and we would like to thank all our partners for their support of the project."*

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An Industrial Revolution in Nantes

The International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) define the 4th Industrial Revolution as the convergence of digital technologies (such as Big Data or the Internet of Things), biotechnologies and the physics of the infinitely small. And this is precisely what they will talk about at La Cité Nantes Congress Centre, who will host their 36th World Conference (IASP2019). The great promises of this revolution are to seduce consumers with unique and personalized products, as explains IASP consulting director Jean-François Balducchi, from Atlanpole, the science-based business incubator for the whole region Pays de la Loire.

What kind of role has Atlanpole played in Nantes' candidacy for the hosting of IASP2019?

Back in 2017, Atlanpole initiated the candidacy of Nantes at the IASP World Conference in Istanbul. Competition from other global destinations was fierce, and we chose to highlight the strengths of the Nantes Saint Nazaire Metropolis and, more broadly, the Greater Western Region of France – and France as a whole. The challenge was taken up across the whole shareholders chain, including Nantes Métropole, the Pays de la Loire Region, the University of Nantes, the

Chamber of Commerce, etc., who followed and encouraged us from the very start.

In addition, as the ISAP President from 2014 to 2016, I had every intention to bring this conference to our shores. So I waited for the right opportunity to apply. This win is the confirmation that Nantes is recognized for its virtuous innovation ecosystem. The region has undeniable assets in the field of the industry of the future, with the competitiveness cluster EMC2, the French industrial cluster dedicated to advanced manufacturing technologies, the IRT Jules Verne, the French Institute for Technology, or Atlanpole Biotherapies which focuses on the health of the future. So many strengths that will allow us to best address the main theme of our conference: the 4th Industrial Revolution.

To what extent are Nantes and La Cité the ideal venues for this event?

La Cité Nantes Congress Centre has been our privileged partner for 30 years, we've been working together on different types of events for a long time – and always with successful results. Ideally located in the heart of the city, it is very accessible from Paris, and thus from all major European capitals and beyond. We also like their commitment to CSR in general, and how they approach events in environment-friendly terms.

La Cité's infrastructure makes it possible to organize our world conference in the best conditions. Their professional teams provide bespoke services which guarantee a flawless execution of events in general.

More broadly, Nantes was labeled the European Green Capital in 2013, and it has many advantages outside the quality of life. It's a dynamic, green, innovative city which delegates can easily enjoy after a hard day's work at a conference.

What kind of support did you receive exactly?

From the very start of the bidding process in 2017, the teams of La Cité were quite keen for us to win IASP2019. They really acted as our partners in this, providing all kinds of support. We of course rent their spaces, along some dedicated technical support, but what we like the most is that they also guarantee a permanent follow-up of our project, by putting an account manager as well as a production manager at your disposal. That makes the execution of the event very smooth to say the least.

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A Breath of Fresh Air in La Baule



La Baule, located in the south of Brittany, is known more for its beautiful bays and beaches than its conference facilities—it is a member of the Club of the World's Most Beautiful Bays, after all. Yet, it's precisely this prime position—sandwiched between land and sea in the middle of a vast protected pine forest—that's drawing organisers to the French destination.

La Baule is a place of character, basking in the spotlight of the famous salt marshes of Guérande and the natural local park of Brière. One step on the pristine beaches and you'll immediately understand how La Baule stands out from your average beach locale.

A three-hour high-speed train ride from Paris, or an hour's drive from Nantes-Atlantique International Airport (77 direct flights from international major capitals), this part of the Loire-Atlantique coast benefits from the dynamism of the Nantes-Saint-Nazaire metropolis. The region caters to international sports events, such as the Longines international Jumping of La Baule. Another notable event: In 2018, La Baule hosted the 2nd edition of the World Company Sport Games, organised by voluntary nonprofit the World Federation for Company Sport. The international event based on conviviality, performance and cohesion attracted 6,000 attendees from 50 countries, who competed in more than 25 different types of sports.

La Baule is also home to nine competitive clusters, ranging from health to biotherapies; one university; nine colleges; and 200 laboratories. Industrial clusters include shipbuilding and aerospace (the reason why you'll find the STX France shipyard and the Airbus factory), while agribusiness thrives thanks to Guérande salt, with the region producing over 16,000 tons per year!

As far as conferences are concerned, associations can set their sights on Atlantia Convention Centre, which offers up to 3,500 sqm of flexible space. The eco-friendly venue was entirely restored in 2014, and features an auditorium of 900 seats, as well 1,200 sqm modular space flooded with natural daylight. In 2011, Atlantia, as it is commonly referred to, was awarded the Quality Prize for Sustainable Development by France Congrès et Événements, and, in 2015, it was the first venue outside the French capital to receive the lauded ISO 20121 certification, which provides guidance and best practice to help manage and control an event's social, economic and environmental impact.

Couple this with a wide range of accommodation options – there are more than 3,000 hotel rooms scattered across the La Baule-Guérande peninsula – and you'll see how the city is emerging as a business destination where delegates can enjoy a breath of fresh air after a hard day's work. Given its compact size, everything can be reached by foot. As if this isn't an easy enough decision, La Baule Events, the city convention bureau, will act as your reliable partner, opening the doors to a network of local service providers alongside the Atlantia Convention Centre's teams—all committed to the success of your conference.

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TAKING A DEEP JOURNALISTIC DIVE INTO
DESTINATIONS AS KNOWLEDGE HUBS AND
THEIR ASSOCIATION APPEAL.

A Country of Superlatives

Canada can easily be called a country of superlatives. It's where the architects of the global tech revolution live, work and research, and where the world's largest pharmaceutical companies conduct clinical trials. It's where you'll find the highest concentration of Artificial Intelligence start-ups on the globe and it is home to the continent's third-largest life science research hub—as well as the world's largest centre of excellence for AI. These research and innovation centres aren't just churning out data—they're building a booming global business, and giving Canada a leading role in the process.

WORDS LANE NIESET



As Chantal Sturk-Nadeau, executive director of Global Business Events Canada puts it: *“When you convene in Canada for meetings and conventions, you’ll be connected with the innovators who are shaping the future, the thought leaders who are leading the way, and the business and research architects who elevate Canada’s position on the world stage across a spectrum of industries.”*

Out of the 36 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada offers the most highly educated workforce, with over 460 private and public post-secondary institutions that are grooming the “workforce of the future.” And thanks to successful sectors like Life Sciences, Technology, Agribusiness, Aerospace, CleanTech, Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing, the country is coming out on top as a leading competitor, making it *“an alluring destination for global meetings and business events,”* according to Virginie De Visscher, director of Business Development Economic Sectors, Business Events Canada. *“By connecting with industry and academia, planners gain important access to resources that can shape their conference agenda, help grow their membership and elevate the profile of their event on the world stage.”*

Successful Sectors

At the moment, Canada ranks fourth on the Global Cleantech Innovation Index for its work reducing carbon and cutting back on energy consumption. Écotech Québec is one organization that’s making big strides by bringing together some of the key clean tech decision makers. The Agricultural Clean Technology program is also putting \$25 million toward clean technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting sustainable and clean growth.

The country’s progressive green visions aren’t going unnoticed, either. Last year, two Vancouver-based companies—AweSense and MineSense Technologies—received awards at the 2018 Cleantech Forum San Francisco, drawing major attention to the world’s third greenest city. In Calgary, the hub of Canada’s energy industry, 150 companies are employing 4,500 people in oil and clean gas technology, and the city sports a number of world-class research centres like the Clean Resource Innovation Network.

Ontario-based not-for-profit Next Generation Manufacturing Canada, meanwhile, is one of the organizations leading Canada’s Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster initiative, a sector expected to have a \$13.5 billion impact on the Canadian economy over the next 10 years. Over 130 participants in the supercluster, including the University of Waterloo and software developer Autodesk, are driving forward advanced



manufacturing in technology like 3D printing, machine learning and cybersecurity.

Toronto in particular acts as an advanced manufacturing leader, where 250-plus companies and industry organizations collaborate on advanced manufacturing research with the University of Toronto (home to both the Institute for Robotics and Mechatronics and Toronto Institute of Advanced Manufacturing). The city of London also serves as a headquarters for a number of impressive research facilities, including the 130-acre Advanced Manufacturing Park, which houses the Wind Engineering, Energy and Environmental Research Institute (WindEEE RI), the world's only facility that can reproduce a tornado vortex. It's also the base of the Additive Design in Surgical Solutions Centre, which has developed innovations like 3D-printed surgical guides and jaw implants. In addition, auto parts giant Brose Canada chose London as the locale for its only Canadian facility, where two plants have stamped more than 180 million seat frames and 22.5 million seat adjusters since 2005.

In terms of aerospace, Aéro Montréal is Canada's largest cluster, and the city helps generate 52 percent of the country's aerospace industry sales, in addition to bringing conferences like the upcoming AHS International's 76th Annual Forum American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in May 2020. It's no surprise the city is bringing conferences of this scale, considering Greater Montréal is one of the world's three major aerospace centres (sitting alongside Seattle and Toulouse) and Québec ranks fifth worldwide in the aerospace sector.

In Ottawa—Canada's national capital and hub for the aerospace, defence and security sector—you'll find some of the country's best R&D capabilities and tech innovators, from Lockheed Martin to Boeing Canada. Ottawa is also the base for the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority and Department of National Defence

and brings large-scale conferences in the sector like the Canadian Aerospace Summit, which drew 1,200 to the 2018 edition.

Natural Beauty

The largest country in the Western Hemisphere is among the world's largest energy producers, and in 2017 alone, Canada exported \$251 billion worth of natural resources. The country boasts one of the most advanced programs for enforcing sustainable fisheries practices, in addition to the third-largest crude oil reserve. Pair these features with the fact that Canada claims the world's longest coastline—and fourth-largest ocean territory—and you'll see why the country is leading the way as an innovator across ocean sectors.

St. John's, Newfoundland, is promoting Canada's ocean economy by serving as a base for startups like Seaformatics Systems Inc., which developed the WaterLily low-speed turbine that uses water or wind to charge USB devices. And, next year, 2,000 attendees will descend on the city during the World Aquaculture Society (WAS) North America 2020 conference, the first collaboration between WAS and the Aquaculture Association of Canada (AAC) in some time.

Food for Thought

The Greater Toronto Area ranks as the second-largest food industry hub in North America behind Los Angeles. And as the fifth-largest global exporter of agri-food products (generating 5.7 percent of the world's exports), Canada is known particularly for commodities like poultry in Newfoundland and Labrador; hogs in Manitoba and Quebec; grains and oilseeds in the Prairies; and eggs in the



Northwest Territories. Several companies in Québec City (a hub for food and nutrition information) are also part of the Québec Health Food Cluster, which helps market healthier, value-added products.

Canada as a whole features 19 agricultural clusters and 15 food and beverage clusters, with stand-out superclusters like the Protein Industries Canada (PIC), 145 stakeholders across the western part of the country that focus on crop breeding, production and export development. Saskatchewan is the country's leading agricultural exporter and every variety of pulse crop grown in the province was developed at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon—a world leader in pulse crops. Regina, the province's capital, is one of the supercluster's active members and where corporations like DOT Technology designed breakthroughs like autonomous vehicles to replace human-operated tractors. Last October, the city attracted 120,000 attendees for the Canadian Western Agribition, the country's largest livestock show. Another success story worth pointing out: the ISM Canada Centre of Excellence at the University of Regina, which features the world's first data hub for agriculture, where the focus is heavily on food traceability solutions.

As Murad Al-Katib, president & CEO of AGT Food and Ingredients and 2017 EY World Entrepreneur of the Year, puts it: *"The opportunity for Canada is that we're going to be the first stop on the protein highway. The whole game now is about feeding the world, and, as we move toward 10 billion people by 2050, Regina will be the place to be to ensure we actually seize that opportunity and feed the world."*

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Leading the way in Ocean Science

Q&A with Dr. Kate Moran, President & CEO of Ocean Networks Canada (ONC), Victoria (British Columbia)

Can you talk about how ONC contributes to Victoria's role as a leader in ocean science and commercial marine technology?

Ocean Networks Canada operates Canada's largest and most diverse ocean observing networks. Ocean scientists, policy makers, and technologists who travel to Victoria to visit Ocean Networks Canada often turn into advocates lobbying for their organizations' conferences to be hosted in Victoria. Our leadership team participates in strategic social and economic discussions with all levels of government that help to expand Victoria's position as a leader in ocean intelligence, from big data to scientific discoveries to technological breakthroughs. Most recently, a collaboration of European neutrino scientists enlisted Ocean Networks Canada as their last resort to conduct neutrino experiments that had repeatedly failed in the Mediterranean basin.

What makes Victoria a prime place to host ocean and marine conferences to conduct research?

Our waterfront city speaks volumes about the ocean's beauty, combining ocean park settings with sustainable marine industries right downtown. This showcases Victoria's strength of supporting industry while protecting and improving local ocean health. Victoria's residents are keen to learn about science, and ocean science is near or at the top of their scientific curiosity list.

Victoria helped kick-start British Columbia's natural resources sector over a century ago. How are organizations like ONC continuing to building on this reputation?

As an ocean-front city, Victoria is seeing the impacts of human-caused climate change. The city of Victoria's vision aligns with First Nations' views, confronting the changes facing society and the planet today by looking ahead to the next seven generations.

How are the research and developments underway at ONC impacting the industry as a whole?

Ocean Networks Canada works with many industry partners who use our sensor data and Oceans 2.0, which now captures data in real-time from all of Canada's three coasts. For example, we are working with large infrastructure operators to tailor the earthquake early warning notification for their specific needs (e.g., initiating automatic valve shut-offs; slowing trains; bringing elevators to the ground floor; having alarms sound to stop surgery; providing alerts to port and airport operators).

We've worked with the Vancouver port and local pilots to provide real-time ocean current data that helps inform their management decisions about ship traffic. Additionally, our high-quality, specialized ocean hydrophone systems capture sound signatures of large ocean-going ships to help the port and governments make decisions that protect marine mammals from noise pollution. Oceans 2.0 is recognized by the World Data System and, through an international competition, their International Technology Office, which informs global data systems, is now co-located at Ocean Networks Canada.

What type of legacy can conferences expect to leave on the city, as well as on the field of marine science?

Networks Canada not only operates infrastructure for scientific research, but also delivers data products to this region that protect ocean health and enhance public safety through providing ocean health indices, sea state alerts, tsunami alerts, and earthquake early warning notifications. The city is well-positioned to lead the world in developing and implementing, in partnership with Ocean Networks Canada and others, climate change adaptation services for ensuring a high quality of life for people in a biodiverse-rich world. This progressive approach kickstarts what services and data are developed and used here and marketed globally in this age of climate change.



Paving the Way for a Creative Future

Creativity is the path to innovation - and no community is proving that to be true more than the leaders, artists and even visitors in Montreal.

Words Samantha Shankman

Through a deep and sincere commitment to transformation, Montreal is crafting a new model of what a sustainable, collaborative, and human-powered city of the future can be.

The Palais des congrès de Montréal is at the heart of Québec's largest city, which is recognized worldwide for being dynamic and creative. But the team behind Palais is leading the charge for a better future with unprecedented ambition and optimism.

The Palais' team slowly rolled out a new vision for the venue which accounts for the local community and universities, forward-thinking associations, and their impact on one another and the world. The multidimensional concept builds on the idea that all industries are creative, and sharing that creativity is the most important step towards building a better world.

The Palais des congrès de Montréal has been turned into a local hub where startups can profile their work, universities can share discoveries or find funding to research, and international visitors can find incredible access to all this is Montreal. It is the gateway to the city, and an ambassador bringing local businesses to the world.

"Montreal is well known for its creativity," said Chrystine Loriaux, director of marketing and communications at the Palais. "Creativity for us is a way of doing things differently. To not just see something new, but experience it. Associations coming to Montreal will find something different here, something that is not possible to experience anywhere else."

The team hopes that visitors can experience the magic of Montreal within the venue's own walls. It has collaborated with local artisans to bring in swings and chairs, ping pong tables and public pianos. It is collaborating with industry leaders to craft special standing exhibitions that provide conference attendees a quick view into the culture beyond the centre.

The new multidimensional approach is led by CEO Robert Mercure. His new framework is smart on two fronts: It provide small businesses, environmental initiatives, and artisans with the capital and attention needed to continue their already good work -- while welcoming visitors and business travelers to take part, therefore enriching their experience and sharing a kind of neighborly love with them.

The initiative is so compelling because it benefits everyone within the Palais' orbit including Montréalers, convention attendees and visitors from around the world.

A LEADER INSISTENT ON INNOVATION

Prior to its new direction and focus on community building, Montreal was already a top events destination. *"Montreal has an established reputation of attracting innovative events and industries. The life science sector accounts for almost half, or 40 percent, of events followed by finance, engineering, natural science, environment and energy,"* explained Loriaux.

The Palais spans 113 rooms and venues with top technology capabilities. It is also centrally located within a 10-minute walk of the city's main train station and more than 16,000 hotel rooms. Meanwhile, the city ranked the number one international convention destination in the Americas in 2018, for the second year in a row, by the Union of International Associations.

Nearly all, or 95 percent, of business tourists were satisfied with their visit to Montreal in 2018 and 98 percent were satisfied with the conference facilities, according to a 2018



survey by research firm Ipsos on behalf of Tourisme Montréal.

The ranking speaks to the quality of work and cooperation already present in the Montreal ecosystem. This new vision is building upon existing collaborations between the business tourism sector, the universities of the province of Québec, the city's main economic clusters and creative communities, and its leaders. It is clear that Palais is not in need of change – but the most innovative organizations know that the only way is forward.

A TWO-SIDED COMMITMENT

An innovative partnership between the Palais and MT Lab - North America's first innovation incubator dedicated to tourism, culture and entertainment - will play a role in revolutionizing the events industry. It is also a prime opportunity for startups which, through the Palais partnership, will have access to the entire business travel landscape against which to test their innovations.

Two startups which have already partnered with Palais are Stimulation Déjà Vu, which brings emotions alive through the sense of smell, and Livescale, which offers a

MultiCloud Platform designed for the live video revolution.

"We are so proud to work with the Palais," Stimulation Déjà Vu founder Audrey Bernard, says sincerely. "When I first met Mercure, he spoke about the new vision with such energy and excitement. This is what really inspired us because we create experience and spark emotion through the sense of smell and project people to a different place."

The partnership provides associations that arrive in Montreal with fast and easy access to Montreal's most innovative and creative startups, and likewise, creates an unprecedented opportunity for Stimulation Déjà Vu to reach new clients. Stimulation Déjà Vu also created a standing exhibition that lives inside the Palais. The local startup community is, understandably, eager to get involved like Bernard.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CREATIVITY

Furthering its creative approach to innovation, the Palais has taken it upon itself to galvanize environmental best practices and set the sustainability standards of tomorrow. The list of its efforts is impressive from supporting the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development

to local partnerships in which it hosts sustainability workshops for children.

Perhaps more creative, and in line with its foundational purpose, it has become one of the first carbon neutral convention centre in the world through an initiative that has local impact. Carbon neutrality has been achieved by offsetting the emissions from the building's energy expenditures by contributing to the forest management and tree planting efforts on four hectares of the Université Laval Montmorency Forest -- the largest teaching and research forest in the world.

The Palais' new vision is built around the celebration of creativity and support of hands-on experiences that provide a new perspective of the world. By tasking itself with living these ideals, it creates the opportunity for associations to do the same.

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A Tale of Collaborative Power

Calgary is riding high having won the bid to host the 24th World Petroleum Congress in 2023, but as Denis Painchaud, chair of World Petroleum Council (WPC) Canada explains, it was a long process requiring a collaborative, whole-city approach.

Words Chantelle Dietz

On 23 June this year, 41 WPC member countries gathered in St. Petersburg to find out who would win the privilege of hosting the 2023 World Petroleum Congress - the culmination of months of rallying and promotion. The winning country needed 21 votes to secure the event. After the first round - competing against the likes of Argentina, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates - Canada was in the lead but with just 13 votes. It picked up a few more in the

second and third rounds, but its lead was shrinking, putting everyone involved on edge.

"Kazakhstan dropped off the ballot after the third round and so their 12 votes were the votes that would determine whether Azerbaijan or Canada would win," recalls Denis Painchaud, chair of World Petroleum Council (WPC) Canada. *"We just needed five of the 12 available votes, assuming everyone else voted the same, but we were very concerned at this point as*

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan were somewhat allied in the process and we expected that most if not all of Kazakhstan's support would go to Azerbaijan."

Fortunately for Canada, in the crucial moment it narrowly pipped Azerbaijan to the post, winning the vote 21 - 20 in the fourth and final ballot. The win was a meaningful one for WPC Canada, having previously lost its bid to host the 2020 congress.



STRONG CONTENDER

Painchaud first bid to bring the congress to Canada in 2015 on the understanding it wouldn't be competing against the US. "In the run up to the vote for the 2020 congress I saw an opportunity for Canada. I contacted the chair of the US national association to ask if it was planning to bid and was told it was not," he explains. "You can imagine our surprise on 1 March 2016 - when the bidding countries were announced publicly - to find out that the US was bidding as well! Ultimately we lost that bid to Houston, but it created a resolve in our board to win the right to host the congress."

Fast forward to September 2018 and WPC Canada decided to bid again, this time for the 2023 Congress. With a practice of rewarding consecutive bids for the congress in place, Painchaud was confident Calgary was once again a strong contender, but Canada now had to get around the obstacle of convincing organisers of the merits of hosting two consecutive congresses in North America, when traditionally the event moves to a different continent each year.

As a part of its due diligence process WPC Canada surveyed other national associations on the most important considerations in determining how they would vote for a congress host. Destination was top of the list, with participants agreeing that somewhere beautiful and interesting with modern conveniences and tourism opportunities would get their vote. The size and sophistication of the local oil and gas industry including investment opportunities came second, with safety, government support and visas ranking third, fourth and fifth.

"Calgary competes very well on destination and tourism opportunities. Our facilities are within walking distance of hotels, whereas in some locations bussing for hours for delegates to get to congress facilities from hotels has been an issue," explains Painchaud. *"Canada is very safe in comparison to most countries. Our industry is also considered on the leading edge in terms of technologies deployed and Canada has one of the few remaining large resource bases that is actively courting international investment to develop. So we were well positioned on all of those considerations."*

Calgary also had another string to its bow: it previously hosted the event back in 2000 with great success. *"The 2000 congress is still regarded as one of, if not the most successful congress for the WPC,"* says Painchaud, so it had already set a strong precedent.

CITY-WIDE SUPPORT

WPC Canada led the bid working closely with local partners including Meetings + Conventions Calgary, the Stampede Park, Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, the Calgary Hotel Association and the City of Calgary to produce its bid book and associated promotional material. Meetings + Conventions Calgary, the Calgary Hotel Association and the City of Calgary also provided material funding so that WPC Canada could take on a more aggressive and visible advocacy campaign.

Additional support came from the federal and provincial governments, industry organisations like the Canadian Association of Petroleum Providers (CAPP), the Society of Petroleum Engineers and the Calgary Airport Authority, and local oil and gas companies including

CNRL, Encana, Enbridge and Suncor. The Canadian Trade Commissioners Service proved instrumental, meeting with national associations WPC Canada was unable to visit due to budget or time constraints. Even Calgary's mayor, Naheed Nenshi, made the trip to St. Petersburg to be part of the final presentation and take part in a series of advocacy initiatives to help secure the congress.

"Our success would not have been possible without the efforts of all of these organizations and their people who cared about this effort and who worked with the WPC Canada to make the bid a winner," says Painchaud. *"In the end, Calgary and Canada's reputation of being able to pull off these types of large events in a successful way and our reputation as a friendly, welcoming and inclusive people won the day."*

CALGARY 2023

The countdown to the 24th World Petroleum Congress is now on. Calgary will become the third city to host the congress twice after London and Houston when it arrives in 2023. When it first hosted the event back in 2000, it welcomed 2,000 delegates - in 2023 it is likely to attract more than double with 5,500 visitors expected. The event is set to benefit the local economy with an estimated \$65m CAD injection.

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TAKING A DEEP JOURNALISTIC DIVE INTO
DESTINATIONS AS KNOWLEDGE HUBS AND
THEIR ASSOCIATION APPEAL.

A City Brimming With Knowledge

With its picturesque, river-side setting and Nouvelle French-style architecture Québec City is a treasure trove of Instagram-worthy snaps, but dig a little deeper and you discover it has more to offer than just a pretty picture. The city has a thriving knowledge economy, making it as much a compelling business destination as it is a leisure one. It boasts Canada's highest ratio of researchers to population, with over 5,500 people working in cutting-edge fields, and is home to 400 laboratories, research centres and institutes, 120 research and development companies, five universities - including the leading Université Laval - and 38 colleges, technical institutions and vocational schools.

WORDS CHANTELE DIETZ



CHATEAU FRONTENAC, QUÉBEC CITY

"**Q**uébec City was always perceived as the tourism capital of the province of Québec and one of the leading travel destinations in Canada," says Carl Viel, president and CEO of economic development agency, Québec International. "Not everyone knows that the region has invested massively in developing a forward-thinking, knowledge-based economy. This includes infrastructure, government programs to support businesses and innovation, tax credits, and much more."

When it comes to key industries, the city is best known for its booming life sciences sector, but it's also a leader in financial services, digital arts, ICT, electronics, optics and photonics, and geospatial technology. Other lesser-known areas of expertise include food and nutrition, value added materials and transportation equipment, and green smart building. With such a variety of knowledge to be made use of, it's not surprising it gets a lot of interest from association event planners.

"Tapping into a destination's economic and educational ecosystem can do wonders to create unique experiences, attract more sponsorship dollars and access local speakers," says Marie-Elaine Lemieux, sales manager at the Québec City Convention Centre, which welcomes over 200,000 visitors from around the world for national and international events each year. Québec City Convention Centre and Québec City Tourism joined forces in 2013 to create Québec City Business Destination, the city's official convention bureau.

The two organisations work together to attract and facilitate conferences, conventions, meetings and other events in the city. Québec City Business destination has over 30 members including hotels, business tourism and event planning services. Its team of sales representatives are experts on Québec City as a host city, and can support organisers with each phase of the event planning process.

Army of ambassadors

One of the ways Québec City Business Destination attracts events is through its Ambassadors' Club. Since it was established in 1996, the club has brought 190 international conferences to the city. With the help of its esteemed members including professors and researchers, business people and organisations working across multiple sectors, it serves as a 'one-stop-shop' for conference organisers, providing the expertise, resources, and support they need to stage their event. The ambassadors - of which there are now 150 - draw upon their networks of contacts to convince decision-makers and their organisations to choose Québec City for their conference.



© EMMANUEL COVENY

One such ambassador - Sylvain Moineau, a professor in Université Laval's Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Bioinformatics at the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering and a researcher at the Faculty of Dentistry - was behind the successful bid to stage the 13th Annual International CRISPR Congress in Québec City this June.

Moineau is one of the world's leading experts on bacteriophages - also known as phages (viruses that attack bacteria) - and has made it his life's mission to understand viruses and the vital role they play in our lives. He holds Canada's Research Chair in Bacteriophages and is curator of the world's largest public collection of phages.

The event brought hundreds of researchers from around the globe together to exchange their latest discoveries on and applications using CRISPR-Cas systems, a first for Canada. For Moineau it was a "momentous occasion" enabling all involved to see just how far the research has come. "We still have so much to learn, and I am proud that Québec City was the backdrop to an event

that pays tribute to one of the smallest biological entities known to mankind that can potentially make a huge impact on human health," he says.

Ahead of the curve

Advancements in the field of life sciences are being made all the time Québec City, including new vaccines for viruses and new treatments for diseases. Ten of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies are based in the city and there are 85 life sciences research centres, chairs and clusters, accounting for more than 600 research professors - many of them world-renowned.

"Québec City has truly made its mark in the world's life sciences industry thanks to several key factors," explains Carl Viel. "For one, the city is focused on health research. Université Laval is one of the top ten research universities in Canada and, along with the burgeoning number of research chairs, partner chairs, research

centers and institutes, over \$357 million has been awarded in grants and contracts in the past three years alone. That immediately signifies that Québec City is home to top professors, researchers and students who are conducting some ahead-of-the-curve, high-quality studies," he adds.

Complementing Québec City's dedication to university research is Alliance santé Québec, an initiative that brings leaders from the Québec City region, including university faculties, healthcare institutions, stakeholders from the business community, and economic development agents, to further innovate in delivering sustainable healthcare. "Alliance santé Québec symbolizes the amazing synergy between different fields of expertise to take healthcare to a whole new level—to the benefit of citizens everywhere," says Viel.

Driving innovation

With more than 500 high-tech companies generating almost \$2 billion in sales annually, Québec City has a flourishing technology ecosystem - rivaling cities with twice, even three times, its population. It boasts 65 research centres, chairs, groups, and institutes and employs a 19,000-strong workforce. This wealth of knowledge has created an environment ripe for entrepreneurship and innovative start-ups across many different high-tech sectors including digital arts, optics/photonics, geospatial technology and ICT.

Thanks to this optimum blend of infrastructure, people and innovation, it is developing systems and approaches that are revolutionising a number of fields. "Québec City's secret is that it has brought together and developed the most important ingredients to create a thriving technology ecosystem: state-of-the-art research centres, programs to support technology entrepreneurs, access to a wide range of financial and legal services, a qualified and skilled workforce, and close regional cooperation amongst all stakeholders in the business and high-tech sector," explains Sebastien Tanguay, general manager at Québec International's Le Camp, an incubator-accelerator dedicated to tech businesses' growth and mentorship.

As such, the city regularly attracts both national and international associations eager to leverage these assets. The International Association for the Engineering Modelling, Analysis and Simulation Community (NAFEMS) brought its 2019 World Congress to the city in June, while the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) welcomed 1,000 delegates to its International Design Engineering Technical Conference and Computer and Information in Engineering Conference in August 2018.

Future growth

Québec City's food and nutrition industry is also showing promising potential. There are currently 160 businesses operating in the sector, employing more than 6,500 people and generating \$1.33 billion in revenues. Completing the network are 10 research facilities, including the Institute of Nutrition and Functional Foods, which analyzes products and looks for ways to make them healthier, the incubator-accelerator AG-Bio Centre, Université Laval's Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences and Cégep de Limoilou's technical training in dietary sciences.

The agri-food sector continues to make great strides forward, owing to the vast array of businesses and food products offering a wide variety of foodstuffs and terroir products. In 2016, the region's successful strawberry-producing industry came under the spotlight, when Québec City became the first Canadian city to stage the International Strawberry Symposium at the Québec City Convention Centre. The event attracted over 700 experts from over 30 countries, including researchers, producers, propagators, academics and business people who wanted to gain insight into the latest developments in the worldwide strawberry industry.

The bid to host the event was led by Yves Desjardins, a professor and researcher at the Université Laval's Centre de Recherche en Horticulture (CRH) and Institut des Nutraceutiques et des Aliments Fonctionnels (INAF). "Québec City was a natural fit for the 2016 symposium," he says. But, he believes it was the "allure" of Québec City along with a "stellar" presentation he prepared in conjunction with the Québec City's Ambassadors' Club that ultimately helped tip the scales in their favour and clinch the deal. "It's so easy to 'sell' Québec City with its European charm, accessibility and fine dining—all with a North American twist," he says.

In acknowledgement of his organisation and involvement of this event and several others high-profile association events, Desjardins was named the 2016 Ambassador of the Year for Québec City's Ambassadors' Club.

Québec City's knowledge economy growth shows no signs of slowing down, something that Carl Viel is extremely proud of: "We're still at the cusp of Québec City's potential. The next few years are promising to be even more exciting, thanks to new investments - local and foreign - and industries from around the world eyeing the region for its amazing resources and tremendous potential. We're in for quite a ride!"

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An Australian Story of Robots

Australia is no stranger to success. It has world-class expertise in a wide variety of sectors, ranging from food to agribusiness, and its leaders in health and science, financial and professional services, resources and energy, and infrastructure, are of global renown. In this context, Sydney has been building itself into an international hub of technology and innovation. Through a consistent commitment to community, education and collaboration, the city is attracting global events from the most forward-thinking and entrepreneurial organizations worldwide. The most recent of these was RoboCup 2019 held at ICC Sydney in June.

Words Samantha Shankman

RoboCup is an international robotics competition that's been running since 1997. Officially, it is a scientific initiative with the goal of advancing the state of the art of intelligent robots.

"It is an academic event in that it was originally intended to try to foster research in robotics and AI," explains Claude Sammut. *"It is a sort of Olympics of robotics with many different competitions under one roof."* Sammut is a professor of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of NSW and served as the General Chair for the Local Organising Committee of RoboCup 2019.

Although the first official competition was held in Nagoya in 1997, the organization behind it was international from the start, including founding members from the USA and Europe. A trial robot soccer game was held in Paris in 1996, and the international RoboCup Federation was founded to oversee the event. The confessed goal is to beat the FIFA world champions by 2050.

The RoboCup organization even likens its intent to that of the moon landing. *"The accomplishment of the goal itself is a landmark in the history of mankind. Although the direct economic impact of having someone land on the moon is slim, technologies developed to achieve this goal were so significant that they formed powerful technological and human foundations for American industries,"* reads the organization's website.

Although building a robot that plays soccer might not seem to generate significant social or economic impact, the technologies created to do so will inform and accelerate innovation in other areas. And Sydney was the perfect place for this ambitious event to place as we inch towards 2020.

WELL SITUATED IN SYDNEY

In Sydney, more than 2,000 participants arrived from 40 countries to build and compete their robots designed for a range of industrial, domestic and recreational purposes. The main competition is intended for researchers, but a junior competition now includes school-grade participants - a particularly promising addition. The most talented young teams from competitions around the world come together here, and get a glance of what's possible if they continue on their path.

"What's great about this setup is that these young students get to work alongside the graduate students in the major competition and see the potential of where they can go if they stick with robotics in a few years time," says Sammut. *"The junior competition is designed to foster education, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. A primary purpose is to inspire more students to work in this field."*





RoboCup has been held in cities across the world, and this was the first time that the event returned to Australia since it was held in Melbourne in 2000. The country has traditionally stood out in robotics, especially in field robots, which are designed for outdoor purposes including mining automation, agriculture and infrastructure maintenance. *“It was an opportunity to showcase what we do in Australia. We have a strong record that we wanted to highlight and it is a way to promote this kind of research”* says Sammut.

Australia’s own technology scene is rapidly evolving today, and the whole economy of the country is, in fact, shifting. There is an increased interest in technology and innovation as the startup scene takes off. *“Increasingly, we see our students not just going off to work for an employer but thinking about their own startups,”* says Sammut. The startup scene is growing in part because of Australians who go overseas and then return with expertise and experience to contribute to national innovation. One of the reasons for this shift is Sydney’s world class universities and professors that champion computing, AI and robotics.

Sydney is, indeed, an economic powerhouse – one of many in Australia. It offers huge trading opportunities with Asia, and a lot of associations willing to engage, would see this as an

opportunity to attract Asian delegates to their conference. As an intellectual capital, Sydney’s key areas of expertise are aplenty and its start-up culture is very vibrant.

CHAMPIONING INNOVATION

Located on the iconic Sydney Harbor, ICC Sydney is more than an outstanding venue. It is an incubator for ideas, a champion for change, and advocate for community. *“For us at ICC Sydney, hosting events is about much more than the numbers. The venue is a champion of change and community, with deep local connections,”* says ICC Sydney CEO Geoff Donaghy.

The venue is recognized internationally among its peers for its smart and strategic use of global meetings to shape the city and build the innovation economy. Opened in 2016, the venue is the result of A\$1.5 billion development intended to build a space that accounts for the future demands of the meetings industry. With sweeping views of the city and water, the venue is uniquely designed with its internal and open-air spaces event spaces. Theatre capacities range from 2,000 to 9,000 and there is 35,000 sqm of internal exhibition space, which includes 32,600 sqm arranged over two floors of exhibition halls with an additional 2,400 sqm of multiple purpose event space. The

venue also boasts the largest ballroom in Australia with views of the water and city.

"It is a very modern space," explains Sammut. *"Logistically, RoboCup is a very complicated event to run because there are hundreds of teams coming from around the world with different power requirements and security demands. The organizers had to build 20 different arenas for the different competitions. ICC was really good at handling all of that."*

He also praised the location of the venue. The students work long hours and were able to quickly and easily access restaurants and lodging within walking distance. *"For a competition where people tend to work for as long hours as they can on these robots, they like to be close by. One of the big factors is location and everything was close,"* says Sammut.

ICC Sydney sits at the intersection of Sydney's academic, cultural and technology districts. Not only do guests have access to world-class meeting spaces, but outstanding restaurants, diverse entertainment and smart businesses are nearby. The venue is also located within walking distance to more than half of Sydney's 33,000 hotel rooms and 5 miles from Sydney International Airport. There are multiple transport options including road, light rail, train and ferry.

RoboCup is only one of the many major international and national tech events held at ICC Sydney this year. Other events hosted this year include Amazon Web Services, Salesforce World Tour, Adobe 2019 Symposium, and SMACC (Social Media in Critical Care).

In fact, 10 percent of the international events hosted at ICC are based in the technology sector. On a local level, ICC Sydney also hosts innovation events on almost a weekly basis. It is this intersection of local and international collaboration in support of technology, entrepreneurship and innovation that is shifting the entire groundwork of its economy and knowledge base.

BUILT TO BUILD

ICC Sydney sought out to foster community and collaboration since before its door opened. *"Since before ICC Sydney's opening, we understood how important an innovation brand is for a city. Sydney has a strong tourism and leisure brand, but we have sought to shift this focus onto the brains of the city and how clients are able to connect with this when they bring their events to the city,"* explains Donaghy.

ICC Sydney's industry-leading Legacy Programs was designed to expand the intellectual capital of an event across the city. The legacy team works with event organizers to identify opportunities that advance the social or sustainability goals of an event while crafting new relationships and partnerships with local organizations.

The Legacy Program also enriches delegates' experience by providing clients with a platform to connect with the community and give back across five dedicated streams including Creative Industries, Innovators and Entrepreneurs, Generation Next and Sustainable Events.

"Through the Innovators and Entrepreneurs stream, we are fostering innovation and connecting clients with Sydney's burgeoning startup scene including the Sydney Startup Hub, which provides working space for innovators, entrepreneurs and investors," says Donaghy. In fact, ICC Sydney's 2019 More Than a Venue campaign highlights the many ways that the venue connects clients to Sydney's top innovators and entrepreneurs.

The venue's team gone beyond what is expected to take on the role of ambassador. Its goal is to build Sydney's branding as a hub of innovation and attract more events based on technology and innovation.

Business Events Sydney, formerly known as Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau, also plays an important role in crafting opportunities for collaboration and technological advancement in Sydney. BESydney CEO Lyn Lewis-Smith is particularly focused on the role that innovation-based conferences play in developing a knowledge economy.

Her organization is built on the foundational belief that business events drive trade, industry, investment, high-yield tourism and global talent acquisition. They serve as the global meeting point to exchange ideas and reveal innovations and kickstart networks and collaborations.

"BESydney is targeting global meetings that we believe can contribute to our city's transformation, bringing in global conversations on smart cities, artificial intelligence and the new economies," Lewis-Smith said at IMEX Frankfurt in May.

As such, Sydney might well be the epitome of the Australian spirit, eager to explore new frontiers. It is taking a holistic and multidimensional approach in its ascent as an international destination for technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. Its leaders recognize the critical role that events play in its development and the symbiotic relationship that it has created between international events participants and the local community.

For more information on business events in Australia:

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Creating Opportunity Down Under

In Australia, thanks to collaboration, groundbreaking hubs are connecting community, medicine, industry and academia – and creating opportunities. More particularly down south, Adelaide is fast becoming a life sciences hotspot thanks to a new hi-tech health and medical precinct with state-of-the-art research facilities and strong ties to local hospitals and academia. Which helps the Adelaide Convention Centre attract high-profile medical conferences and, in turn, position itself as an ideal venue for knowledge transfer.

Words Rémi Dévé



THE ADELAIDE CONVENTION CENTRE STANDS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE
ADELAIDE BIOMED CITY HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES CLUSTER

Adelaide, South Australia's capital city, has enjoyed steady growth in recent years. While the city is well known for its relaxed lifestyle, its major cultural festivals, its pristine beaches (which sit just a short tram ride away from the city centre), and the nearby McLaren Vale and Barossa Valley, perfect for wine tasting and kangaroo feeding, in recent years it has made a name for itself as a new state-of-the-art biomedical and life sciences health hub. Government-funded incentives and faster ethics approvals are also driving foreign investment from companies keen to do phase one clinical trials here - and the precinct has played a major role in reinventing the city following its car manufacturing decline.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In this context, the Adelaide BioMed City health and life sciences cluster is one of the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. Spearheaded by the futuristic-looking South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), the precinct also comprises medical science research centres at the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, along with the new Royal Adelaide Hospital. Next to join the precinct will be SAHMRI 2, featuring the Southern Hemisphere's first proton therapy unit, focused on the treatment of inoperable cancers. Construction on SAHMRI 2 is expected to commence shortly, with completion earmarked for 2022. Meanwhile, the science and medical-focused Tonsley Innovation District - built on the former Mitsubishi manufacturing site - is a 61-hectare precinct where medical device companies collaborate with the Medical Devices Research Institute at Flinders University.

From a health and medical research perspective, the proximity of the Adelaide Convention Centre to Adelaide BioMed City, definitely makes it the envy of conference venues around the world. *"Our positioning right next door to one of the largest health and life sciences precincts in the Southern Hemisphere has certainly helped bolster Adelaide's reputation as a leading and innovative medical conference capital,"* comments Simon Burgess, general manager of the Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC). *"It makes for a unique proposition for conference organisers, providing valuable support in everything from access to delegates and speakers to the ability to facilitate tours of world-leading facilities. If we could choose our neighbours, BioMed City would have been at the top of our list, particularly for a venue like ours where medical and health related conferences account for more than one-third of our business."*

BioMed City, indeed, provides conferences coming to Adelaide with a ready supply of speakers and delegates, with more than 2,000 researchers and thousands of academics, staff and clinicians on the Centre's doorstep. ACC's team is focusing its efforts on SAHMRI's key research fields including cancer; heart health; indigenous health equity; brain disease; mothers and children; and mental health and well-being- and attracts conferences that are aligned with the destination's expertise. Upcoming international

medical conferences confirmed for the Centre include the 2022 World Congress of Echocardiography and Allied Techniques (1,300 delegates), and the International Combined Meeting of Orthopaedic Research Societies (700 delegates), which has teamed up with the Australian Orthopaedic Association Annual Scientific Meeting (1,300 delegates).

DRIVING INNOVATION

"Our close proximity to the Convention Centre makes it easy for our researchers and clinicians to connect with innovative thinkers and welcome international guests to our biomedical precinct," says Yvette van Eenennaam, General Manager, Adelaide BioMed City. *"And not just those that are related to their individual fields, but relevant for driving innovation. The converging of emerging technologies in our biomedical field is exponentially growing. Technologies within the defence and space industry, big data and machine learning are driving improved healthcare and research outcomes and we are keen to work with Adelaide Convention Centre to further stimulate knowledge sharing in these fields."*

Echoing van Eenennaam's comment, Professor Steve Wesselingh, SAHMRI Executive Director, praises Adelaide Convention Centre as a facilitator of knowledge transfer: *"Anytime you bring people with similar professional interests together there will naturally be an exchange of knowledge and experiences, which is fantastic. The Adelaide Convention Centre maximises the potential for this by striking a great balance between professionalism and comfort."*

All in all, Adelaide provides the bigger picture for conference organisers and delegates alike. No conference is 100 per cent work and Adelaide is easy to navigate with an incredible variety of things to see and do on the Convention Centre's doorstep. If visitors have a little more time to spare they are spoiled for choice with world class galleries, museums, wineries, beaches and national parks just a short drive away.

But Adelaide's added values lie in the extra opportunities it provides. As Yvette van Eenennaam concludes: *"Whenever I am travelling for business, I try to combine the conference I'm attending with some visits to institutions to meet with experts in my area. Adelaide offers an abundance of these opportunities - from our Adelaide BioMed City to Tonsley Innovation District with its focus on hi-tech manufacturing and R&D; and more recently, Lot Fourteen - an entrepreneurial ecosystem in artificial intelligence; cyber security; smart sensor networks; robotics; big data; defence and space technologies; and media and creative industries. People around the globe aren't always aware of the incredible beauty - and innovation - that can be found here. And they should!"*

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The Driver of the ICT Conversation

For over 600 years, Seoul has served as the capital and centre of Korean culture. If you stroll through the city, remnants of its illustrious past mingle with signs of its modern present – and future. The ancient Dongdaemun (East Gate) sits alongside the Zaha Hadid-designed Dongdaemun Design Plaza – the new cultural hub for the historic district. Seoul is getting smart – and we’re referring to its burgeoning reputation as a world leader in technology, where high-speed communications are boosting business, as well as modern-day life.

Words Lane Nieset

Boasting some of the world’s fastest Internet speeds – coupled with city-wide WiFi coverage – Seoul’s ICT industry is not only connecting visitors convening in the city, it’s making the city one of the most connected places on the planet.

GLOBAL INNOVATION POWERHOUSE

Korea ranks as the world’s eleventh-largest economy, and ICT is one of its most significant exports. According to the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2018, Korea is the world’s champion when it comes to broad-based ICT adoption, scoring nearly perfect at 91.3. The report also ranks Korea eighth on the innovation pillar for its role as a global innovation powerhouse, since the country is home to some of the world’s highest penetration rates of ICTs.

In 2019, Seoul held on to its third-place ranking for the fourth year in a row. The city serves as a regular host to many IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics

Engineers) events, including next year’s IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference 2020 and the IEEE MTT-S Wireless Power Transfer Conference (WPTC) 2020 – which will bring a combined attendance of 1,200 to town.

IEEE, which was established in 1963 and includes more than 422,000 members spread throughout over 160 countries, established its Seoul Section in 1978. Over 40 years later, IEEE, the world’s largest technical professional organization for the advancement of technology, continues to facilitate knowledge-sharing between local and international members as part of its role to “advance technology for the benefit of humanity” – a role the city of Seoul also takes quite seriously. As chair of the Seoul Section, Jong Chang Yi, says on the site’s welcome page, “*It is now our obligation to welcome the young generations to form their own specialized groups and pave their ways into building the right blocks for the [ICT community].*”

DRIVING THE DIALOGUE

Part of why Seoul attracts organizations like IEEE is its innovative relationship with technology. Instead of merely responding to the “Fourth Industrial Revolution,” the city wants to be the one driving the conversation, acting as a hotbed for research and growth by offering associations the tools they need to be part of the dialogue and make a difference.

“There are numerous appeals to Seoul as a venue for IT-related conferences, but most notably, having the world’s best IT infrastructure, a convenient geographic location, large convention centres, convenient public transport and high-quality accommodation are the charms of the city,” says Professor Kyung Mu Lee, ICCV (International Conference on Computer Vision) general chair and Computer Vision Foundation (CVF) Advisory Board member.

In 2015, Coex provided bidding clinic support for ICCV 2019. The premier international computer vision event will



DONGDAEMUN DESIGN PLAZA

bring 5,000 attendees (4,500 of which are coming from overseas) to Seoul in October for the week-long event. As Professor Lee puts it: *"ICCV is the world's most important and representative conference in the field of artificial intelligence. It is very meaningful and encouraging that this influential, large-scale academic conference is to be held in Seoul at this moment of AI becoming one of the big topics around the world. Not only is the ICCV 2019 more than twice its normal size, many new technical breakthroughs will be announced in content."*

Coex Convention & Exhibition Center, considered "Korea's Venue of Choice," offers four exhibition halls and 54 meeting rooms, plus three five-star hotels, Asia's largest shopping mall, two theatres, and the city's only airport terminal. It's also the only convention centre in Korea to receive convention support services on a district level. Coex hosts over 2,000 meetings and events per year, including some of the country's most notable, such as the 2010 G-20 Seoul Summit and the 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.

Lee counts the convention centre as one of the factors that boosted the participation response for ICCV 2019, adding that *"participation in exhibitions by leading companies around the world will be a good opportunity to gauge the current status and future of cutting-edge artificial intelligence and computer vision technology. I think that this event will be a new momentum to innovate in the AI academia and industry in Korea."*

CONNECTING A CULTURE

Thanks to local manufacturers like LG and Samsung, citizens in Seoul use smart phones for practically everything, from banking and hailing taxis to

ordering groceries. It's even said that *"the consumption of content in Seoul is more digital than ever."* This refers to how people consume popular *hallyu*, or "Korean Wave" content, by streaming TV dramas or participating in online gaming on their smart phone device.

In the 20 years since Korea's late-90s broadband boom and the first official World Cyber Games, which debuted in Seoul in 2001, people have moved from PCs to modern mobiles, all thanks to the quality of the country's high-speed Internet. And in June, just three months after 5G rolled out, more than a million Koreans switched to the fifth-generation cellular network, which, *"facilitates the operation of fourth industrial revolution technology, such as virtual reality, automatic driving, and IoT technology,"* according to Seoul Convention Bureau's latest MICE Trend newsletter.

"It's very impressive to see the Seoul Metropolitan government actively working toward to expand human resources in many IT related areas, especially in AI and Big Data," Professor Lee adds. One of the best examples is the new LG Sciencepark, a 26-building campus—one of the world's largest corporate research campuses—in Seoul's R&D-focused Magok District. The 1.1 million-sqm campus acts as the world research headquarters for LG Group's consumer electronics business, accommodating 24,000 LG researchers and engineers, in addition to serving as a new scientific hub for South Korea. As Ju-Hwan Shin, managing director of LG Science Park Business Unit/Construction Drive Division, said in a statement about the "next-generation" campus: *"All design decisions were made from the perspective of researchers, with research productivity and the synergy of fusion in mind."*

Seoul's City-Wide Support

Seoul's digital-savvy mindset makes it easy for international planners to tour venue facilities anywhere they are in the world with just a click of a mouse. And thanks to resources like the Seoul MICE Alliance (SMA), a partnership between government agencies and private-sector organizations, planners who work with member companies reap even more benefits in terms of bidding and hosting events. In fact, the PLUS Seoul program can support them every step of the way.

"The factors that led to the success of ICCV 2019 are the strengths and attractiveness of the host city, Seoul, and its largest convention centre, Coex, which offered thorough preparation [plans and services for the conference]," Lee says. *"This year, the exhibition programs of various companies significantly increased compared to previous conferences. It's a great opportunity to see the development of computer vision and artificial intelligence technologies and how they apply to real products and services. Plus, we can showcase attractions in Seoul, which beautifully blends its 600-year-old tradition with its image as a high-tech city."*

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THIS STORY IS PART OF BOARDROOM'S LEGACY SERIES, WHERE WE TAKE A DEEP JOURNALISTIC DIVE INTO HOW CONFERENCES CAN LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY IN THE CITIES OR REGIONS WHERE THEY'RE HELD... AND BEYOND.

Today's Business Events Serve Tomorrow's Generation

What is the real power of association conferences? The hot topic has become part of the core of Business Events Sarawak or BESarawak (formerly Sarawak Convention Bureau) that is now looking beyond the narrow limits of business tourism financial benefits. Malaysia's biggest state and second-tier conference destination with rapidly-increasing popularity has recently expanded its focus towards the social impact and remote legacy meetings can leave behind.

WORDS VICKY KOFFA



BESarawak's Redefining Global Tribes (RGT) campaign began in 2017 and has received much praise among the meetings industry experts putting out tribal values of community, identity and unity. The innovative campaign has helped Sarawak win a place both in conference organizers and delegates' hearts alike as the state has been moving up the rankings of the global market.

According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)'s global ranking report released in May, Malaysia is ranked 9th in the region with Sarawak being a huge contributor in the nation's success, while Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, shot to N^o32 on the city rankings. Such great success means only the beginning of progressive ideas and values for the state, who is yet again rising to the challenge of a new era.

New year, new focus

The start of 2019 found the bureau with a new name, image and a diverse focal point which heightens the intangible pay-back of business events. Not so long ago business events were assessed merely by delegate expenditure on travelling, shopping, commuting, eating and sleeping. BESarawak's contribution has reached over RM720 million in total since 2006.

The economic impact is only the facade of what business events can offer society. BESarawak is now eager to demonstrate that the power of knowledge and the power of associations and academia can advance research, science and innovation. Using the global network of an international association new talent will flood in the country creating clusters and higher standards for any industry.

Chief Operating Officer of BESarawak, Amelia Roziman, shares that *"BESarawak's focus this year is on advocating legacy impact in every business event held in this state. This means looking beyond the economic input and expanding our focus to the significance of conferences through the promotion and usage of knowledge exchanged to have a positive effect on various areas of sectors. Besides from sharing knowledge and expanding our education outcomes, we are also measuring business events' capability to enhance future research capacities and fundraising opportunities, and whether it can reform public policies or even create new ones."*

The visionary target will not be achieved without close collaboration and support. Business Events Sarawak and the Sarawak government have placed 7 Key Focus Areas (KFAs) as crucial factors, namely Urban Development & Redevelopment (inclusive of the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy), Social, Environmental and Agricultural Development plus

Service Industry and Digital Economy. These distinctive elements of community growth are set to trigger a domino effect of impactful motions in their respective areas in favour of the state and the nation.

"Associations are vying for a bigger purpose that is closely linked to their objectives, hence government support is unquestionably vital," Amelia emphasizes. *"Regardless of which market we are aiming for (this year we have set our sights on ASEAN countries, Australia and Europe), the support that is received from the government such as local government agencies and industry partners is undivided."* This support is prominent in every step of the way, even before bidding begins, making the planning of a conference as smooth as it gets.

In fact, Sarawak is creating a win-win situation with its Legacy Impact Programme. Through helping associations fulfil their *'bigger purpose'* and leave a legacy by leveraging from this support, the state reaps the benefits of economic growth and knowledge influx, which in turn leads to better standard of living for the future generations.

Four major pillars of legacy impacts laid out by BESarawak are meant to vest more power to business events in order to extract their full value and drive change. These pillars are identified as Advancing the Field, Economic Outcomes, Community Benefits and Public Policy. The first assigns the leading role to local associations and global networking, which will lead to wider trade opportunities and industrial development. Cultural, social and public welfare outcomes can be achieved for the community, which in turn can also benefit by policy changes.

The forward-looking mentality is already taking root in Malaysia. Conferences such as the 2019 Borneo Coffee Symposium and the 8th International Conference on Bioprocessing, both held recently in Sarawak, have had tangible effects in their respective sectors.

The 2019 Borneo Coffee Symposium

Business events had the sweet taste of coffee on 6 and 7 April this year during the very first Borneo Coffee Symposium, held at the Old Court House in Kuching. Over 250 renowned coffee scientists as well as experienced coffee farmers and estate owners gathered in East Malaysia, on the island of Borneo, all sharing the same purpose: to show the world the potential of high-quality coffee cultivation in the area in a sustainable way.

Organized by Earthlings Coffee Workshop, the Symposium was the first of its kind to be held in Borneo and aimed to

find the possibilities to produce a sustainable coffee cultivation model in rainforests. Particularly, to solve the lowland and warmer climate challenges by introducing the right species and varieties of coffee and introducing the knowledge of modern coffee cultivation to the Sarawak state.

Coffee cultivation in Sarawak has been growing rapidly, but the local tribes need the right guidance and knowledge in order to enter the global market successfully. The Symposium managed to do just that: well-known speakers and international coffee education systems such as "CoffeeCraftsman Education" from Germany, which was brought to Sarawak right after the Borneo Coffee Symposium, provided tailor-made support for local coffee growers.

Events like the "Liberica Coffee Roasting Competition" and "Cross-Species Coffee Cupping" that happened during the Symposium were also organized to support the direction of the right coffee species for the region. Dr. Kenny Lee Wee Ting, founder of Earthlings Coffee Workshop, believes that *"with proper coffee education and the thorough understanding of the global coffee market, coffee is a type of environmentally-friendly crop that would benefit Sarawak not only financially, but also in terms of helping to protect our natural environment."*

Dr. Lee is optimistic about the future of coffee in Sarawak: *"I am quite confident to say that the future of Sarawak coffee cultivation will go toward the direction of a "high-quality, small scale estate or garden coffee" model - where coffee would not be planted in mass scale, but instead, will be produced by individual coffee growers from different villages with knowledge of growing and processing high-quality coffee."*

The Symposium made great impact within the government. The Ministry of Modernisation of Agriculture, Native Land and Regional Development has already increased financial investment for coffee planting and is now looking into socio-economic benefits for farmers in crop diversification, moving from subsistence to specialty production, recognition of farmer identity and their contribution to labour and identity of state too.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Sarawak government represented by Department of Agriculture Sarawak (DOA) and Earthlings Coffee Workshop on the last day of the Symposium proves the point of collaboration and mutual benefit deriving from business events. Based on BESarawak's drivers, the acquired knowledge and skills gained at the Symposium provides a platform for the formation of new associations in the industry with the goal to educate the younger generation and put Borneo on the world's coffee map.

The immediate impact of the Symposium is indisputable as every coffee related business segments in Sarawak or even entire Malaysia will benefit from the rise of local grown coffee independent of brand identity or cost considerations. In the long run, such a knowledge intensive symposium will stir the waters for coffee players in Malaysia, forcing them to update their products and market knowledge in order to catch up with the international competition. According to Dr. Lee *"this would lead to a healthier competition throughout the whole coffee industrial chain in Sarawak. If everyone in the industry demand better quality coffee and have the knowledge to produce it, they will surely work with the local farmers to reach the desired result."*

The 8th International Conference on Bioprocessing

In the same spirit of innovation and knowledge, the 8th International Conference on Bioprocessing (IBA-IFIBiop 2019) took place at the Imperial Hotel Miri, making this its first visit in Sarawak. During the five first days of May this year, this conference brought together scientists, engineers, and experts to deliberate on developments in the field of bioenergy and bio-fuels, food technology and engineering, industrial biotechnology, environmental biotechnology and upstream and downstream bioprocesses. Organized biennially by the International Bioprocessing Association (IBA), the conference has attracted many participants worldwide in the past.

Under the theme 'Bridging Sustainability and Industrial Revolution through Green Bioprocessing', the event aimed to provide a platform for participants from various industries and academic institutions to share thoughts and views on the bioprocesses and biotechnology, while developing research connections and networking. A highlight was the discussions on new technologies related to bioprocessing and biomass energy, which is aligned with Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) initiatives focusing on palm oil industry.

According to Dr. Bridgid Chin Lai Fui, Senior Lecturer for Curtin University of Technology at the Sarawak Campus and co-chair of the conference, *'industrial bioprocessing is key to facing the challenges of the provision of food, water and energy supplies, environmental issues and climate change humanity is facing due to global population and urban growth. The technology has the power to bring future economic development not only for Sarawak and Malaysia but also on a global level.'*

In her opinion, *'bioprocessing application involving biotechnology and natural based products that are being converted into industrial setting can fuel the current and future world economic powerhouses. In addressing the fossil fuel depletion and climate change threats, a*

How Sarawak measure impact

Steering its efforts to analyse what lies deep under the surface of business events, BESarawak made a forward-looking alliance with consultancy group GainingEdge and two major universities in March 2019 to conduct a study on hosting conventions in Sarawak, enabling an estimated 5,000 delegates to make an impact in the local community upon completing the allocated feedback form. To date, 10 conferences have agreed to participate.

Amelia elaborates: *"What is distinct about this is that Sarawak is one of the very few destinations in the world conducting such a study, with each feedback form worth 1 US Dollar, donated by BESarawak to the Chumbaka Junior Innovate Fund. This entitles us to purchase up to 74 digital learning kits for 1,000 rural school children in Sarawak to give them a head start in learning future technological skills."*

The reward for the delegates who choose Sarawak comes in the form of a unique experience of work and fun. During IMEX in Frankfurt this past May, the bureau soft-launched its latest campaign, Redefining Global Tribes – Impact (#RGTImpact), a three-year collaborative campaign with Sarawak Tourism Board to boost the economic impact and the State Planning Unit (SPU) to yield legacy impact and diversify the return of investment in business events. A segment of this campaign is the recently-announced 'I Want to Discover Sarawak' contest, which offers delegates the opportunity to relax and meet Sarawak's wonders.

shift to renewable resources is necessary to ensure long-term energy supplies. Thus, bioprocessing application displays a promising outlook in search for energy alternatives which are renewable and environmentally friendly and could meet the future world energy demand.'

Bold initiatives such as the one of the Malaysian government to promote extensively the research on renewable energy in the 8-10th Malaysian Plans in order to increase the use of renewable energy up to 11% in the year of 2020, bear proof that such heavyweight conventions help raise the world's awareness when needed.

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Meet in Switzerland's Highest-Knowledge City

A congress city with a long tradition of hosting meetings of all sizes and formats, Davos is perhaps best known as the venue of the World Economic Forum, which gathers around 3,000 leading figures from the worlds of business, politics and science every year. As such, it has all the expertise and the capacity to host association events, as Professor Geoff Richards, Director, AO Research Institute Davos, can surely testify.

Words Rémi Dévé

The highest-altitude city and the largest municipality in Switzerland in terms of surface area, Davos has since long been established as a congress, research and clinic destination. What was once only a health resort has developed into what is known today as Science City Davos. The knowledge accumulated here - primarily in the fields of natural science and medicine - has been passed on since the beginning of the 20th century.

In that regards, the AO Foundation leads the way in the treatment of trauma and disorders of the musculoskeletal system. Founded in 1958 as a medically guided, not-for-profit organization led by an international group of surgeons, it has now a global network of over 200,000 healthcare professionals.

Director of the AO Research Institute Davos, one of the four institutes of the AO Foundation, Professor Geoff Richards has been organizing the eCM Conferences for some time now. As the place where clinicians and industry meet, it brings together, by design, a rather limited number of participants (max 200) to ensure ample opportunities for knowledge sharing in basic, translational and clinical research. In this context, scientists of all kinds, including biologists, engineers and material experts, bring clinical problems to the table, consider industrial requirements of possible solutions and often initiate collaborative projects to answer these clinical problems.

"But our flagship congress is the one that the AO Foundation has been running

every year in December since 1960 in Davos and since 1969 at Davos Congress Centre", says Professor Richards. "It brings together around 1,500 surgeons from different specialties, from spine to trauma and veterinary and now re-con (joint replacement). The Foundation is the biggest educator in this field in the world. We run numerous courses around the world every year: there were 832 educational events (courses, seminars and symposia) in 2018, plus 53 courses for operational room personnel (ORP) - and our pinnacle courses are in Davos. Overall we taught around 61,000 surgeons and 2,400 ORP last year on operations skills and basic knowledge behind surgeries."

Historically, because there was a need for a place to hold some advanced training courses in several fields, the

Davos Congress Centre was built in 1969, where the World Economic Forum has been held every year since 1971. As Davos progressively developed into an internationally known congress location, the Congress Centre was extended in 1979, and again in 1989 and 2010, to cope with an ever-increasing number of participants. Today, Davos Congress Centre has an overall capacity of 5,000 participants.

"With respect to holding a congress at Davos Congress Centre, nearly everything can be organized for you by Davos Congress and its PCO service, which is very convenient," says Professor Richards. "Accommodation can be booked through their website, from budget hotels to all-stars facilities. In general, rates are cheaper than in the rest of Europe, and the quality is good. Davos Congress Centre can cater to all needs from budget congresses to high-end events such as the World Economic Forum of course, which I personally attend each year. The venue is really of top quality and its staff very flexible and professional. There are many rooms that can be used for parallel meetings and its large, lecture hall can accommodate up to 1,800 pax. I have just run my eCM congress on bone infection there, and it was flawless."

More info on Davos:

sales@davos.ch \ www.davos.ch/meetingplace

and on Switzerland:

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PLENARSAAL, DAVOS CONGRESS CENTRE



How Startups Can Propel a City into the Future

Think about Riga and immediately images of a green city filled with Art Nouveau and wooden architecture from the 19th century conjure up. Arguably one of the most beautiful destinations in the Baltic states, Riga is also surely the greatest tourist attraction in Latvia, seducing more and more visitors each and every year. Lesser known perhaps is the city's booming startup scene, rich in innovative laboratories – the perfect place, for instance, to host a hi-tech conference on 5G.

Words Rémi Dévé

Riga is home to a growing startup scene, where local entrepreneurs have global ambitions. With a population of under two million, the Latvian market is relatively small, but innovators of all kinds have set their sights on the bigger picture, positioning the country and its capital as the perfect sandbox for companies to test products before expanding internationally.

TAKEN BY STORM

The startup scene wasn't, of course, born overnight. As the movement was taking the country by storm a few years back, the government of Latvia joined hands with the ecosystem and offered a range of initiatives and support mechanisms for the startups which choose Latvia as their home-base. This has been known as "Welcome Pack" ever since, in the framework of a Startup Launchpad – it is divided into two categories: 'money', i.e. funding and opportunities to save costs, and 'cool stuff', which groups all other bonuses and support startups can count on.

In this context, startups have benefitted from the strong support of the Latvian government, which, in 2016, passed legislation that lays out a special tax regime for startups to save on social and income tax. The authorities also introduced a startup visa for visiting entrepreneurs, along with a €15 million accelerator fund for pre-seed and seed investments. Last but not least, the Latvian parliament approved early 2017 a Startup Law and new tax

regime – it's actually one of a kind in Europe – providing a further two complimentary types of tax support for qualified startups.

Founded in 2016, Startin.LV, the Latvian Startup Association, mobilizes its members to make the voice of startups heard in the country and beyond. Built on common values, it gathers stakeholders of the Latvian startup community – startups, startup founders and employees, co-working spaces, incubators, accelerators and other ecosystem service providers, individual and corporate supporters, investors and other players.

"Riga is a unique place for startups to grow," says Jekabs Dambergs, Executive Director of the Latvian Startup Association. "We are part of the EU and the Eurozone, and it fosters the same business environment as Western Europe, but with lower living costs. We have one of the fastest internet connections in the world, great infrastructure, highly skilled talent available and the biggest airport in the Baltics just fifteen minutes away from the centre of Riga... all this makes it the ideal place for a business that requires rapid growth. There's also the financial, material and consultancy support available, from the idea stage all the way to the scaling of your business. Important as well is the wide range of government support - the Latvian startup scene is really well taken care of from a public sector point of view."

Jekabs doesn't only emphasize the business environment for startups to flourish but also the natural one. *"Doing business 24/7 requires days off to recover from time to time,"* he says. *"Wild nature, sandy beaches, beautiful forests and recreational sites are a mere*



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QUARTERLY CONFERENCE OF STARTUP
THE LATVIAN STARTUP ASSOCIATION

30-minute drive from the city centre. Riga is really a good place both to live and work.”

In this context, Riga Technical University (RTU) - which boasts space for meetings by the way! - also offers support for those wanting to go the extra mile. Its researchers provide, for example, project development services in accordance with business needs, and access to independent laboratories and research centres. In terms of design and prototyping, they also can ensure invention prototype design, experimental production, testing, and product upgrade, as well as contracted work, consultative services on product design and development, and prototyping and testing at all levels of complexity.

HARDLY A SURPRISE

Riga has recently raised the bar by becoming one of the first countries in Europe to launch a 5G mobile network. It comes hardly a surprise the city, every year, hosts the 5G Techritory conference, a forum bringing together about 700 senior participants and industry experts from all over the world, who discuss and share their insights on the future of mobile networks - and what it means both for society and businesses.

Surfing on the trend, MEET RIGA, the official city convention bureau, recently updated its www.MeetRiga.com portal with additional features, helping meeting planners find, in the least

number of clicks, the most suitable suppliers. There is a special search engine which allows you to find the perfect venue based on your size and capacity requirements. Information on local agencies and local know-how is also easily available.

When it comes to meetings indeed, Riga, in general, offers affordable room rates in its recently renovated or new hotels (there are 8,000 rooms catering to all kinds of budget all over town, and an additional 1500 in the pipeline). The city’s main venues, sights and hotels all lie within walking distance of one another, and since Riga is so compact and easy to navigate, delegates can save time and money on transfers, since they may not even need to use transportation at all. In addition to hotels, most of which have conference space, two large multifunctional conference centres in Latvia’s capital city can host meetings up to 1,100 delegates theatre style.

Plus, the airport conveniently sits just 9 km from the city centre. Associations can also easily tack on a trip to the nearby resort town Jurmala, which sits along the Gulf of Riga just 24 km from the city centre, offering delegates two entirely different experiences less than half an hour away from one another.

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Monaco, a country where event is in harmony with environment

Monaco is a country mobilized by its Sovereign, H.S.H. Prince Albert II, to tackle universal challenges linked to the environment.

Most of the hotels and the convention center, Grimaldi Forum, are eco-certified. All MICE professionals are already committed to the energy transition, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% in 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

The Principality of Monaco hosts numerous conferences related to sustainability and is recognized for its expertise in the organization of green events.

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Postcards from the Principality

A multicultural destination with an impressive reputation that offers associations high standards alongside eco-friendly facilities and stunning views, Monaco has been working hard to consolidate its position as a destination of excellence and expertise. Time has come to write about the latest novelties of a destination which seems to never stand still.

Words Rémi Dévé



With a 2-sqkm territory, the Principality of Monaco offers international organizations the possibility to experience the assets of this small country for several days in the most ideal conditions. The city-state takes advantage of 2,500 rooms within all categories of hotels at walking distance from a high-tech, eco-certified convention centre, the Grimaldi Forum Monaco, which can accommodate from 400 to 3000 delegates.

The Monte-Carlo Société des Bains de Mer Group inaugurated, in June 2019, its brand-new One Monte-Carlo conference centre, offering multiple options for hosting exhibitions, conventions, seminars, and cocktail receptions. The venue, with a total area of 1445 sqm and 9 meeting rooms strengthens, the MICE offer of the destination. Among those, let's highlight the Salle des Arts. A perfect replica of the eponymous room of the former Sporting d'Hiver imitating the classic Art Deco style, it can seat up to 300 people.

Located in the heart of the Principality, a short walk from the train station, the three-star, recently renovated Novotel Monte-Carlo offers a unique experience to its guests. It houses the Wojo Corner, a co-working space where delegates can have access to amenities such as office space, wifi, printers, etc. The hotel, with its 530 sqm of meeting rooms and a multipurpose hall of 250 sqm, can host groups up to 200 participants and brings new types of cuisine to the Principality: a food truck at the Wojo Corner, the restaurant Azzura for meals, and the Azzura Bar for coffee and snacks. In addition, the terrace on the 7th floor is the ideal place for cocktail receptions, accommodating up to 300 people.

Last but not least, the iconic Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, founded by H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco's great-great-grandfather Prince Albert the 1st, recently created a new, exciting place, called 'The Odyssey of Marine Turtles.' This open-air area of

550 sqm, made in the extension of the Museum overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, can be privatized in the evening for up to 100 people. The installation takes guests on a fabulous discovery of sea turtles, from their life cycle to the dangers that threaten their existence, from their unique nesting habits to the actions being taken to preserve them. Next to this space, three new breakout rooms with sea view complete the offer of the Museum: the Salle des Tortues hosts up to 100 people, while the Salle Hironnelle and the Salle Princesse Alice accommodate up to 50 and 48 respectively.

The Monaco Convention Bureau will attend ICCA Annual Congress 2019 in Houston (27-30 October 2019) and IBTM in Barcelona (19-21 November 2019).

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The Secret to Successful Social Value

Before planning a conference, there's a few questions to consider: Who does this event affect? What will attendees find to be important and how can organisers incorporate these aspects? What value does the event have for society in a larger context? And what may actually be a net drain on society?

Words Lane Nieset

"Events respond to a need among a community or group to meet around specific themes, which can be anything from water management and horticulture to drones," wrote RAI Amsterdam's CSR manager, Stephanie Mathas, in a recent article. *"The success of your event depends on how well you can respond to the requirements of potential and current exhibitors and visitors. But there are many other needs and parties for which you can also create value—your event doesn't take place in a vacuum, but in a context in which you encounter a variety of social needs."*

Context is key. By paying attention to the needs to the community—as well as delegates—associations can ensure they're enhancing their event's social value to the fullest, while tackling social challenges as they arise along the way.

NEIGHBOURHOOD VENUE

RAI Amsterdam is one venue that treats itself more as a neighbour than a conventional conference centre. Since the venue sits in the heart of Amsterdam, RAI Amsterdam works closely with organisers to limit noise and traffic congestion—pesky issues that inconvenience local residents. Instead of waiting for neighbours to complain about these problems, RAI Amsterdam takes a proactive approach to see how the venue (and organisers) can reduce concerns before they become critical concerns.

Another key approach for venues to find their footing in the neighbourhood is by looking to new opportunities that could offer potential value to the surrounding community or environment. *"It is a loss for society when any potential value that you could offer through or via your event is left unrealised, especially since there are often plenty of ways to make that happen,"* Mathas writes. *"Look around and get a feel for what's going on and who might need what you have to offer. If you view your event purely as a closed economic system, you sell it short."*

RAI Amsterdam, for example, has opened up its potential value by catering to the needs of local organisations like HeenenWeer Foundation, a social service for those living in the De Pijp and Rivierenbuurt districts. Residents who are unable to walk short distances are matched with one of the foundation's social volunteer drivers, who can transport them to the market or a doctor's appointment. The foundation parks its electric vehicles at residential care center d'Oude Raai, which is under renovation until 2020. RAI Amsterdam acknowledged this need for temporary parking and swiftly responded to fill the gap by offering free parking facilities for the four green cars.

"As an event organiser, you can generate a lot of value," Mathas writes. *"The question is: Who needs it? Or turn the question around: What social needs are there and how can you contribute to meeting them with your event? Finding the answers requires matchmaking, which fortunately is something our industry is good at."*



RAI AMSTERDAM HAS AN ONGOING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SALVATION ARMY.

CSR POWER MOVE

Not all waste is created—and disposed of—equally. It's a known fact that conferences generate a variety of waste, from display materials to food from catering. But the way this waste is reused adds a new type of value, particularly when it's donated back to the community in a manner that shows off tangible good. RAI Amsterdam will introduce the concept of a "donation room" for the first time during an event in September, offering exhibitors a list of social initiatives so they know where their donated items are being distributed in the community. A similar initiative is the ongoing partnership with the Salvation Army in Bij Bosshardt, in the north of Amsterdam, where RAI Amsterdam sponsors a free lunch programme every Thursday.

"Lots of food is prepared in the kitchens of the RAI Amsterdam, and every week, part of this food, which would otherwise be thrown out, is allocated to us," says Yvonne van Lambalgen, Bij Bosshardt Salvation Army captain. *"This enables us to offer some 50 neighbourhood residents a free hot meal every Thursday. The people who come to eat here would probably not meet in other circumstances—they are often lonely individuals on a tight budget."*

Part of RAI Amsterdam's sustainable catering program, the Heartwarming Amsterdam concept was dreamt up years ago as a way to incorporate ingredients with added value into the venue's kitchen—which processes 500 tonnes of food a year. Associations were increasingly asking for sustainable catering, looking for

eco-friendly, seasonal, organic, and regional ingredients to serve delegates during conferences. As a response, RAI Amsterdam launched Heartwarming Amsterdam, and switched to organic and sustainable alternatives, such as sustainably caught fish from the North Sea and animal-friendly choices like free-range veal in place of meat from boxed calves. In the process, the venue supports small-scale producers in the metropolitan area and adds value to the region as a whole—not to mention doing its part to support the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Now, by sponsoring initiatives like free Thursday lunch at Salvation Army, the venue—along with the associations hosting conferences in Amsterdam—is giving back in a way that directly benefits the community.

"At Bij Bosshardt, an initiative of the Salvation Army, we think this is a great initiative by the RAI Amsterdam," van Lambalgen says. *"It helps keep people fed, and also creates valuable friendships by facilitating meetings and allowing people to enjoy a meal together. This has a positive impact on reducing loneliness in the city, and thus our society as a whole."*

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Stephanie Mathas' blog can be accessed through the website of Amsterdam Rai.



An 'Intelligent' Journey to Knowledge

Once science fiction, artificial intelligence (AI) is here to change decisively the way we live, and Prague finds itself not only in the heart of Europe but also in the heart of this promising knowledge hub. The capital of the Czech Republic has made enormous strides in the last few years towards building a tenacious AI ecosystem in an effort to establish a reputation as a world-class AI superhub.

Words Vicky Koffa

The establishment of the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC) back in July 2013 by the Czech Technical University (CTU) in Prague kick-started the idea that the city possesses the talent, the knowledge and the necessary governmental support to venture into this new relatively unknown sector called AI.

The rapidly developing research institute places its focus on fields like robotics, artificial intelligence and computer graphics with the goal to integrate information and cybernetic research and education at the CTU through interdisciplinary collaboration with other local and international research centres. Within this centre, the first extensive Testbed for Industry 4.0 is being developed primarily for the advanced development and transfer of technologies and solutions for Czech small and medium-sized companies.

ENGAGEMENT & COLLABORATION

Projects like BIOCEV are equally putting AI in the country on centre stage. The joint project of six institutes of the Academy of

Sciences of the Czech Republic and two faculties of Charles University in Prague aim to establish European Centre of Excellence in biomedicine and biotechnology.

Professor MUDr. Pavel Martásek, Director of BIOCEV, explains that *"more than 450 researchers from all over the world have been working to discover new medical and therapeutic procedures for severe health issues that are afflicting society, such as cancer, diabetes and HIV. Engaging in collaboration with other institutions and the application sphere both in the Czech Republic and abroad is one of the key elements of the concept and functioning of a centre of excellent research. At BIOCEV, we emphasise the European Research Area, cooperation with other projects that are being implemented in the Czech Republic and with commercial entities, and last but not least, with regional and local authorities."*

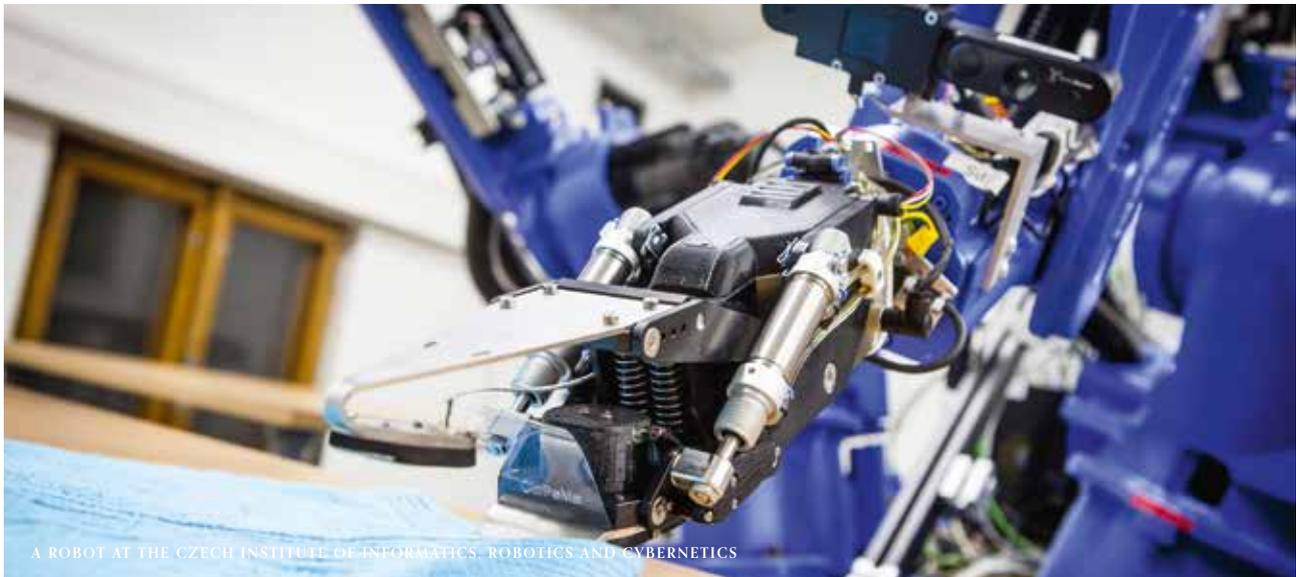
Prague is seizing the opportunity for economic growth which seems to arise with the use of new technologies. According to the summary report "Analysis of the Development Potential of Artificial

Intelligence in the Czech Republic", which was published by the Government of the Czech Republic last year to address the challenges of the AI development in Czechia, R&D in AI is implemented by all public research institutions and by SMEs supported by the appropriate infrastructure.

FROM RESEARCH TO APPLIED TECHNOLOGY

To this end, a number of new application-focused centres were created to carry out R&D and transfer the research results into the application sphere. Along with CIIRC, the establishment of the Research Centre for Informatics (RCI), also within the Czech Technical University, resulted in the initiative that currently owns the most powerful computer cluster for AI research in the Czech Republic, grouped under the AI Center (AIC).

Diving into the extended potential of AI, AIC is a driving force for foundational research in game theory, cybersecurity, smart urban mobility and robotics among



A ROBOT AT THE CZECH INSTITUTE OF INFORMATICS, ROBOTICS AND CYBERNETICS

others. Findings get converted into building large-scale systems and technology transfer which has stimulated the creation of several innovative tech companies, such as AgentFly Technologies and Blindspot Solutions.

The upsurge of the cluster has prompted the establishment, in May last year, of a much-needed support system for small businesses involved in AI. The AI Incubator, headquartered in Prague, provides financial investment, specialised networking, resources and business mentoring to start-ups focusing solely on AI with the goal to launch them into the global market as successful companies. With the organisation of AI Awards for the Czech Republic, the Incubator goes one step further and introduces AI experts to the general public.

The Czech government is following closely the development of the sector and has, therefore, approved the "National Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the Czech Republic" (NAIS) in May 2019. It constitutes part of the implementation

of the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2019-2030 (The Country for the Future) and its main objective is to make the Czech Republic an innovation leader. Among its tasks is to ensure the development of responsible and trusted AI and promote digital transformation especially for startups.

AI CONFERENCES

Like-minded association conferences add the final piece of the AI development jigsaw. Last year Prague hosted the Joint Multi-Conference on Human-Level Artificial Intelligence (HLAI) which took place at the Czech Technical University. Part of the program were debates on Biologically Inspired Cognitive Architectures and Neural-Symbolic Learning and Reasoning. The conference took place for the first time in Europe and was co-organised by the Czech company GoodAI. Regularly, the Future Port Conference with over 10,000 participants has been organised in Prague with the aim to present what awaits us in the near future.

These events seem to be just the beginning for Prague. Ambassadors like Professor Martásek share their passion for their country which can only attract more AI conferences. *"I am very honoured to be an ambassador for Prague, whose history and presence are closely linked not only with culture, but also with education and science. One of Prague's greatest advantages is that the city is known throughout the world and many people want to come visit and often, they want to live here. Prague has a great reputation, a unique location and a large concentration of universities and businesses, which also makes it attractive for young researchers. It has the potential to become a centre for talents in the field of artificial intelligence and related start-ups and companies."*

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How a Congress Centre Embraces Digital Transformation

As the Startup World Cup & Summit, attended by more than 350 startups from over 50 countries, took place at the Prague Congress Centre (PCC), it introduced the most promising European companies with bright ideas and sharp thinking. Apart from presentations of the finalists, startups had an opportunity to discuss new ideas for their product development, look for new investors or connect with new partners.

Words Nikol Chumová

The Prague Congress Centre was chosen for its uniqueness and know-how. Václav Pavlečka, CEO of Air Ventures Capital Fund which co-organised the event together with UP21, said: *“Prague does not have a lot of places that are as flexible and professional as Prague Congress Centre.”* He explained that using the main hall – which boasts a great stage and excellent technology – was essential to their decision making. *“It is a place where you can have both a great show with a lot of spectators and a lot of parallel activities. Those features can be beautifully combined, and that is simply unique.”* he commented.

Having gone through a complex renovation and modernisation, the PCC itself found some inspiration for the next technological steps it is planning to take. Looking for ways to improve local communication with employees, neighbouring companies and local communities, the venue is now anticipating the implementation of an app that was presented at the Summit.

The Centre also recently finalised its own mobile application that helps visitors navigate through the building, should they be looking to attend a particular session at an event. It is a very practical tool that can also be imported into the app of any

congress. This way the PCC minimises the need for printed navigation, and people can rely on digital navigation only. In addition, there are now over 190 LED screens that serve as an inhouse navigation system and/or as a platform for online screening and social media presentations – this is supported by over 300 Wi-Fi access points and an internet speed of 1500 Mb/s.

The hosting of the Startup World Cup & Summit is testament to Prague having become the startup hub of the Czech Republic. According to NimbleFins, the country itself ranks 6th in Europe in terms of number of startup businesses. Even though 78% of startups are self-financed when they commence, they become highly successful once they attract investors. And in Prague, there are many investors supporting local startups and promoting innovation. Let’s mention, among many others, the Palacký University in Olomouc, which recently organised its own innovation competition and gave a deserved boost to the recycled-plastics 3D printing model, CzechInvest with its CzechStarter programme which, every year, brings its best two projects to the Silicon Valley or the Vodafone Foundation Laboratory.



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Silke Schlinnertz

Head of Operations & Events, Euroheat & Power

Appointed in July 2014, Silke is in charge of the oversight and management of the Euroheat & Power office, events organisation and relations with Euroheat & Power members and partners. She joined Euroheat & Power in March 2011 from Colloquium Brussels, an international events agency.



Jennifer Fontanella

Director of Operations and Finance, International Studies Association (ISA)

Jennifer has been with ISA since July 2014 when the association moved its headquarters to the University of Connecticut. She is responsible for the management of ISA headquarter staff and has responsibility for managing the ISA's budget and finances as well as coordinating future convention planning.



Giuseppe Marletta

Managing Director Europe, Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)

Prior to joining ACC, Giuseppe Marletta was the General Manager of the International Association of Young Lawyers. In his career, he has managed several European and international groups and associations, in the field of intercultural dialogue, policy making, project management as well as in the health sector. Giuseppe is President of ESAE, the European Society of Association Executives.



Mohamed Mezghani

Secretary General, UITP: Advancing Public Transport

Mohamed worked at UITP as Senior Manager (1999-2001), Director Knowledge and Membership Services (2001-2006) and Senior Adviser to the Secretary General (2006-2013). He also out several technical assistance and training projects in Africa and the Middle-East. He established the UITP office for the Middle-East and North Africa in Dubai.



Matthew R. D'Uva FASAE, CAE, CEO

International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP)

Matthew has served as the CEO for the IASP since July 2015. He holds an MBA from the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Tufts University. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Association Executives and has previously served as a member of the Board of Directors of both ASAE and the ASAE Foundation.



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Azerbaijan

An Emerging Association Hub

Throughout its rich history, Azerbaijan served as a business hub, a place where trades of all kinds were exchanged along the Silk Road. Centuries later, the country is once again competing on the international scene, having all it takes to be a successful business events destination.

Words Rémi Dévé



It might not be the first name that comes to mind when planning a conference, yet Azerbaijan is slowly but surely becoming a sought-after location, with socio-economic changes having deeply transformed it over the last two decades.

A much-needed boost certainly came from the hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2012, as it broadcasted the skills and competencies of the country to the world in terms of organising events of global magnitude. Since then, the country has invested in world-class conference facilities, starting with an award-winning international airport. It has also hosted a gamut of events such as the first ever European Games, the Azerbaijan Grand Prix, the Islamic Solidarity Games, and various international conferences including the 41st World Scout Conference and 13th World Scout Youth Forum, the International Association of Ports and Harbors, and the World Conference of the International Society for Music Education.

As a result, meeting venues have popped up everywhere. Among them, let's mention the iconic Flame Towers, the brand-new Baku Convention Centre and the awe-inspiring Heydar Aliyev Centre – all of which can provide the ideal setting for conferences. Moreover, Azerbaijan's world-famous sense of hospitality means guests are warmly welcomed and provided with high standards of service.

Petroleum and natural gas are the country's major industries, along with steel, iron ore and cement. But the development of the tourism industry is currently a major priority and business delegates now have countless ways to enjoy the country between meetings.

Baku is a wonderful city with an amazing atmosphere. A walk in the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is definitely a must-do: it's the oldest part of Baku and is surrounded by fortification walls, and the narrow streets inside are brimming

with traditional teahouses, restaurants, old mosques and hamams.

Then there is the waterfront promenade and the contemporary skyline, reminiscent of a modern metropolis, making an all-the-more-striking contrast. The city also boasts a vibrant nightlife with everything from contemporary clubs to intimate wine bars.

Even beyond Baku, there is lots to explore. For example, Gobustan area is home to an extraordinary collection of over 6,000 prehistoric petroglyphs charting ancient ways of life. The area is also a great place to discover why Azerbaijan is known as the mud volcano capital of the world – the country's over 350 gurgling mud pools are a true wonder of nature.

But you'll read more on this in upcoming issues of Boardroom.

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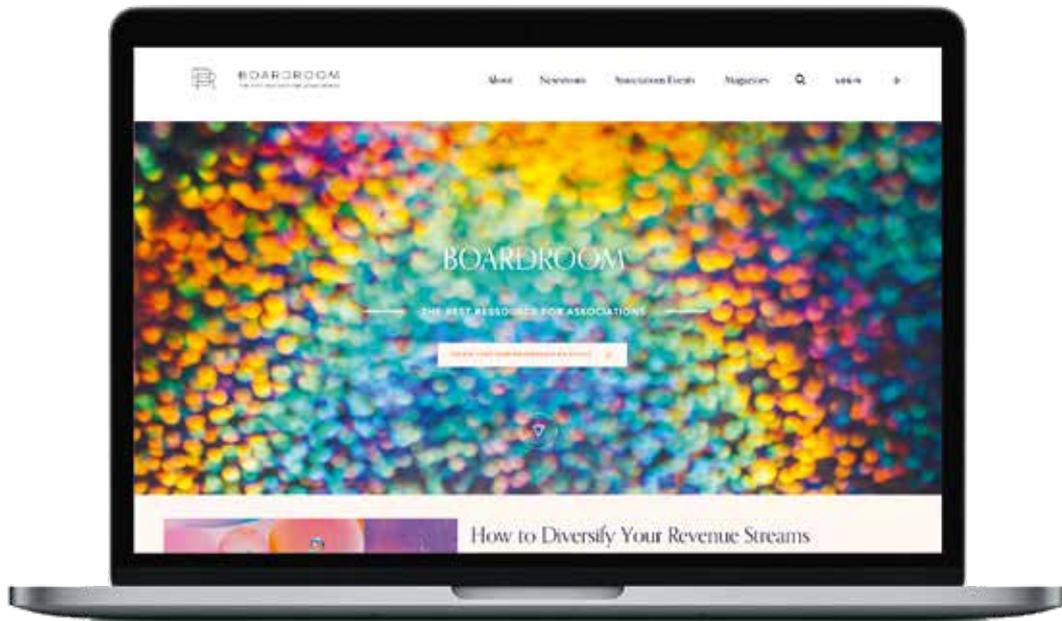


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