

KONGRES

5th anniversary



SOUTHEAST EUROPE MEETINGS INDUSTRY MAGAZINE, VOLUME VI, SPECIAL ISSUE, JANUAR 2012
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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SLOVENIAN CONVENTION BUREAU

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FIRST SOUTHEAST EUROPE MEETINGS INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

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KONGRES MAGAZINE IS MEDIA PARTNER OF:



A word from the editor



Gorazd Čad

THE FUTURE OF MEETINGS MEDIA

The content is king, the readers are queens!

The talk of the town is already the media crisis or the crisis in mass communication. Both established media practices and confidence in media companies appear to be shattering. The crisis is clearly reflected in the decreasing number of readers, a falling confidence in the credibility of media, the crisis in journalism and the crisis in media business models. The most illustrative example is the scandal that shook the foundations of Rupert Murdoch's media empire. The British investigation has exposed the real face of media culture and practice, one that depends on advertising revenue and a concentration of capital in monopolies and oligopolies.

The basic question, therefore, is what the role of serious congressional media is nowadays?

IF IN THE CASE OF A PARTICULAR MEDIA EDITORIAL POLICY THERE IS AT THE SAME TIME AN EDITORIAL POLICY OF ADVERTISERS, THEN THE MATTER IS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND THE MEDIUM IS REDUCED TO THE LEVEL OF A COMMERCIAL PRODUCT.

If we want to assume a more critical role and revise every aspect of the meetings industry, the responsibility of media becomes significantly greater. In 2011 it was highlighted

that confidence in the media notably decreased, with at the same time new information coming through on a daily basis about a decline in the number of employees, advertising and content.

As the purpose of the jubilee issue of Kongres Magazine is to offer an outlook on the future, I will try to highlight some of our reflections on congressional media and what we see as its future. Taking into account that the basic function of old media is news publishing, the existing media industry is completely out of date.

WE ARE NOW ON THE MEDIA CROSS, WHEN THE FORMS OF NEW MEDIA ARE BEGINNING TO APPEAR AND THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA INDUSTRY IS IRREVOCABLY BREAKING.

Our users are interested in being better informed about their news; they are expecting instructions, some idea about how to progress, the evaluation of information, in short the highest quality of presented information. They expect the news to be placed in its proper context instead of catalogue publishing in RSS feeds. In short, reading habits have completely changed and it does not at all surprise us that numerous readers are leaving traditional media. In the future we will discuss topics on network media, to which the classic media industry has no kind of monopoly. The world of media moved onto the Internet long ago, the

crucial matter now being how to put Internet advertising in order, since traditional models of the past do not work in network media.

There are a lot of proposals about how to find a way out of the media crisis. The matter was most thoroughly tackled in the University of Columbia's "The Story so far" study, one I recommend to all those who are active in the world of media and to other users of media. From this study:

The first proposal is to transform media into non-profit organisation and this way make them independent from the interests of capital. Only by doing this could media really carry out their basic public function. It would be financed through donations.

The second proposal for the salvation of the industry is the introduction of micro-payments, since readers who are following Internet media are not prepared to pay full price. They would pay only for articles they are interested in and journalists would therefore write such articles.

The third proposal is to transfer the cost of media creation to Internet providers, who are actually those earning the most and most involved with Internet at the moment. The fourth proposal is to introduce journalism cooperative societies, in which top journalists would be brought together to offer in-depth information to different media for publishing.

Beyond these proposals, especially in the USA, where the media crisis is at its most severe, other ideas were for subventions for postal delivery of magazines, tax deductibility for

readers subscribed for magazines with quality content and the stimulation of non-profit media projects.

Media cooperative societies consisting of both article authors and readers are quite a good idea. The financing of cooperative societies is based on donations defined by their members; meanwhile the cooperative societies would be acting according to the principles of self-management.

Even more interesting would be the direct connection to the meetings industry in the context of the organisation of events related to specific subjects that a medium should report on beforehand and afterwards. There are several successful examples of this and it is necessary to establish closer relationships between congress organisers and the respective media. Here, quality content could be the connection.

In any case, the attitude to national media markets has become modified.

GOOD STORIES FIND THEIR WAY INTO ANY MARKET WHERE READERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET.

That part of the new media world is today's most inspirational and revolutionary. We can create a global medium practically without any investment - all we really need is a good idea and good stories. Technically this

is what provides us with our own blog, set up on WordPress. But the conviction that we can save the world of media with technology is wrong and availability of proof of this is numerous. Introducing technology, for example in the field of video and other additional information resources, increases complexity and complicates the basic idea of the unlimited spread of 'the story'. It is otherwise possible in the area of video, if we know how to reduce relatively high production costs, but the simplest application of technology is the automatic generation of content through codes and algorithms, a function nowadays incorporated into almost every blog. It is difficult to imagine a serious medium with only generic content, however. A story special to the pharmaceutical industry, for example, is about original media and generics. A good example is The Huffington Post, a site that aggregates available media information into new form and provides new readers to its originators. It acts on the edges of copyright, but at the same time provides additional value and more visits to the classic generics as well.

Today there is no other choice but to live with technology, but the problems of technology are the instant imitators of your original idea. Supposedly, there have been 30 millions iPads sold up to the end of 2011, but despite that the media advertising revenues have not become remarkable. The role of Apple as the saviour of the media world is unique - from every sold application or medium 30% is required, and at the same time the data of subscribers remain strictly protected.

The media theory that for every 1000 readers we can employ a new co-worker on the editorial board is therefore no longer applicable. Such relations have become completely different.

We are in the middle of a real media revolution, one side of which is that we have technology devotees who believe that blogs, Facebook and Twitter profiles can replace serious editorial media. On the other side, the media are eagerly fighting for the autonomy and in accordance with the wider interests of civil society to be more objectively informed.

Kongres Magazine relies on checked and accurate information. The most read sections are the editorial articles and proper, originally sourced contents. They are analytical and intelligent, loaded with knowledge and style, and geared towards the future. The less recycled stories, the more the original ones. With timely digitalisation set to expand to full strength in 2012, we will make best use of our access to selected readers in the community that we have already connected. Our advantage is smallness and our ability to be adaptable. We consider our journey into a digital media future as the completion of the circle of excellent and competent creators of media contents.

Primarily, we rely on our ear for readers and their orientation toward the digital world of congresses! The content is king, the readers are queens!

SLOVENIA'S MEETING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS' EVALUATIONS AND PREDICTIONS

A gaze into the Crystal Ball shows that ...

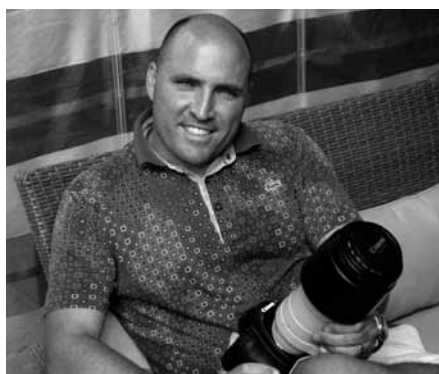


Over the past five years the meetings industry has seen good and bad days; we were delighted at our successes and we supported each other in times of crisis. Considering that through your actions you have contributed to the development of the meetings industry, we invited you to share your views on how has the meetings industry changed over the past five years. Are you happy with results, has the level of development met your expectations, do trends move in the right direction, what are your predictions for the meetings industry over the next five years?

In the past years we have noticed that for the meetings industry, as with the economy in general, the recession had an impact in various ways. Meetings organisers have been looking out for more affordable options and the optimal ratio between quality and price; corporate events were shorter and more intense; professional events have seen fewer participants. The recession had an impact with a smaller number of team building events and incentives. Despite this we have noticed that some industries have not reduced budgets for meetings and that there is still demand for the new, unique and boutique. I believe that all of these trends will continue for some time – meetings organisers will ask for best service that they can get within their budgets and the competition will remain fierce. The biggest advantages Slovenia has – if we will know how to use them and offer them to clients – will be the quality of our service, favourable ratio between price and quality, accessibility and in-

ventiveness of our programmes and the relative novelty of the destination.

Petra Čuk, Sportina Turizem



The meetings industry in Slovenia has progressed dramatically in the past five years, because of a few companies that believe in its development. Unfortunately it happens all too often that the ones that should help us the most in this situation turn their backs on us. Here I think of the state, which in my opinion has completely the wrong approach when it comes to the meetings industry and is not aware of its importance and the effects it has on the complete economy. I am not only talking of financial help and subsidies, which are inexistent or too small. What I have in mind are the basis of our work. We have the case of our national air carrier, Adria Airways. Because of the alleged loss-making they cancelled flights to some European capitals, which are key to our industry. Instead of helping us in the tough economic situation, the state is making our business harder.

Boštjan Horjak, Liberty International

Recently I read Patty Smith's autobiography. Her life story is like every life story of a creative person: instructive. She needed quite some time to achieve success, much more than her roommates



at the cult Chelsea Hotel in New York. When she became successful quite a few followed her and became famous too, unfortunately some are now also deceased. She succeeded because she started something completely new without even realising it. She presented her poetry that was accompanied by her friends musicians. She started the trend and her performances were visited by the top celebrities of American poetry of the time, from Allen Ginsberg to Bob Dylan. The Slovenian meetings industry is – please do not reproach me for this seemingly inappropriate comparison – a talented young lady that only needs to take one more step to make its breakthrough. That would be nothing too demanding if she had a healthy economic climate and a favourable intellectual climate. I am not worried about the first precondition; however, I do have doubts about the second and third ones.

My wish is that on the next occasion when we will be looking at the Slovenian meetings industry of the next five years I will speak differently. For example, like the most famous storytellers. Good luck and congratulations to all the persistent ones!

Anuša Gaši, Loža

In the past five years things have changed dramatically and not all the changes have been negative. It is true that we have seen the onset



of the crisis that made us 'fall and hit the ground hard' and had to fight much harder for business. The effort pays off and we value each and every group, each and every guest even more than before. We realised that we can be stronger in times of crisis, in our team, in our company, with our business partners and our competition. Yes, we can even cooperate with our competition when needed. We have all realised that we can be stronger together. We see opportunities in Europe as companies are now increasingly choosing to organise events in neighbouring countries because of the crisis. We are also becoming increasingly more socially responsible and environmentally friendly, not because this is fashionable at the moment, but the main reason being the fact that we honestly believe in these concepts and know that this is the only solution for long term success for us all. Because of these reasons, no matter how hard it will be we are confident that we will be able to do it and come out stronger together. Although it will not be easy, we see all of the problems that await us as challenges. The best times for Slovenia and all of SE Europe and its meetings industry are yet to come.

Vilijam Kvalič, Kompas

The meetings industry has somehow walked half of the way in the past five years. At home in media and in professional circles the industry is increasingly claiming the position of a prosper-

ous product. Unfortunately, we have not yet achieved the desired results and it is becoming increasingly clear that more time is needed to show what kind of place it will take in the Slovenian economic environment. Internationally we are also somewhere halfway. Slovenia was appropriately presented to international business and with various innovative marketing tools our success is increasing. Personally, I believe that Slovenia will become a more successful meetings and incentives destination in the near future.



Miha Kovačič, Slovenian Convention Bureau

Looking from the outside, the meetings industry is changing at the speed of light. New technologies and their implementation into planning and operational implementation, the emergence of new structures (core PCO) and new ways of



managing associations, the appearance of new and fashionable destinations, pricing policies, trends in catering and social programmes and an awareness of environmental issues on a local and global level are definitely areas which we had to learn anew and adjust to. If we scratch below the surface, the essentials remain unchanged. Business as a whole depends on our feelings and trust. If we trust someone and if the conditions are right, the meeting will be carried out. Because we have a lot to offer to our clients I am glad that Slovenia made a leap in its international profile. That is our formula for success.

Maja Vidergar, Cankarjev dom



I believe that the Slovenian Meetings Industry has seen positive development in the past five years, despite numerous ups and downs. Progress can be observed in all areas, from investments in meetings infrastructure and improved quality and competitiveness to improved integration and the professionalism of personnel. Since the creation of the Slovenian Convention Bureau, which constructively linked key meeting services suppliers and raises the status of tourism development at a national level as one acting in the public interest, it has successfully implemented its 'Push Up' marketing campaigns. These not only raised the visibility of Slovenia on the international scene but also the standardisation of the bureau's members and an improved

reputation of the Slovenian meetings industry players in Europe. The numerous professional education options within the realm of Academy Conventa, the organisation of the regional exhibition Conventa and numerous other activities that were implemented in this period have all helped to position the 'meetings product' in Slovenia. In the past couple of years this 'product' was recognised as one of the most important of Slovenian tourism and activities within the strategic partnerships between the Slovenian Convention Bureau and the Slovenian Tourist Organisation that have been successfully carried out and upgraded in the past couple of years. In this period the Slovenian Convention Bureau has also taken some knocks, which we managed to overcome with economic assistance.

In conclusion I can say that results have been satisfactory. Everything has not been achieved yet, but we are on the right path. Some areas have to be improved. Here I would like to point out flight connections, partnerships between destinations, regulation of funding of the Bureau, increased support from the state when it comes to helping us bring larger events to Slovenia, and following trends in the field of sustainable meetings management. The direction we will take depends on positioning of the meetings industry in strategic documents that are currently being prepared. Meetings industry professionals have acted proactively and prepared a resolution with which we want to call on the government for greater support in the further development of the 'meetings product'.

We are currently living through an era of great challenges. Usually this type of situation shows how successful we are, as only the ones that have strategic and clear common objectives and are working together will be able to survive. I believe that in the future a proactive, innovative approach to marketing and organised development of the 'meetings product' will be of great importance. We will only succeed through appropriate co-operation of business and the state.

Azra Botonjič, Slovenian Convention Bureau



Over the last years we have witnessed many changes globally, the suppliers and destinations have to respond to quickly. A rapid development of new technologies, stronger role of social media as a new communications and marketing platform, the growing importance of sustainable development, flexibility of the offer and included added value, centralised procurement in corporations, strengthened regulations in the field of pharmacy and ROI, are only a few of the factors which contributed to the transformation of all segments of the meetings industry. At the same time we were influenced negatively by the global economic crisis, which hurt our industry as well.

In Slovenia and Ljubljana I can highlight a few positive changes in the last five years: investments into building new or renovating existing congress and hotel facilities, a more visible promotional breakthrough on the foreign markets - also with the help of Conventa and Kongres magazine (Congratulations for five years!), higher professionalisation of the industry, supported by young staff, no increase of funds, but more innovativeness, stronger links between all stakeholders. The meetings industry has been proclaimed dead many, many times (let's recall the internet revolution!), but miraculously it always survived and revived itself. I believe in the future existence of direct interpersonal connections and communications in exchanging knowledge, despite the growing technological development. I hope

Europe won't become a sleeping beauty with the inevitable development of Asian destinations and BRIC countries.

Tatjana Radovič, Ljubljana Tourism / Convention Bureau

In the last few years the meetings industry has been one of the fastest growing segments of tourism. A specific tourist product with high added value, with its complexity and successful uniting of regional products it ensures high multiplicative effects. For the future we can foretell the importance of de-seasonality of Slovenian tourism, intensive partner cooperation on all levels (and over the borders), inclusion of all stakeholders with a goal to place Slovenia alongside key destinations and into the portfolios of important buyers. Ambitious growth of Slovenia as a congress destination can be achieved with a thorough policy, by setting strategic and action plans and observing and implementing them.

These are just a few suggestions that I want to share with the readers, decision-makers and distinguished colleagues. This is how Slovenia could put itself on the European and global meetings map successfully.

Karmen Nobarlič, Slovenian Tourist Board



THE CREATORS OF KONGRES MAGAZINE

GORAZD ČAD

Editor-in-Chief



A long-time meetings industry addict, Gorazd is the Founder and owner of marketing and congress agency GO.MICE. He has many years of experience in planning, preparing and carrying out

large international meetings and exhibitions and in cooperation with foreign and domestic scientists, doctors and institutions preparing common congress projects. He started his career as Head of Congress Projects in Cankarjev dom, moving on to be Head of Marketing during the establishment of Hotel Mons. At the GO.MICE agency he is a consultant for the successful marketing of congress centres and destinations as well as communications for congress and business events. He is trying to follow his academic path as a lecturer at the College for Tourism in Bled. He is also the author of numerous articles and editor-in-chief of the meetings industry magazine for SE Europe – Kongres.

JAN KLAVORA

Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief



He first encountered tourism when he was 15 and became a tour guide in one of the sports-tourist agencies in Posočje. Soon after that Jan joined the newly established company Maya Sports

tourism, where he stayed for the next 10 years. Towards the end of his studies he traded tourism for some other activities (the Protocol of the Republic of Slovenia and Valicon), yet his path soon took him back to tourism after meeting the Go.Mice team at one of the team buildings he helped organise in his free time. Soon after that he joined the team and took up the position of Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief at Kongres Magazine.

JANA APIH

Creative Editor



After her first job at the Slovenian Tourism Board she was hooked on tourism. During her work at there she led on different projects, including promotional events during Slovenia's

entry into the European Union. She also dealt with organising events during her work with marketing agency Advertus where she cultivated another of her passions – marketing. Working on Kongres magazine is a successful combination of both for Jana.

ANDREJ JUVAN

DTP and Prepress



During his schooldays Andrej realised that working in graphics was his passion. He gathered experience in printing houses, graphic departments, reprographic studios and by reading

professional literature. After a period gathering skills and experience he decided to embark on his own path as an executive designer for an ad agency. He collaborates with different designers and companies where he can offer his knowledge and experience. After the recommendation of a friend he started collaborating with Kongres magazine. The work he does is also his hobby.

NINA POLAK

Translations



Nina has been a Kongres magazine translator and occasional Go.Mice collaborator since 2010. An International Relations graduate, she started gaining event management

experience as part of the organising team of the first Slovenian International Model United Nations, SIMUN. During her studies she took part in numerous international student conferences from Cambridge to Sofia and spent a semester in Leipzig, Germany. Before her collaboration with Go.Mice she worked as Assistant Project Manager at an IT company. She recently volunteered at a Women's Centre in Kigali, Rwanda, where she taught computer classes and also taught women how to make eco-friendly jewellery from paper, which she herself loves to make.

ROB COTTER

Proofreading



Leaving Ireland over 20 years ago to study in London took Rob on a very long life journey via London, Oxford, Berlin, Cork, Malmö, Stockholm and Berlin again to

eventually arrive back in London. During his Berlin English teaching days, Rob met the staff from MPI at a very special one-off event that he'd organised, a meeting that drew him into the world of meetings and journalism for the meetings industry. Now a regular contributor for MPI's prestigious One+ magazine, Rob also writes articles for and is involved with the final preparations of the English language version of Kongres.

KONGRES MAGAZINE TIMELINE

The future is bright!

Five volumes means 18 regular issues, 2 special issues, 5 thematic supplements, over 120 article writers, more than 500 articles in our database, an iPad application, web portal 'Meet and SEE' and a FB community with more than 3500 friends.

Let see how the project of Kongres Magazine has been developing over the years ...

2006: THE IDEA FOR THE KONGRES MAGAZINE WAS BORN ...

... supported by more than 30 co-founders. We wanted to offer our knowledge to our readers, share our experiences and information on congress and business tourism or the meetings industry. Our starting point was to inform about novelties and trends in the field of business and congress tourism in Slovenia and worldwide. A little later, the magazine begins to present the congress offer at selected destinations, offering models of good practice and advice for event

organisations. As the official newsletter of the Convention Bureau, the magazine also updates on the Bureau's latest activities.

2007: THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE MAGAZINE

From the groundwork that had been begun in 2006, the first issue of the Slovenian-English professional magazine for business and congress tourism was published in April 2007. After this, three more issues were published during 2007 (in July, October and November). In the first year of publication the magazine was very well received by readers in Slovenia as well as abroad.

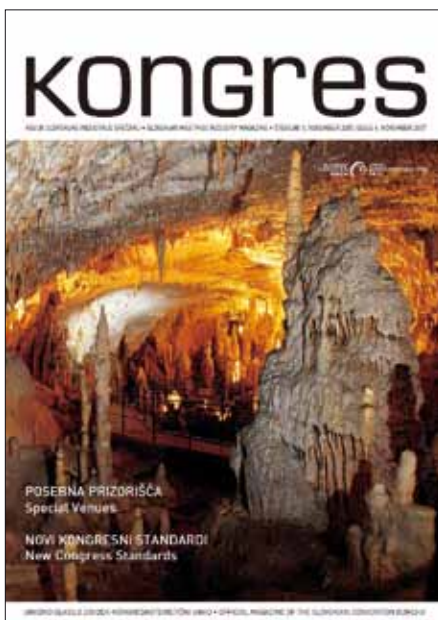
The important highlights of 2007 included:

- the magazine becoming the official newsletter of the Slovenian Convention Bureau;
- the eminent British expert Tony Carey cooperating with us as a columnist and member of our editorial board;
- presenting 15 excellent examples of best practice that are today part of the permanent congress offer of the presented destinations;

- Rok Klančnik opening the sequence of celebrity columns that have become amongst the most popular and regularly read columns of all published issues in our five-year history;
- in the first year of publication also reaching a circulation of 5,000 copies distributed on the airplanes of Adria Airways;
- initiating the www.kongres-magazine.eu website and watching the number of visits to the website constantly increase since it was established.

2008: THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE MAGAZINE

In 2008 we started with expanding the magazine's market to the Alps-Adriatic region, as providers from the SE Europe states had shown an interest for more intensive integration and a collaborative presence on foreign markets. The contents of particular issues began to be assembled thematically: green meetings, gastronomy and meetings, people and meetings and regions and meetings.



Stand-out highlights of 2008 included:

- issuing a special thematic issue about the SIMEX trade show and undertaking the communication support for the show;
- starting to call attention to the importance of green congress tourism with the publication of a special issue dedicated to green meetings;
- preparing the first THE CHALLENGE OF SUCCESS exhibition, where congress guests, their habits and consumption were analysed;
- starting to publish the first exclusive interviews with important world congress persons;
- starting with our in-depth analyses of web pages and developing our best venues for events charts;
- publishing the first printed MEET IN SEE catalogue, where meeting suppliers from the entire region were presented;
- the magazine becoming an important partner of other international trade shows besides our partnership with the EIBTM and IMEX exhibitions.

2009: THE THIRD VOLUME OF THE MAGAZINE

The Kongres Magazine not only survived a year well remembered for the economic crisis, but ended it with a larger number of partners and subscribers and the most extensive distribution in its history.

The important highlights in 2009 were:

- that we improved the interactivity and included the magazine in social networks;
- with the digital edition of our magazine we reached 35,000 congress organisers;
- that we published Rok Klančnik's professional book, 'Crisis Management';
- that we started our 'Breakfasts with Kongres Magazine' promotion;
- the Magazine Kongres become a media partner of the column about congress tourism in the newspaper Dnevnik;
- that Kongres Magazine had been adding value to the trade show Conventa as its chief media partner and was responsible for a number of publicity activities that contributed to the posi-

tive media image of the event and participating exhibitors;

- that the first fair supplement of the Kongres Magazine was published;
- that we presented the magazine at our independent stand at the EIBTM trade show;
- that we prepared the second printed edition of our 'Meet in SEE' catalogue.

2010: THE FOURTH VOLUME OF THE MAGAZINE

In 2010 we were engaged in strengthening the international profile of the magazine. On the basis of acknowledged market necessities, we prepared separate Slovenian and English issues of the Magazine. The overall look of the magazine was completely redesigned. Kongres moved towards social networks and interactivity and the publication of thematic and destination supplements.

Important highlights of 2010 included:

- totally redesigning and refreshing the magazine;



- participating in establishing the Conventa Academy program;
- presenting in a single place for the first time the adventure parks across the entire region;
- beginning the presentation of key congress figures recognised in the industry as market changers or 'enfants terribles';
- opening the column on congress travelogues;
- welcoming Dr. Janez Bogataj as the magazine's permanent gastronomy moderator;
- providing communication support to the Slovenian Convention Bureau's PUSH UP SLOVENIA promotion campaign;
- introducing a regular e-newspaper of the magazine as a monthly overview of activities;
- digitalising and transforming the Meet in SEE catalogue into an interactive form on www.meetinsee.com

2011: THE FIFTH VOLUME OF THE MAGAZINE

This was the year of novelties! We began with the introduction of interactive content. The mission of the magazine became the stimulation of

professional competence and excellence in the meetings industry field as well as stimulation of the development of the profession in accordance with global trends. From the editorial point of view, the magazine became more sophisticated, critically oriented and a true mirror of the industry.

Important highlights in 2011 were:

- transferring the magazine to a new company, Toleranca Marketing d.o.o., where it has become independent;
- welcoming international writers into our dedicated team of co-workers;
- in cooperation with the company IB PProcadd, the first test broadcasting by the magazine of the interactive television Conventa TV, now part of the new web portal KONGRES INTERACTIVE, which will start this year;
- Kongres Magazine becoming the regional media partner of the meetings industry mega portal 'International Meetings Review';
- publishing the second barometer of congress prices;
- the commencement of the column TOP, in first

- place with luxurious congress hotels in the Adriatic region;
- the first publication of the small advertising supplements Obsotelje and Kozjansko, Vinariji and several others;
- having the magazine installed into the i-Pad kiosk and adapted for tablets;
- preparing the second THE CHALLENGE OF SUCCESS exhibition, again analysing congress guests, their habits and consumption in Ljubljana.

You can read about all of this and much, much more on our website, www.kongres-magazine.eu

Looking back at all we've achieved so far, we are proud to state that the Kongres Magazine has become an important part of the meetings industry and culture of the region and has greatly contributed to its development and profile. Plaudits for the uninterrupted publication of the Kongres Magazine go to all of the article authors and co-workers, who have tirelessly participated in the creation of the magazine during its five year history.



THE REVIEW OF IMPORTANT MEETING EVENTS IN 2011

In 2011 even the biggest congress optimists pulled back from high-flying and optimistic congress rhetoric. It was replaced by a more prosaic and realistic assessment of the situation: the European Union is persistently avoiding a collapse, the global population has reached the magic 7 billion figure, autocratic regimes in Northern Africa were brought down, nature bared its teeth with the devastating earthquake in Japan and the floods in Brazil, Thailand and the Philippines. The past year was marked with revolutions; there were many indications that the world might be slipping into hell, but there were also a lot of positive developments that brought fresh hope to the meetings industry. Physicians discovered Higgs boson, the 'God particle', scientists were on the cusp of new medical treatment for Aids, we learned that the universe is expanding. All of these as well as new discoveries will also influence the meetings industry, since at the very least there remains the hope that scientists will continue to meet and socialise at their congresses and conferences.

The European Union is actively seeking a way out from the fiscal crisis and it seems that it is totally at sea. Politicians still appear unable to understand that they need to act for their people and not their own interests, political or otherwise. Of the many promising industries on the current horizon one can find congress tourism. 2011 was a year that was focused on finding the way for it to survive. Whilst it will not be remembered for great historical congresses and events, there were several minor, but nevertheless important, events that occurred. We have selected for you the most frequently read news and information that captures the highlights of the 2011 congress year.

LOCALLY

DEEPENING OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The year in the region passed under the spotlight of the financial and economic crisis, decreasing demand and forcing redundancy and closure of agencies. Once again, those more exposed were in the corporative sector of the meetings industry, with the associations market a little bit less so.

PROGRESS OF ZAGREB AND BELGRADE IN THE ICCA RANKINGS

Zagreb and Belgrade were the cities making the most considerable progress on ICCA's 2011 international association rankings. Zagreb jumped from position 171 to 79, in Europe to place 42. Even more remarkable was Belgrade's progress, somersaulting from place 168 to 55.



BEBEE CAMPAIGN

The innovative 'BeBee' marketing campaign set out to attract as wide a global congress public as it could by informing about the green advantages of Slovenia through the story about the Carniolan honey bee. Bees are symbolic of the level of protection of the environment, biodiversity and nature's fine balance.



THE LARGEST AUTUMN CONGRESS IN LJUBLJANA

The 40th four-day EDTNA/ERCA international conference in Cankarjev dom brought together more than 1500 nurses specialised in the field of the nursing care of kidney patients. The event is important for the development of the medical profession as well as for Slovenian congress tourism, as it was one of the largest conferences this year in terms of the number of attendees.

SLOVENIA TO HOST THE 2012 IMEX CHALLENGE

Ljubljana was chosen to be the host city of the international, socially responsible, humanitarian 2012 IMEX Challenge project. The project is carried out by the IMEX trade show organizers. Ljubljana won with the idea of building a learning bee house for the pupils of Training, Occupation and Care Centre Dolfke Boštjančič in Draga na Igu. In winning the event, Ljubljana squeezed out the other candidate, New York.



CROATIA AN IMPORTANT MEDITERRANEAN CONGRESS DESTINATION

Croatia, increasingly becoming an important destination in the Mediterranean region, also records positive trends in its meetings industry realm. This reflects the quality of its hotel and infrastructure offer and also its positioning on the international market.



THE CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEETINGS PROFESSIONALS FOUNDED

In Croatia the new association of meeting professionals that acts as non-profit organisation CMPA was founded. The association is committed to raising the standard of services among its members by means of education and opinion exchange.



THE SUSTAINABILITY AWARD FOR CONVENTA

In demonstrating a real commitment to the principles of sustainability, Conventa were presented with the 'Sustainable Stand Award' by Sustainability Events Ltd., an independent awarding body. Conventa follows the principles of international sustainable event standards, including BS8901, draft versions of ISO20121 and APEX Green Meeting standards, the Global Reporting Initiative Event Supplement and a number of sustainable event guidelines.



KONGRES MAGAZINE A FOUNDER MEMBER OF ELITE MEDIA CLUB INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS REVIEW

Kongres Magazine became a global media meeting point of the meetings industry of SE Europe. On the public presentation of the new global editorial network MRI - Meetings Review International - at the EIBTM trade show, Kongres Magazine was invited to become a member of the elite club responsible for the SE Europe area.



ENTHUSIASTIC LECTURE GIVEN BY LINDA PEREIRA

According to the opinion of readers and attendees, the most enthusiastic lecture last year within the Academy Conventa was performed by an event organiser well-known worldwide. Director of L&I Communications Group and CPL Events, Linda Pereira is an experienced professional in the field of congress tourism, which she prefers not to call tourism, but business.



GLOBALLY

SURVIVAL OF EUROPE

For Europe the most acute problem was that of the common currency. The leaders of Union members who formerly met four times during the year met eight times in 2011. The survival of the euro and the entire European project is at stake, and this could radically affect the meetings industry.

COLLAPSE OF THE CONSUMER SOCIETY

The avarice of consumers and the common responsibility of the consuming society are two often overlooked causes of collapse of the finance sector. The consuming society has lived for the past 40 years well beyond its means, spending borrowed money. In 2011 the meetings industry will have to adapt quickly to the changes in retail habits.

YEAR OF CONTENT MARKETING

In 2011, content definitely became the king. Event organisers have to learn how to create, prepare and distribute content in different ways to reach attendees. There are no longer website visits or satisfied attendees without good content.

MEGA EVENT OF THE YEAR: THE ROYAL WEDDING

In searching for the global mega event of the year, one that required and included the knowledge of the meetings industry as well, there was no need to look further than the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. The wedding was seen by two billion people in direct broadcasting, with more than a million people on the streets of London.

THE MASS COMMUNICATION CRISIS

The media crisis was deepening all over the world and the confidence in media was also decreasing due to media mogul scandals. The crisis of the media industry is the crisis of mass communication, an exit from which is exclusively possible by taking into consideration the interests of readers and not advertisers and capital.

REALLY GREEN MEETINGS

In 2011, everyone who really wants to move in the direction of low-carbon events had to begin to carry do so in a measurable and not solely declarative level. At the same time, last year different standards and regulations became more simplified and defined (British standard BS8901, draft standard ISO20121, APEX standard on green meetings - annex on events and GRI standard). We will see how this will be carried out in practice in 2012.



THE YEAR OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS



The spread of smart phones, where operation systems Android and Apple's iOS are eagerly fighting for dominance, also touched the meetings industry. A lot of smart solutions became available to congress organisers, and

these will make organisation easier for them, as well as communication to attendees: from registration payments to completely new dimensions of mobile communications on conferences.

WOMEN PREDOMINATE IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

If we look at the industry on fairs, trade shows or particular providers, it seems the meetings industry has been taken over by women. A lot of them are in high positions and are occupying well paid posts in the industry. Men often reported to contribute a lot to the development of the industry so it is good to see that women are not only observers, but an important part in the development of the meetings industry.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Mass marketing in 2011 was no longer useful. It passed to social networks and goal oriented and segmented marketing. In 2011 google+, efforts to monetize Twitter, network shopping, the global dependency on Facebook and new prayers of all marketing managers of SEO optimisation all appeared.

SUCCESSFUL TRADE SHOWS IMEX AND EIBTM



The effects of crisis did not damage the success of the world's two largest trade shows. Both flagship events had unprecedented visitor levels and expanded in the American market. The

industry is imperishable and positive signals from events bring a lot of optimism for the future.

STEVE JOBS



The year was also marked by the death of the founder of Apple, the visionary Steve Jobs. His inventions, charisma, guidelines and new foundations of information technology also radically affected the meetings industry, which is based on communication.

THE BEST EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2011 ACCORDING TO "EUROPEAN BEST EVENT AWARDS 2011"

FIRST PRIZE

Project: SURPRISE CATWALK
Agency: Fieldwork
State: Norway

SECOND PRIZE

Project: EDP 35th BIRTHDAY
Agency: Desafio Global Ativism SA
State: Portugal

THIRD PRIZE

Project: ŠKODA WORLD DEALER CONFERENCE
Agency: VokDams
State: Germany

More info at www.besteventawards.com/

TREND SPOTTING: SUSTAINABILITY IS SMART BUSINESS

‘Greening the supply chain’ has been a focus of many industries, but will be a larger issue for the meetings industry in 2012



GUY BIGWOOD

Guy Bigwood's mission is green congress events. He is the manager of corporate social responsibility in the MCI agency, a leading world DMC that employs 1200 professionals. He is leading expert for sustainability questions and one of the most influential people on the congress circuit. At the same time, he is an adviser on sustainability projects in Copenhagen and Göteborg. He is known as great lecturer as well as motivator.

As 2011 becomes 2012, Top 10 lists and year-in-reviews abound. With sustainability so much in the news throughout 2011 (extreme weather, measured increases in green house gasses, and continuing economic crises), and because it is our chosen area of focus, some attention is also merited to ways sustainability issues will affect the meetings industry.

This time last year, we created a list of predictions. In a few examples, we were perhaps a bit optimistic and, yet, we maintain that the list remains viable, if ahead of it's time, so they appear again in this list for 2012 (sustainability reporting for events, social responsibility activities at events and increased leadership from Destination Management Organisations, in particular).

A THOUGHTFUL REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TRENDS SHOWS CLEARLY THAT SUSTAINABILITY, AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES, ARE MORE RELEVANT AND, INDEED, MORE IMPORTANT TO BUSINESS THAN EVER BEFORE.

Return on Investment (ROI), risk reduction, cost containment, stakeholder engagement and innovative initiatives to increase revenue streams are terms which are not only near the top of every business leaders 'to do' list, but also characterise sustainable business results.

Given the increasing import of sustainable business practices in a difficult and ever more competitive marketplace, it's appropriate to look more closely at the most influential of sustainability trends which will inform the 2012 landscape of meetings and events internationally.

1. Measurement and Reporting: 2012 will see a defined growth in measurement of event

impacts and reporting to stakeholders. This trend will be a natural extension of the rapid growth in reporting seen in the corporate sector.

AT PRESENT, 80% OF THE GLOBAL FORTUNE 250 COMPANIES NOW COMPLETE SUSTAINABILITY REPORTS TO INVESTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS.

One reason for the intense interest in reporting can be attributed to organisational effort to build trust with investors and clients. The economic crisis has compromised the perception of business integrity and transparent reporting of financial returns, with sustainable business actions an effective way to show that organisations are responsible and poised for growth. Those events that perform sustainability measures will most likely measure the following:

- a. Return on Investment
- b. Event related carbon emissions
- c. Total waste/recycling/donations
- d. Investment in local community

2. Supply Chain Management: 'Greening the supply chain' has been a focus of many industries, but will be a larger issue for the meetings industry in 2012. Suppliers, such as hotels and conference centres, who attain eco-certifications, will be required to conduct a review of the suppliers with whom they work. Planners seeking compliance with any of the internationally recognised sustainability standards for meetings and events will also be evaluating the ability of their suppliers to support sustainable event outcomes. The result will be a re-writing of purchasing policies and a shift away from suppliers with no engagement in sustainable practices.

3. Education: The proliferation and release of voluntary industry standards (ISO 20121, Apex Sustainable Meeting Standards and the

Global Reporting Initiative Event Organiser Sector Supplement), along with the increased interest in reporting impacts, will increase interest in building planner and supplier skills through education. Industry associations such as the Green Meeting Industry Council and Meeting Professionals International are, along with private sector sustainability resources, well poised to offer relevant and cost effective sustainability training for the industry.

4. Technology: As with all sectors, the meetings and events industry will see a rapid evolution resulting from the increased usage of event-specific smart phone applications. These apps provide individual delegates personalised, customised mapping to optimise their event experience, saving time and increasing productivity.

SOCIAL MEDIA, AS A PLATFORM FOR TWO WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EVENT OWNERS AND EVENT PARTICIPANTS ('WHAT'S WITH THE AIR CONDITIONING?' 'THE AUDIO VISUAL IS AWFUL') PROVIDE REAL TIME OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS ANY EVENT IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED TO ENHANCE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE.

Social media makes it possible for the event to begin at the time of registration, giving real value to sponsors and exhibitors to engage event attendees in constructive dialogue before the official event start date.

5. Virtual elements: Regional events connected internationally: Event planners are learning that the addition of virtual audiences increases stakeholder engagement in their organisations rather than compromise attendance. Regional 'nodes' which connect at focused times during their respective events

can be highly engaging and offer exciting opportunities to share knowledge while reducing costs and carbon emissions from flights and other transport.

6. Community Actions: Social programs will remain an important element for conferences in 2012. The change will be seen in what planners offer as activities in events.

RATHER THAN INVEST EXCLUSIVELY IN MORE TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THEME PARTIES OR COCKTAIL MINGLES, PLANNERS WILL OFFER SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ACTIONS WHICH GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY.

Participants in these sessions are moved to enthusiastic expression of these sessions being a highlight of their event experience.

7. Destination Management Organisations as sustainable business hubs. As a first point of contact for many planners, DMOs will become increasingly responsive to demand for sustainable suppliers and activity options for events. Through their connections with regional membership, DMOs have the opportunity to gather industry leaders around the topic of sustainability and facilitate training to bring mutually beneficial business returns to the region.

8. Fewer actions, greater results: Rather than struggle to integrate 10 or more new actions, ideas or processes, planners and suppliers will focus on 2 or 3 specific and measurable tactics which can yield tangible returns or progress. In 2012, more planners will mature in their approach to sustainable event management and find concrete results by narrowing their focus to improve areas most material to their unique conference or business.

PREDICTIONS: THE GLOBAL EVENTS MARKET

The provision of educational content is a key theme



RAY BLOOM

The director of the IMEX group is also a creator of trade shows - together with Paul Flacket Ray invented the EIBTM trade show, later to be taken over by Reed Exhibitions, and also founded IMEX, which will celebrate its tenth anniversary this year. The strong strategic concept behind the project is testified by the constantly successful records of the IMEX trade show and its expansion in the USA. Ray is one of the leading personalities of the meetings industry and is an active member of the most important associations of interest.

Taking into account results from a recent survey amongst the leading buyers and meetings professionals across the globe, the IMEX Group's predictions for the 2012 meetings, incentive travel and events market reveal a number of interesting themes.

DESPITE THE TURBULENT ECONOMIC BACKDROP OF RECENT YEARS, RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY ANNOUNCED THAT BUSINESS IS PICKING UP, WITH GLOBALISATION ON THE INCREASE.

Comments indicated that whilst it has been a predominately conservative increase and mostly short-term focused, there had been a boost in business over the previous 12 months. In addition, there is a trend towards more - but smaller or shorter - meetings and events and slight growth in attendance at association meetings and events.

ANECDOTAL SURVEY COMMENTS ALSO SUGGEST THAT INTEREST FROM THE CORPORATE SECTOR IS RETURNING AND THAT DEMAND FOR INCENTIVE TRAVEL IS ON THE RISE AGAIN.

Increased globalisation in terms of planning and destination choice also came through in the survey. It is apparent that the definition of a 'new' or 'emerging' destination is broadening and increasingly dependent on a given buyer's own location and experience. One buyer's 'emerging market' will be another's 'long-time favorite' and, as globalisation increases, so does buyer awareness of the full size and scope of the world market.

Another key theme highlighted in responses and, again, reflective of the current economic climate, is the importance of value and specifically the goal to achieve more for less.

WITH ECONOMIC PRESSURES ACROSS MANY WORLD MARKETS, THE DEMAND FOR 'ADDED VALUE' FROM BUYERS OVER THE NEXT 12+ MONTHS WILL REMAIN.

Convention centres and some hotels are leading the way with value-adds such as free wi-fi or green meeting consultancy services. The provision of educational content is a key theme, with organisations asked to provide this more than ever compared with previous years.

Environmental issues continue to be a significant focus in 2012.

'GREEN SUPPLY-CHAIN ANALYSIS' AND 'RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS' ARE GROWING TRENDS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD.

We can expect to see more companies, networks and alliances emerge that make it easier for organisations to work together to achieve their green or CSR goals. Streamlining of green practices, benchmarks and certifications will also start to occur as knowledge and experience expands.

Social Media continues to grow in importance. For example, in the US 87.5% of respondents reported using LinkedIn for business, with Facebook at 70.8%, Twitter at 50%, and YouTube at 22.4%.

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, 42.5% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THE USE OF

SOCIAL MEDIA IS HELPING THEM GENERATE BUSINESS.

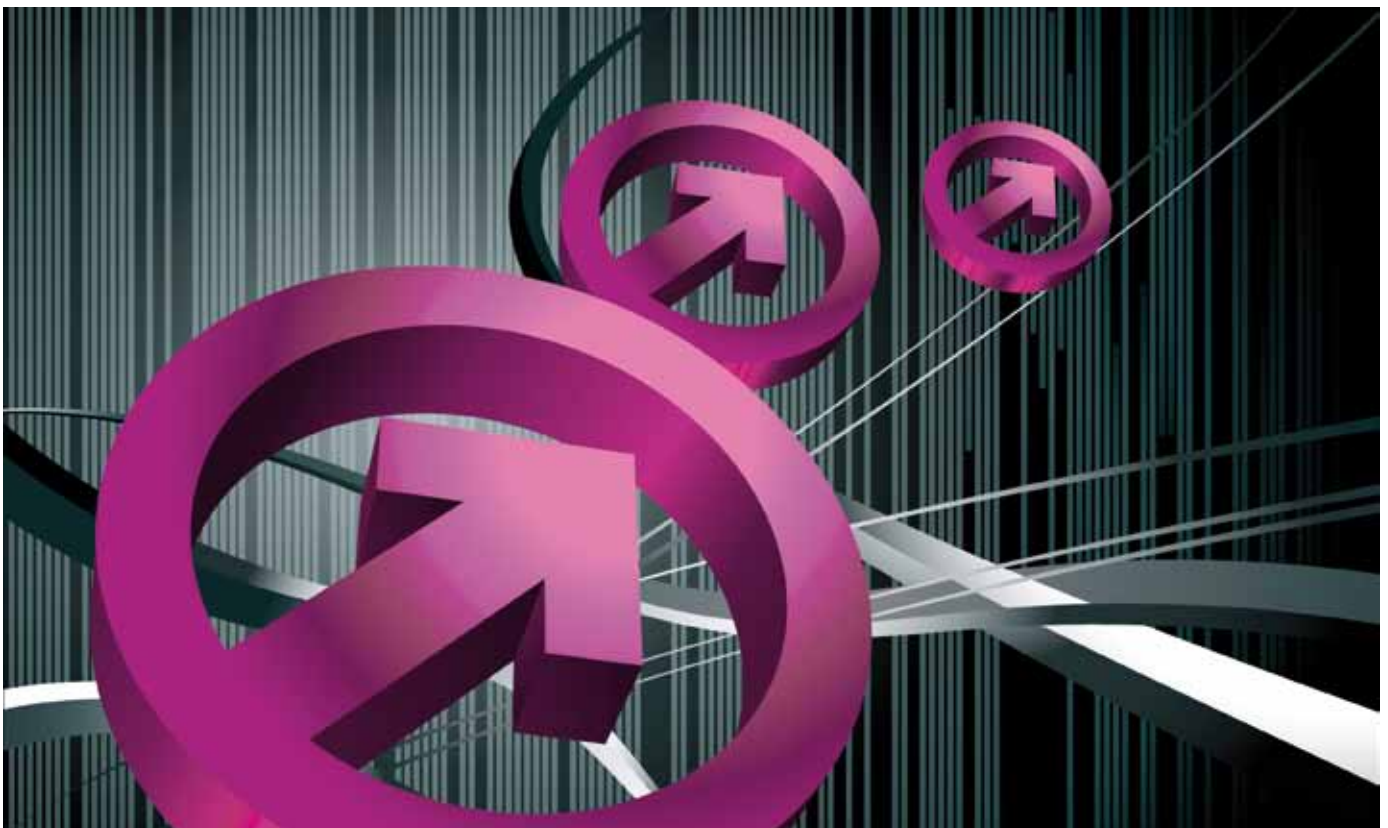
Buyers also reported a 50% + increase in usage of social media in the past six months.

One of the biggest trends identified in the survey, particularly among associations, is the need to capture and leverage education content both during and after live events to extend the reach and benefit to attendees and members. Driven by a never-ending surge of internet, smartphone, and tablet use there has been a breathtaking and widespread desire for high quality, easily accessible knowledge-sharing and education 'on-demand'. These developments mean that many in the industry have become

both publishers and education-providers, not more so than in the social media sphere, and this is certainly a trend that will increase.

THE DELIVERY OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS IN AN ENTERTAINING, INTERACTIVE AND DIVERSE FORMAT, INCLUDING AN INCREASING CROSS-OVER OF GAMING TECHNOLOGY OR 'GAMIFICATION', WILL ALSO RISE.

Finally, another trend crucial to the long-term health and success of the meetings industry is the ability to quantify and transparently communicate its economic value to a given country, region or city. The US led the way with its 2009 Economic Impact Study, whilst Mexico recently announced results of its own. We expect numerous additional destinations to announce intentions to conduct similar research studies, which, in turn, will become increasingly important tools for political advocacy.



ARE YOU MAKING A SNACK, PROVIDING A MEAL OR CREATING AN EXPERIENCE?

An experience is created when all parties work together and understand the value of their collective contribution



PAUL BRIDLE

For more than two decades Paul has studied effective organisations and the people that lead them. Paul is fascinated by what works in organisations and why individuals and groups follow some people and not others.

His interests include: human behaviour, leadership, organisational dynamics, research, trends, networking and meeting interesting people.

For three consecutive years he was voted 12th in the Top 30 Most Influential Leadership Gurus in the World for contribution to leadership development.

If we think of a 'meeting' as similar to eating food, the food we eat is like the content of a meeting. The reason we eat it and the type of food will depend on a number of reasons, but they broadly fall under three headings.

Some meetings are purely to consume food. It is about sustenance, the sharing of knowledge or information and is often solving an immediate need or hunger. Some are more of a meal where discussion can take place, ideas get challenged; brainstorming will take place and even some networking. Then there are the meetings that are more of an experience. They do all of the elements of the previous types of meetings, but they also do a whole lot more. It is the difference between eating a snack because we are hungry, sitting down to have something to eat and going to a restaurant for a meal.

In each case there is food to eat. At each meeting there is content to be consumed. In each case the food needs to be prepared, packaged and provided, but in each case the way this is done depends on what is trying to be achieved. A meeting to discuss whether we need to buy a piece of equipment is necessary, but does not require a lot of effort to plan and set up. A meeting to define the buying practice of the business needs more time and consideration.

A MEETING TO DEFINE THE STRATEGY FOR THE BUSINESS WILL NEED A LOT MORE PLANNING, THOUGHT AND EXECUTION.

Each satisfies a need but has more depth to it.

A perfect meeting is defined by the experience the delegate has and the value it adds in terms of how it can be digested later.

IT IS LIKE A RESTAURANT, THE PERFECT MEAL IS DEFINED BY THE CUSTOMERS' EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION.

Just because the Chef thinks it is a great meal, or the Head Waiter and Bar Tender thinks it is a great meal, does not make it a great meal. The same applies to the meeting or event. What the supplier thinks, or the meeting planner thinks, or the venue provider thinks, is not the deciding factor. It is what the delegate thinks and can do as a result.

Just as in a restaurant, if the Chef thinks he or she is the most important element of the visit, or the waiters think they are the most important element, then all that is achieved is disharmony in the restaurant, which ultimately affects the customer's experience.

THE KEY IS HOW WELL EACH AREA CAN HARMONISE WITH EACH OTHER TO CREATE A SATISFIED CUSTOMER.

An experience is created when all parties work together and understand the value of their collective contribution and that each one has a chance to add to the overall experience, but also has a chance to damage the overall experience. The food can be wonderful, but if the plates or cutlery are dirty, or the wrong ones for the food, then the wonderful food is undermined completely and the experience is broken. Equally, trying to design a meeting by focusing on designing a new plate or finding new cutlery is of no use if the food is not good enough.

If we take the food example to another level, we also know that a person's health is important and eating correctly is an essential part of that. Constantly eating snacks is not good for us. We need to eat sensibly, in a balanced way and at regular intervals. People

who care about their health will consider this and monitor what they eat, how often and how they eat it. If they know they are going out for a dinner that evening, they will likely eat lightly during the day. Those that don't plan and consider the balance they need are the ones that create health issues for themselves.

Organisations are no different.

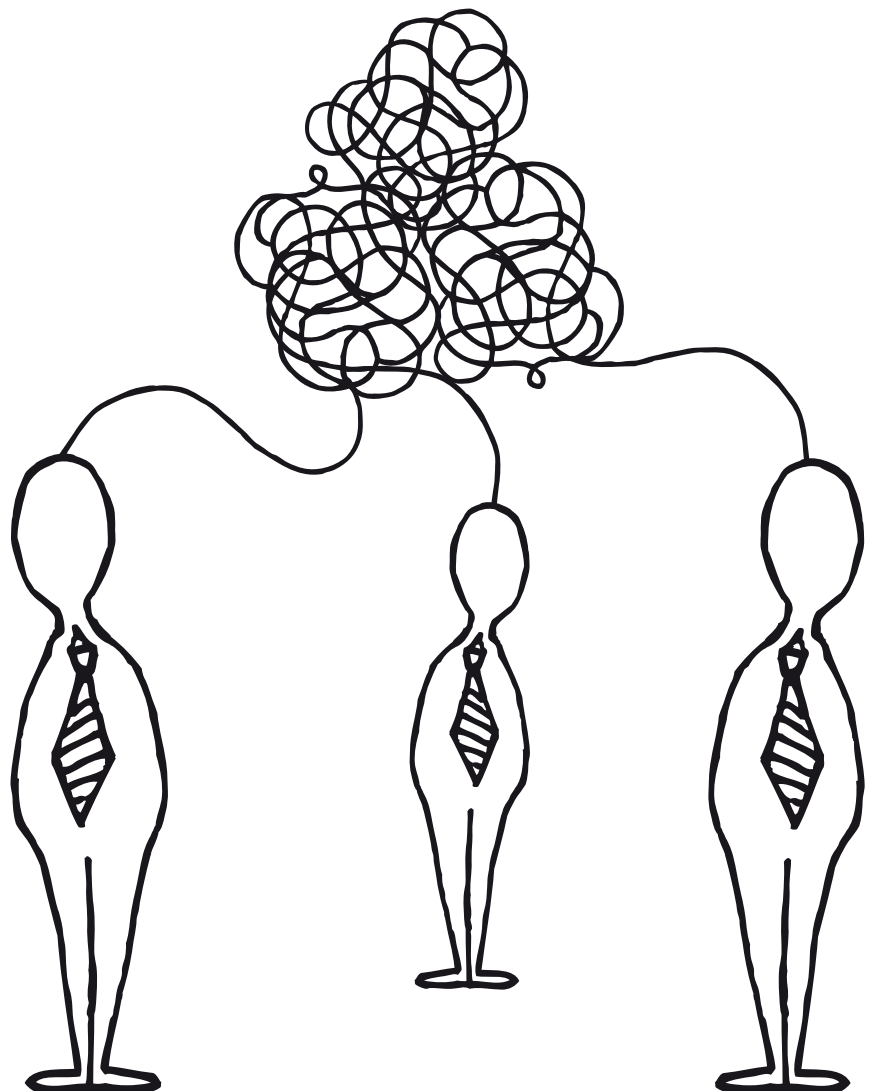
THE HEALTH OF AN ORGANISATION REQUIRES GOOD COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE.

Meetings facilitate communication and knowledge, but without some forethought or planning it is possible that people end up eating all day! Worse still, they end up eating the wrong foods and the food is not properly digested or burnt off, thus creating health issues.

The problem is made worse by people seeing fast food as the answer to all their nutritional needs and even as a cost effective way to sustain themselves or their organisations.

THE FUTURE IS NOT ABOUT DESIGNING A MEETING, BUT IN HOW TO CREATE A NUTRITIONAL PLAN THAT BALANCES ALL THE NEEDS.

This will include snacks, meals and restaurant dinners.



'MOSOLO' OR 'THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK', FUTURE TREND HYBRID EVENT

The classic event belongs to the past – the future belongs to the hybrid event



COLJA M. DAMS

Colja M. Dams has been President/CEO of the VOK DAMS GRUPPE since 1998. Since its foundation in 1971, the agency has been one of the international market leaders in Live-Marketing and Events. An economics graduate from the University of Witten/Herdecke in Germany, he was early to recognise the importance of internationalisation in the special events business. Thanks to his efforts, the Wuppertal, Germany headquartered agency has established five additional German offices in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Berlin and Munich, as well as successful subsidiaries in the Middle East (Dubai), China (Shanghai & Beijing), France (Bordeaux), England (London) and the U.S.A. (New York). Furthermore, Colja sets new standards in the fields of Events and Live-Marketing, which are constantly developed by VOK DAMS Consulting.

How can communication goals be achieved faster and better? How can new communication forms be used effectively for brand communication?

It is not only marketing specialists faced by these questions. Every day new articles, theories and discussions are published on how the internet is changing all of our lives.

THE INTERNET HAS BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FOR A LONG TIME – NOT JUST FOR B2B, BUT ALSO FOR B2C.

The advantages of the internet as a communication platform have long been acknowledged – greater proximity to the consumer, more target oriented and innovative.

Although the term 'paradigm shift' is a big claim, it is appropriate here – because the focus of brand and product communication is shifted from company to consumer. This new relationship 'at eye level' is regarded as the 'new dominant logic of marketing'.

But here, people working in marketing find themselves on uncertain ground. Does the brand fall into the hands of the users? Like Goethe's Sorcerer's Apprentice, many say: "Spirits that I've cited, my commands ignore." What happens when I spread a message online? How can I still control the forms of post-communication?

Trend MoSoLo

Which of the current trends have a sustainable impact on communication?

Augmented Reality – A combination of the digital and analogue world. 'Virtual' and 'real' stop being opposites.

Crowd Sourcing – Many people can cooperate on one project simultaneously.

Cloud Computing – Hard drives are replaced by decentralised networks, which can be accessed from all kinds of devices.

Cloud Gaming – For playing games, cloud

gaming ensures highest-quality graphics, even if the connection is slow.

A.I. Web – Artificial intelligence allows semantic analyses and computer-assisted learning of language processes.

Social Search – The search engine is replaced by searches and recommendations via social networks.

3D Web – 3D is the web standard.

Multiple Web – The web is available on a diverse range of devices. The boundaries Access between the devices are further blurred. We access the web via the different devices. For accessing the internet, the smartphone has taken over the computer as the most important device, followed by tablets, TVs, cars, radios and other electronic devices.

Behaviour Follows – The device which we use to go online determines how we use Device the web.

Hyper Connectivity – We are hyper-connected and online 24/7. The web becomes part of us and replaces the key in our pockets.

Web kills TV – The web unites all media and its hybrid forms. Bandwidths continue to increase. The first classic medium that is unable to oppose the trend and is absorbed by the web is the TV. In ten years, it will not exist as a business model anymore.

Social Media Planet – Social media becomes the main reason why people use the web and the main tool for human communication.

What connects these trends? It is 'hybrid'.

Hybrid Media: The web unites all media and its hybrid forms.

Hybrid Devices: The web is available on a diverse range of devices. The boundaries between the devices are further blurred.

Hybrid Work: The boundaries between work and spare time, staff and customer, producer and consumer are further dissolved.

Hybrid Reality: The digital world becomes a part of the self.

Hybrid Events

Hybrid is also the trend for events and live-marketing.

For VOK DAMS, hybrid events are the combination of events and interactive mobile (smart phones, tablets and their interactive applications including augmented reality, QR codes, Apps ...), social (social media platforms including Facebook, Xing, Twitter, YouTube ...) and local (location-based services including Foursquare, Facebook Places ...) web applications.

The simple formula:

Hybrid Events = Live + MoSoLo* = ROI^{new**}

(*mobile/social/local; **Return on

Involvement = word-of-mouth = recommendation to buy).

HYBRID EVENTS INCREASE NOT ONLY THE ROI BECAUSE OF THEIR VIRAL IMPACT, BUT CAN ALSO HELP INCREASE SUSTAINABILITY BY REDUCING CO₂.

Because of the intensive involvement of participants, hybrid events stand for the paradigm shift from focusing on the event to focusing on the participant – from brand-generated to user-generated event.

Reaching communication goals

We are currently experiencing a dramatic change in live communication. A passive visitor becomes an active participant in the communication.

THEREFORE, ROI DOES NOT ONLY STAND FOR RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANYMORE, BUT ALSO FOR RETURN ON INVOLVEMENT.

The stronger the integration of the event participant, the better the chances of them making a positive decision on purchasing

or recommending a product or service.

Even though a Google study showed in 2011 that online recommendations are crucial for the purchasing decision, more than 75% of decisions are taken after a direct communication. This indicates the potential of live marketing and especially of hybrid events.

Conclusion

The classic event belongs to the past – the future belongs to the hybrid event. No event will be successful without MoSoLo applications.

THUS, THE HYBRID EVENT IS THE MOST INNOVATIVE TREND IN LIVE MARKETING.

In the future, however, it will not be sufficient to merely react to the changing expectations of event visitors – it will be important to promote the topic of hybrid events when planning and executing events.

FUTURE TRENDS IN MARKETING DESTINATIONS AND VENUES

Generation Y will choose meetings in the future!



ROB DAVIDSON

Professor Rob Davidson is a lecturer of business tourism at the University of Greenwich in London. Before his academic career, he was an educator and trainer in the central tourist board, 'Visit Britain'. He regularly analyses marketing trends for the largest trade show in the world - EIBTM. According to the Conference & Incentive Travel Magazine, he is considered one of 50 most influential British congress personalities. He is the author of numerous books in the field of the meetings industry and congress destinations marketing and has also been a co-worker at Kongres Magazine for many years.

The conference destinations and venues of the near future will not be selected by people my age. They will be chosen by meetings planners who are members of Generation Y, people currently in their 20s and early 30s. Their preferences and tastes in destinations and venues will determine where conferences are held in the future;

AND THEREFORE THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTING THEIR CITIES AND VENUES WILL HAVE TO ACHIEVE AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT GENERATION Y WANTS IN THIS MARKET.

To assist them in this task, it is possible to speculate about the future from what we already know about the desires of the youngest generation of meetings planners and delegates, in terms of where conferences are held. My own research in this area shows that, regarding venues first of all, Generation Y has a number of specific expectations:

- Natural light and outdoor areas are attractive to them. Unlike their parents' generation, they are very unwilling to spend much time in window-less rooms with no indication of whether it is day or night, sunny or raining outside. They are right in this respect – all of the scientific evidence demonstrates that people are more focused and alert when there is natural light in the room. Regarding outdoor areas, these are also popular with Generation Y, as an alternative to working in groups in syndicate rooms, for example. So venues with usable gardens, terraces and balconies should make sure that these are prominent in their marketing material.
- Generation Y cares about the natural environment more than any preceding

generation, so planners and delegates will like to see evidence of 'green' measures in the venues they use.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND RECYCLING, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL BE REGARDED AS POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ANY VENUE, SO THESE ACTIONS, WHERE THEY EXIST, OUGHT TO FEATURE IN VENUES' MARKETING MATERIAL.

- This is a generation with a high expectation of excitement and stimulation in every aspect of their lives. This means that nondescript, featureless venues of the bland 'concrete box' type will struggle to attract business from Generation Y meetings planners in the future. Their preference will be for 'iconic' or 'funky' buildings – venues with special architectural significance; buildings that lift the spirits of those who enter them; venues that somehow amuse and delight the delegates, by their design, furnishings or outlook, for example.
- 'Chill-out zones' are another feature of venues that is high on the wish-list of Generation Y planners and delegates.

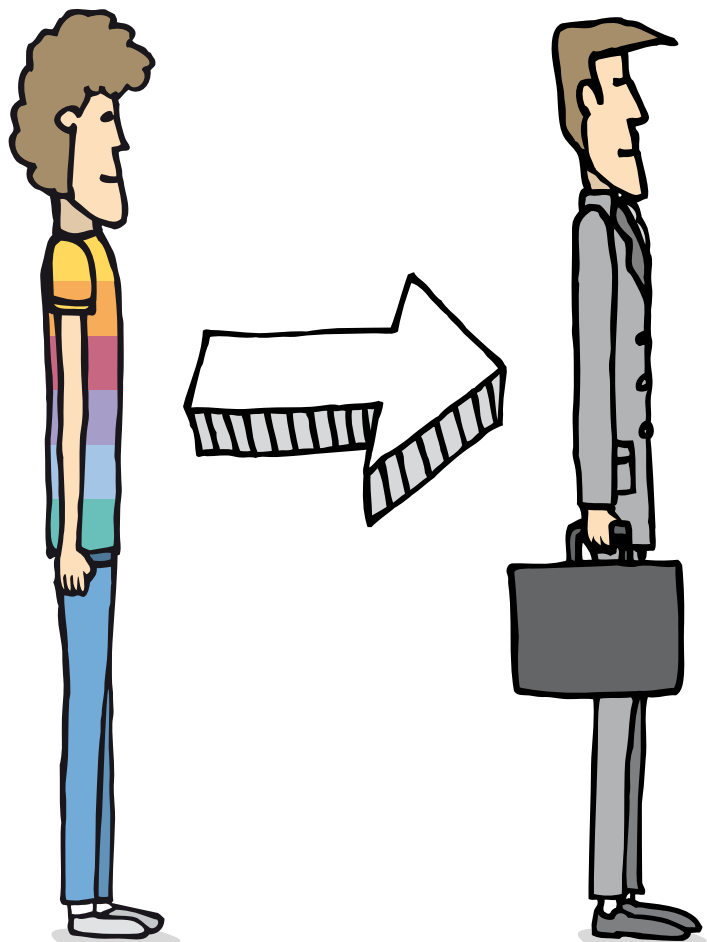
YOUNGER DELEGATES TELL US THAT THEY WANT SPECIAL PLACES TO GO TO WHEN THEY OPT OUT OF A PARTICULAR CONFERENCE SESSION – USUALLY EITHER BECAUSE THE TOPIC DOESN'T INTEREST THEM OR BECAUSE THE SPEAKER FAILS TO COMMUNICATE IN AN ENGAGING WAY.

A typical 'chill-out zone' might include low, comfortable chairs, natural light (of course), a coffee / fruit smoothie machine and (free!) wifi.

In terms of future destinations for conferences, this is very difficult to predict. Who would have guessed even 10 years ago that Belgrade, for example, would become a thriving destination for business events? One thing that is for certain, however, is that the future generation of conference delegates and planners will be more adventurous than previous generations.

**THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO
ARE MUCH MORE WIDELY
TRAVELLED THAN THEIR
PARENTS WERE BY THE TIME
THEY REACHED THEIR 20S.**

For Europeans, for example, many of the continent's capital cities are already familiar to Generation Y. For that reason, I think that they will be more willing to visit 'second-tier' cities for their conferences – towns and cities that are not the capitals of the countries in which they are located, but which offer attractive features – including, most likely, a lively night life! On that subject, I just read that the island of Ibiza has just created its own convention bureau ...



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A CRYSTAL BALL YOU'D BETTER HAVE A REALLY GOOD TOOLKIT!!!

Diversification will be the key to staying not only in the game but ahead of it



LINDA PEREIRA

Known worldwide for her work as an event organiser, Linda Pereira is the Director of L&I Communications Group in CPL Events. Linda, amongst others, was responsible for the organisation of events of three Portuguese Presidencies of the European Union, organisation of EXPO '98, EURO 2004 and many other world congresses, business conferences and prestigious events. In September she enthralled Academy Conventa attendees with her professionalism and with her positivity has proved that her enthusiasm at work is an asset that has given her the will, power and energy for achieving successful results on global level.

Talking about trends is a very tricky thing. I do not have a crystal ball, but I always make sure I have a great toolkit! Only if you have been hiding under a rock will you be unaware of what is happening around us. Europe's financial woes continue to dominate and the debt crisis keeps us focused on the current issues. We waste time talking about banks and politicians and humdrum issues and we miss the bigger picture. This is a structural change in the way we live. These structural tsunamis come around every 20 years or so and things are never the same again. We are moving away from a Cartesian economy of "things" and transitioning, albeit rather suddenly and rather aggressively, to an economy of the "non-things". The models of infinite growth will give way to a time of less urgency, although the future is coming at us with great speed. It will be infinitely painful to face this change, but happiness will become a far more important and valued equity and time will be measured in terms of the quality of life we can achieve.

2012 will demand from humanity greater imagination, more creativity. Nations will need to redefine themselves, re-imagine themselves. And this is where our sector will face challenges like never before. Against this bleak economic backdrop, the events industry has a tough 12 months ahead. Massive cuts in the public sector and government spending will mean less money for public sector events and corporate clients will remain cautious with their long-term decision making as well as their budgets and of course public perception on spending will impact on the rest. Diversification will be the key to staying not only in the game but ahead of it. It has never been so important for agencies and venues to focus on partnerships and risk-sharing. Resourcefulness, harder negotiations with suppliers and the increasing focus on hybrid events combined with live events with social media will become the norm. Changes in the way we view markets, the impacts of technology development, the way we now learn and acquire knowledge will all mean a

brand new meeting industry and client. At my company we annually have two brainstorming sessions, which include certain clients, our destination partners and specific consultants from a variety of areas and fields. As our business is planned on a long term basis it is fundamental that we all have at least an idea of what may be coming down the line, so that we can predict and plan for the best solutions for our clients.

Anyone who knows me professionally is well aware of what I have been 'preaching' for about five years: that our industry will survive and prove its value through creativity, understand their client's business, providing more than just services and coming to the table as part of a destination team. Once and for all we have to create a destination-wide attitude and create across the board solutions for our clients, which involve risk sharing. Add to this the capacity to make that solution memorable, one that inspires growth and loyalty, and success is guaranteed. Since 2008 our conclusions have been very much along the lines, as most experts have been declaring. The role of the meeting planner will increasingly involve financial issues. Whereas previously the planner would spend 80% of his time on logistics and 20% on raising revenue and sponsorship, the reverse is now true. Rising internet technologies, with high-speed connections, 3D monitors and augmented reality tools are making virtual gatherings more feasible and thus creating vast opportunities in hybrid meetings. This will be especially true as travel costs rise. Businesses and professionals will think twice about the cost of travel to particular locations for a meeting or education, so in many cases the virtual meeting room or classroom will win out against the brick and mortar kind. But there is something technology will not be able to replace: human connection and interaction. The need for and value of face to face meetings is undeniable. But 2012 will bring hybrid meetings to centre stage once and for all.

So in the tradition of the relationship I have with this magazine I thought this article should provide some takeaways. As such, here is an overview of the guidelines that, at the company, we are working to for the next two years.

Shorter lead times are no longer a trend but a reality, with bookings taking place often only a few weeks before an event is to take place. We have seen events for 350 people confirmed 3 weeks out - a nightmare for planners. Many companies are increasingly wary of booking too far in advance in case of cancellation or postponement, which in some cases is associated with hefty fees. Herein lies the art of competitive venues who have heard the word about risk-sharing and have thus guaranteed long-term commitment from clients. Some, meanwhile, are simply taking advantage of favourable last-minute rates and packages.

Once again I am indoctrinating my staff that *relationships are the key*. There has never been a more important time to invest in face-to-face meetings between suppliers and buyers. Buyers with short lead times are more likely to go to suppliers with whom they have a good relationship, as they can rely on them for a fast response and the need for flexibility. Suppliers who want to win business should be investing in face-to-face meetings and focusing on creating good working relationships with buyers. The better we know our client, our customer or even our own staff, the better solutions we can provide and that can be achieved in our sector via face-to-face events.

In an ever-changing market, buyers are looking for *flexibility, added value* without extra cost and fast responses. Suppliers need to be flexible with a variety of deciding factors, such as dates, price, cancellation and deposit procedures, and payment options in order to stay ahead of the competition. Responding within 24 hours to an RFP is vital to create a good first impression and suppliers should work with the buyers in partnership to make sure the event can go ahead.

During the height of the recession, many businesses cut down on pure incentive trips, focusing their budgets on business meetings. Incentives will be slowly coming back on the menu in 2012 and throughout 2013, albeit more discreetly than usual. With bigger, but highly scrutinised budgets, buyers are focused on getting the most for their money and on the bare essentials, with decreased attention to parallel programmes, tours, spa and golf facilities. The *more business, less pleasure*, no-frills approach focuses on the basics and team-building activities, if any, are often incorporated into the body of the meeting, with little or no time allocated specifically for networking or incentives. As for meetings, the tourism aspects, while important, are no longer part of the decision factor, albeit as regards destination choice or programme content. It is now about the solution benefit for the company or association.

THIS IS THE TIME FOR THE SO-CALLED EMERGING DESTINATIONS TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.

Offering better value for meetings smart destinations, which are quick to position themselves and show the required levels of professionalism and the appropriate range of services and venues, will greatly benefit now. New destinations, such as Zagreb, Ljubljana, Tallinn, Vilnius and Sofia, are also growing in popularity as companies seek cost-effective venues in up-and-coming destinations.

The world of *social media* is definitely here to stay and crucial for the meetings and incentive industry. Face-to-face contact is still seen as having the most value, but many buyers are utilising social media tools for a variety of reasons, be it to seek feedback on venues, developing relationships through Facebook with suppliers they've already met or creating communities to increase delegate attendance. However, it must be remembered that any

digital interaction creates the need for live face-to-face interaction and does not replace it.

CSR and environmental awareness continue to be hot topics for the meetings and incentives market, but now they are actually client driven. These are no longer optional issues but basic requirements. Many buyers are specifically seeking hotels and other service suppliers with sustainability and green programmes, as companies aim to reduce the environmental impacts associated with meetings and events, whatever their profile. Companies and agencies in our sector can no longer survive with mere badge or bag recycling and in-depth strategies and measurable solutions are now required.

Today we not only have an emerging workforce and talent pool that has studied strategic meetings management and that is highly prepared, but have also grown with technology as a norm. On the client side the same is happening. These young professionals are now in events departments, marketing departments and have become the knowledgeable buyers. And then there is the emergence of the core PCO, which influences every aspect of the event from destination selection to planning and management. Clients now expect a lot more from us and we must respond on the same level. We must employ qualified professionals who speak '*client*' and we must hit the ground running when we are asked to provide a solution. It is no longer an amateur's game. However the sector is still growing and metamorphosing. Brands increasingly consider events as the absolute best and most effective way to build loyalty and a sense of community among clients and staff - and for Associations they are lifelines.

So, are you quite ready for a new adventure?

MEETINGS 2015 – WHAT'S NEXT?

8 main trends in meetings world



DAN RIVLIN

Dan Rivlin has been employed in a number of different management positions with the global PCO Kenes. In 1998 he took over the management of the company, which under his leadership achieved extraordinary strategic progress and gained the leading position among PCOs across the world. He has an MBA in the field of tourism and has been a member of the academy of the most famous seminar of congress professionals, IAPCO, for many years.

Prophecy was given over to fools, yet we are all trying to provide our analyses of what will happen in the future. In the following article, the main trends anticipated for the meetings world are explored and discussed.

1. E education

Technology advancements will enable the spread of meeting content to potential consumers (doctors). The availability of high quality educational content will enable associations to (a) brand themselves, (b) attract more potential participants to their activities, and (c) generate revenue from a new source (sale of content through the internet). Pioneering projects of this nature are gaining momentum on the internet. Modules of selling content in the form of CDs and DVDs have already existed for some time.

2. Cross Continent Markets

The trend of Asian participation in leading brand European meetings will continue.

ASSOCIATIONS THAT WILL BE ABLE TO MARKET THEMSELVES IN THE RESPECTIVE MARKETS WILL ENJOY FURTHER PROSPERITY DUE TO THE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN THE ASIAN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN MARKETS.

The trend will last for approximately the next 5-10 years, until these regions develop their own competitive products (meetings). The trend already exists in some brands, where a significant participation of Asian markets has already become a fact.

3. Virtual Communities

The introduction of virtual communities will turn the congresses into the main highlight of activities of these communities. For example, doctors could discuss posters before and

after the meeting and not only during the meeting itself. Doctors will anticipate having the information available before meetings and remaining available for further review afterwards. The potential growth is significant, due to the exposure of the flagship product (the meeting) to a larger market share. Associations that do not form a part of such communities may end up with a significantly lower profile and thus less market dominance.

4. i Technology

Use of new technological features like eBooks and iPads will enable participants to significantly increase networking at meetings.

THE INTRODUCTION OF SUCH TECHNOLOGY, ADJUSTED TO A MEETING'S NEEDS, WILL CREATE A CLASS OF MEETINGS WITH A SIGNIFICANT ADDED VALUE OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION MAKING FACTORS FOR PARTICIPATION – NETWORKING.

For example, participants could request meetings with colleagues, hold discussions ad hoc and receive information on line on current activities at the meeting. Meetings that do not employ such technology will be considered less attractive to advance participants (e.g. like comparing the change from slides to video projection in the '90s).

5. Scientific Village / Exhibition Decrease

The anticipation of self and external regulation of the Pharma-industry, which already started in the US and is likely to continue in Europe, may have a negative effect on the existing exhibition format.

IT IS RECKONED THAT COMPANIES MAY DECREASE THE

SIZE OF THEIR COMMERCIAL EXHIBITION AND MAY EITHER CUT OR MOVE THE BUDGETS INTO A SCIENTIFIC TYPE OF SUPPORT.

The 'Scientific Village' concept is still under development and will be presented later this year. The concept focuses on selling scientific products to the industry. Such products could be demonstrated through a 'Hyde Park Speaker's Corner' with time slots allotted to companies, a library to support exchange and presentation of books by publishers, and much more. The concept will only be executed following a policy change or relevant legislation in the EU.

6. Grants / Sponsorship Cuts

The same principle of cost cuts and legislation may also apply here - the industry may cut the perceived non-scientific support. Furthermore, the industry may wish to limit support to meetings which focus on science rather than activities which are already debatable in some cases, such as social events (e.g. gala dinner as a part of the registration fees will no longer be permitted). While this is a significant threat, such an action can also present an opportunity.

COMPANIES ARE LIKELY TO MAKE GRANTS MORE READILY AVAILABLE FOR MEETINGS WHICH WILL MEET THEIR REQUIREMENTS.

Meetings will also be able to cut cost and potentially make knowledge accessible to more doctors through lower registration fees.

7. CME

The introduction of a compulsory CME program throughout Europe will encourage participation and consumption of educational

material through the internet. The likelihood of additional numbers of doctors actively seeking education is very high. Furthermore, associations are likely to develop focused CME activities in the form of monothematic meetings and E education (e.g. Webinars).

8. Support of participants by the industry

While being one of the more severe threats to the entire congress industry, the likelihood of such an overall ban is not high.

NEVERTHELESS, A LIMITATION ON FUNDING SUPPORT OF PARTICIPANTS IN MEETINGS IN ONE FORMAT OR ANOTHER IS A PERCEIVED RISK.

Such a limit could come in the form of a limited support to active participants (speakers, authors of abstracts etc.) or by budget to support number of days (which may require an adjustment of the program to reflect such limitations).

MEETINGS: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND ADDING VALUE

The meetings industry has reached a 'tipping point' in its evolution



TONY ROGERS

Tony Rogers, the guru of the meetings industry, is the General Manager of consulting company Tony Rogers Conference & Event Services. For many years of his career he managed the leading British congress organisations 'British Association of Conference Destinations', 'Association of British Professional Conference Organisers' and Eventia. He is author of numerous books and professional articles in the meetings industry field in which he shares his rich knowledge and understanding of the industry.

The past few years have witnessed some paradigm changes for the meetings industry, moving the sector away from its close association with tourism and hospitality on the one hand while, at the same time, developing a much more strategic and professional approach to the management processes that underlie the organisation and measurement of meetings themselves. 'Strategic Meetings Management' and 'Meeting Architecture' are examples of new terms in the meetings industry lexicon, and the movements behind these have been paralleled by international initiatives to change the perceptions and profile of business meetings and events.

Rod Cameron of the Association Internationale des Palais de Congrès (AIPC), for example, urges that, in order to promote a better understanding of the meetings and business events industry, a number of issues needed to be addressed:

- "Firstly, we need to emphasise the role that meetings play in economic, professional and educational development and downplay the leisure aspect
- Secondly, we need to enhance both the content and perceived value of meetings in order to give planners and delegates the arguments they need to justify their investment of time and resources
- In particular, we need to put more emphasis on the ability to demonstrate measurable outcomes that will resonate with increasing corporate concerns about return on investment (ROI)."

He concludes: "The fact is, nobody holds a meeting in order to fill hotel rooms, that's simply a by-product, and yet most of our current industry measures relate to what delegates spend, not what they actually accomplish. This trivialises meetings in the eyes of those who see them as engines for business and professional progress." In other words, the meetings and events industry should be thought of as a key component in

the global knowledge economy, rather than as a branch of tourism.

Strategic Meetings Management and Meeting Architecture

The meetings industry has reached a 'tipping point' in its evolution. Through the corporate trend toward Strategic Meetings Management (SMM) Programmes, the industry will ultimately differentiate based on value, or it will become a commodity that competes on price alone.

SMM PROVIDES DIRECTION TO GUIDE THE STRATEGY, OPERATIONS AND TACTICAL ACTIVITIES OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE BUSINESS PROCESSES, QUALITY, AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI), AND REDUCE COSTS, RISKS AND INEFFICIENCIES.

SMM Programs evolved from current global trends in business, both external and internal, to what might be called a customer economy. In a customer economy, an organisation or department must provide added-value solutions, not just a commodity or service, because the customer (whether an internal customer or an external one) has more options to replace that commodity or service than ever before. While cost may be a driver, provision of value is a differentiator. Businesses are refocusing on value, strategy and structural realignments to produce the most efficient supply chains.

Similarly, the Meeting Architecture movement aims to shift the primary focus away from hospitality and logistics towards 'designing, executing and measuring meeting contents and formats that have a purposeful impact on participants'.

BY DESIGNING MEETINGS TO SUPPORT INFORMATION, NETWORKING AND MOTIVATION OBJECTIVES, PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR WILL, AS A CONSEQUENCE, PROVIDE MORE VALUE FOR STAKEHOLDERS.

Trends among Meetings and Event Agencies

In the event agency community, changes in terminology ('event management agencies' or 'engagement and communication agencies'? 'incentive travel' or 'performance improvement agencies'?) epitomise the evolution taking place as it adapts to changing demands and expectations from its client base and a range of external drivers, from globalisation and consolidation to technology and social media, from economic and environmental issues to a myriad of other factors.

CLIENTS ARE DEMANDING GREATER TRANSPARENCY FROM AGENCIES, OFTEN DRIVEN BY PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENTS LOOKING TO MAXIMISE SAVINGS.

But agencies are becoming more savvy about the business they are chasing and now need to understand the ethos of potential clients. The cost of pitching means that agencies are almost vetting clients to understand better the fit of tender opportunities with their own business. Charging models and complex contractual conditions have become key relationship issues with the potential to impact agency gross profit severely if wrong. Hence agencies are now more confident about saying 'no thanks' to the wrong type of new business opportunities.

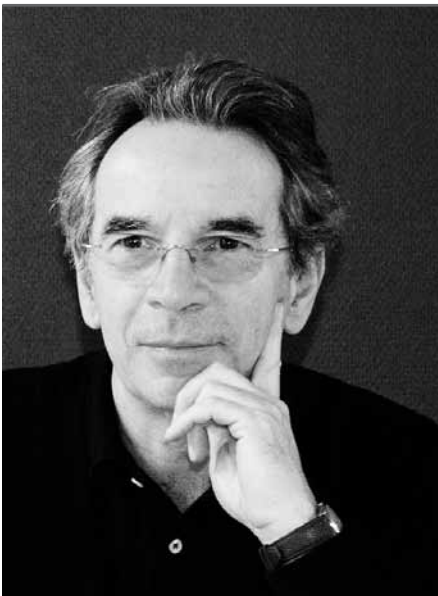
Technology has radically changed the way logistics and event content can be delivered. Creating efficiencies of scale and resource, the many systems on the market offer a wide range of products. Clients want the latest technology, but not always because it adds value - perhaps just to make sure they are not left behind? For delegates, technology is so much a part of their daily lives, they expect it at events too. Meetings are being set up, sessions booked, presentations downloaded, twitter and blogs developed, creating 'un-events' around the event. When it comes to programme content, co-creation stimulates greater participation and engagement. And combining online technologies gives a greater customer relationship, so Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube etc. - apps & iPads - all are coming into play before, during and after events, and their use is increasingly expected by clients.

THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY IS FOR AGENCIES TO KNOW WHICH TECHNOLOGY TO HARNESS TO ADD TO THE DELEGATE EXPERIENCE PRE-, DURING AND POST-EVENT.

I am optimistic about the future of our industry. There are some exciting opportunities ahead, but let's keep a clear focus on the business benefits that meetings and conventions can deliver, and come up with some innovative approaches to spreading the word to the wider business and political communities.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE – FINDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The meetings industry is more alive than ever



CHRISTIAN MUTSCHLECHNER

Christian Mutschlechner started in the meetings industry back in 1977. After having worked for a PCO Company for 8 years he moved to the Vienna Tourist Board in 1985 and became Director of the Vienna Convention Bureau (a department of the Tourist Board) in 1991. Since that time he re-engineered the Bureau. Christian Mutschlechner is former ICCA President, teaches at universities and lectures at various industry events.

The meetings industry, and especially the huge market of association meetings, is experiencing a permanent transformation. Observing, analysing and making the right decisions on the current changes will be the challenges for a successful future.

ASSOCIATION MEETINGS HAVE HAD QUITE A STABLE STRUCTURE FOR MANY YEARS, BUT TODAY THERE ARE ONGOING DISCUSSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS, IF NOT REAL CHANGES, IN THE WORLD OF ASSOCIATIONS.

Some of these changes, that could also prove to be opportunities, include the following:

Volunteer leadership in associations, quite often briefed by professional staff, need to understand that scientific meetings are no longer *l'art pour l'art*, but are very intense educational platforms – delegates look for excellent education and networking opportunities, not to forget a well-planned and smoothly delivered programme.

TODAY MORE THAN EVER, ASSOCIATIONS NEED TO 'FIGHT' FOR EVERY DELEGATE, TO CONVINCHE HIM OR HER THAT THE MEETING PRODUCT DELIVERED IS THE BEST IN THE FIELD AND THAT IT IS A 'MUST ATTEND'.

Optimum service and the best content will ensure that the delegate returns, as in the end it is the delegate who foots the bill for the event through the registration fee. Associations, especially European associations, can create a globally recognised communication and education platform,

attracting not only the European delegate, but increasingly overseas delegates too – the key elements of this attraction continue to be quality of content and quality of organisation.

Associations, however, have also to keep in mind that we are moving towards a multi-generation event era – on one side they have to cater for the technologically-aware younger generations, using the technical tools available on the market and reflected in the meeting organisation – more flexible setups, more high-end technology in the meeting room and foyer areas, more interactivity, all of which the younger generation expects from meetings today.

AT THE SAME TIME AND ON THE OTHER SIDE, HOWEVER, WE NEED TO ADDRESS THAT WE WILL ALL BE WORKING LONGER INTO OUR LIVES, MEANING THAT WE WILL ALSO SEE QUITE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF 'OLDER' DELEGATES ATTENDING, HAVING DIFFERENT PHYSICAL NEEDS AT A MEETING, SPECIAL MEETING CHAIRS, FOR EXAMPLE.

This creates an impetus for venues and hotels to be ready to adapt. The challenge for the association is to balance both sides and cooperate with venues to deliver a product that can easily, conveniently and seamlessly be utilised by all delegates.

A special focus is required for the world of medical meetings. The above mentioned development will be reflected in a different behavioural response of the pharmaceutical industry. We have already seen a change in the participation and sponsorship of medical meetings by the pharmaceutical industry over the last few years. Compliance issues, ethical

codes etc. – we hear about this every day – yet on the other hand no other sector can deliver such a compact continuing education such as medical meetings.

WE WILL SEE FEWER DELEGATES SPONSORED BY THE INDUSTRY, WHICH IN MY VIEW DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY WILL PULL OUT OF MEDICAL MEETINGS – RATHER, CONTENT WILL AGAIN MORE THAN EVER BE KING. AND THE ‘TOURISTIC DESTINATION’ APPEAL WILL BECOME OF LESS IMPORTANCE.

Already today, medical meetings need to focus on the content delivered and not on the destination of the meeting: as we carefully follow the discussions and the developments on various levels, we will better understand how these issues will develop.

Recent research among delegates underlines that the priorities are the scientific programmes and content and that any time to consume the ‘touristic’ aspect of a destination is diminishing (this is particularly the case for European meetings and at the moment less valid for international ones).

Finally we are faced with a new trend in the meetings industry: ‘Meeting Architecture’, a new way of thinking and organising scientific exchange. A wide range of research, outside of the meetings industry, will be imported into the world of meetings.

THE TRADITIONAL THEATRE SETUP OF MEETING ROOMS WILL BE INCREASINGLY REPLACED WITH ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS, TAILOR-MADE FOR

THE NATURE OF THE MEETING (WHICH DEFINITELY HAS AN IMPACT ON SPACE IN VENUES).

Lighting of rooms and foyer areas need to be more flexible, even during a single meeting day, and the power of music will be used more than in the past throughout the different areas of a venue. And finally, it will be also necessary to reconsider how a venue will be set up for the free networking time. Coffee breaks might look different, lounge areas will become more intricate. And let’s not forget how technology can already be used in advance of the meeting to link delegates who might not know each other, but have the same field of interest.

The scenario is fascinating: a lot of change lies on the horizon. Some of these will happen soon, some will happen later, some might not happen at all, but we need to watch, follow and discuss them with our clients and our suppliers.

There is one absolute positive element in this whole change scenario: change reflects life. A life not changing is dead.

THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY IS MORE ALIVE THAN EVER AND NOBODY QUESTIONS ANY LONGER THAT THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN WHEN PEOPLE GET TOGETHER, MEET PHYSICALLY AND HOLD DISCUSSIONS.

The outlook is positive – grab hold of the change and be a part of it!

RENATA BALAŽIČ

We need new markets and new guests, but firstly we need clever decisions on the direction to take



RENATA BALAŽIČ

Committed hotelier and tourism worker, Renata has spent the lion's share of her career in the Grand Hotel Union. As the Director of Sales she received an award for being 2008's Best Manager in Tourism. She now faces new challenges ahead, recently taking a position as a Management Board Member in the Company Sava Tourism, where she is responsible for marketing. The biggest Slovenian Tourist Corporation employs some 1,200 people and has some 3,900 beds and 12% share in overnight stays, generating €66 million in annual revenue.

What have been the major changes after all the tourism companies of Sava were integrated into the merged firm 'Sava Tourism'?

With this integration we became the largest tourism company in Slovenia. We gathered the range of excellent destinations into one offer: terme Moravci, terme Ptuj, terme Banovci, terme Lendava, Radenci health resort, the Sava hotels on Bled, golf courses, campsites and an apartment complex with a total capacity of 2000 hotel rooms. We integrated and enriched our offer - one that is made up of different products, such as wellness, medical services, MICE, golf, gastronomy - and connected our unique 'water' facilities, renowned for their curative and beneficial effects. The integration connected employees, their knowledge and ideas.

Which are currently your most important projects?

Apart from the last step of the reorganisation, we are concluding a phase of integration of our sales and reservation service into one centralised service. Our guests will get all the information they need on any of our destinations and services in one place.

How do you see the actual situation in Slovenian tourism?

I think it is not quite as good as it might seem on first sight, as with what is set out in the constant reports on the increase of overnight stays and number of guests, but rather the business results of tourism companies confirm that the situation of Slovenian tourism is very bad. We need new markets and new guests, but firstly we need clever decisions on the direction to take, which goals to set and how to ensure that there is added value to improve the situation in the tourism market.

How does the congress industry contribute to the new strategy?

It is an industry with really huge potential, beginning with the size of market that is waiting for a presentation of the industry and

then moving on to the purchasing capacity of guests and the effects of an increase in out-of-season demand and the multiplicative effects of meetings industry on the overall economy.

How do you see the 2012 congress year being?

We already estimated in 2011 that, despite the recession, the meetings industry would achieve very good results in 2012 and now we can confirm it, of course, for those destinations and providers of tourism services who recognised in a timely way that more investments were required in congress tourism as an industry that provides the potential to neutralise the effects of the economic crisis.

Are any new investments anticipated in the field of congress tourism?

Considering the economic situation, important investments are not expected in the near future, but a lot can already be done through raising the service level of employees and with good ideas with a good innovation 'background'.

The congress industry is strongly connected to the destination and environment. How do you see that context in Bled?

I see it as a huge challenge and huge opportunity at the same time. The meetings industry contributes a lot of positive effects to a destination. At the same time, for the industry the most interesting destinations are always those with a local environment that have the ear for the needs of congress guests, which is evident from the attraction of the local offer, infrastructure ...

What will be necessary to achieve considerable development of the meetings industry for the future?

First of all, considering its potential the positioning of the meetings industry at one of the highest levels of Slovenian Tourism's new

strategy, followed by support to the SCB by the Government of RS, including systematic and proportionally high financing and good flight connections.

Which experience from the world of business has taught you the most?

That experience is the best education and the honesty always pays off.

Where would you most like to invite your business partners to a business lunch in Bled?

It would definitely be the Promenada restaurant, nearby the Park hotel. It is difficult to find such a kind welcome, creative and excellent gastronomy and a pleasant atmosphere whilst having a conversation with the chef, the young and smiling Bine Volčič. I can really recommend it.

Is there any little corner outside of Slovenia that you would like to live in?

Well, for a short period of time I could think of several locations, but foreign guests have really opened my eyes since I have been working in tourism: we really do have a heaven on earth here in Slovenia.



ANŽE ČOKL

In comparison to conventionally built hotels we use around 60% less energy



ANŽE ČOKL

Despite being very young, as the Director of Bohinj Park EKO Hotel and MPM Engineering Anže has managed a set of very successful projects. He studied machine engineering, graduating with a thesis on energy efficient facilities, and now wants to create environmentally friendly touristic oases whilst also planning the largest ski slope in Slovenia. Anže is a mountain climber, sport climber, diver, tour skier and film director and at the same time the president of the Freeapproved sport association.

How did your ideas for the eco-hotel, ski resort and other tourist ventures come about?

The ideas for new projects and investments came from my father. I jumped on the train in the idea and execution phase and tried to contribute a fresh approach to individual parts of the offer, service or the final product.

How important is the direction of the Slovenian meetings industry towards green meetings?

Slovenia is small. It's so very small that the world doesn't know it by name or by geographic location. This is a disadvantage, which can be turned into an advantage. If we know how to sell this exclusivity, non-commercialisation and easy access, we've got it. I think one of the key advantages of Slovenia is that you can cross it in a few hours and see plains, mountains, the sea and everything in between. Green meetings can take advantage of all of the above, without leaving visible negative consequences on the environment. It's a win-win for everybody – meeting participants, organisers (also from a business point of view) and lastly for Slovenia, the environment the meetings take place in. As in many other areas the industry is what is drawing the crowds and, with a green approach, we can indirectly influence other individuals to become more environmentally conscious.

What are the advantages of your hotel in comparison to regular hotels?

I would stress that our complex has a complete offer in one place near the Triglav National Park – the heart of the Alpine valley and a wonderful starting point. We also have local, honest and motivated staff and, last but not least, offer the luxury of five stars in a modern, pleasant, sustainable hotel.

How are your business results impacted by the savings you generate through using green technologies and practices?

Especially in the area of energy we save a lot. In comparison to conventionally built hotels we use around 60% less energy. A guest

creates over 10 times less CO2 emissions than in a regular hotel. Considering energy costs are the third highest expense, right behind wages and employee contributions, we save a lot of money. We can invest the surplus into a higher quality of food, staff education and so on, so our savings have multiple effects and positively influence all areas.

How do awards and certificates help you with your marketing?

The awards and certificates mainly help us establish our image and reputation. The reputation the hotel enjoys has positive effects on the clients' decision. When they receive a number of offers, the awards and certificates help, but personal recommendations help the most. This often outweighs the price, since we are frequently the most expensive supplier. In marketing to individual guests, the awards and certificates that we have received are by and large less relevant.

Who is your main domestic and international competition?

I don't wish to sound conceited, but we don't have much competition in Slovenia, as our in-house offer is very rich and unique in many ways. Up until now we haven't had a case where the decision-makers who came to do an inspection, experience our hospitality, level of service and spend the night went elsewhere or chose a different hotel in Slovenia. In a general sense, for those who choose only 'on paper', our competitors are two hotels in Portorož, one in Bled and two more in Ljubljana. All of them are in more developed tourist destinations with better support and promotion by the Slovenian Tourist Board. The competition abroad is strong, but as far as we can follow, we mostly lose our potential business guests or international events to hotels further southeast, mostly because of lower prices.

How big is the carbon footprint of an average congress? How can it be decreased?

The footprint of an average event is hard to

estimate, as there are a number of variables and individual events cannot be compared. For starters, the choice of the hotel is very important. In comparison to regular hotels our hotel creates over 10 times less CO2 emissions due to its construction.

Transportation is also important. When our guests arrive by, for example, bike or train, they contribute greatly to the decrease of CO2 emissions. In the spirit of decreasing the carbon footprint other public transport also helps. Cars, for example, are the least environmentally friendly, yet sadly the most common means of transport.

Other things largely promoted by the media are details, which nevertheless should not be overlooked, especially in the case of large events, where the sheer volume of people is the real issue. The choice of food and beverages, where they are transported from, how they are cultivated, made, what kind of devices are used etc. also plays a role. Everything contributes a part to the entire carbon footprint.

Environmentally conscious companies interested in making a difference can upgrade their services to infinity. Everything right up to the last coffee break can be optimised. For all of this to happen the desire needs to be mostly on the client's side – we can't force them to follow our sustainable ideas and advantages.

What are your green initiatives for the future?

We will continue to work on decreasing our impacts on the environment, namely by decreasing energy use and by adding new renewable energy sources etc. We will try to keep informing the public – our guests and others, since we have noticed the ones who visit us are the most susceptible to ecology and green measures. They often ask questions on their own initiative and want to implement changes or upgrades in their own homes. They get many ideas to improve their own homes from our hotel. We will continue to spread knowledge among high school and college students and organise open houses, lectures and other initiatives.

Do you think congress guests are sufficiently aware of sustainability? Does the government do enough about their levels of awareness?

There is a lot being written and talked about eco, green etc., but actions speak louder than words. There isn't much to see yet. Unfortunately, until investors and decision-makers realise all of the advantages (including economic ones), green and sustainable practices will only be talked about, but not put into action. I am astonished by the slow progress in this area. Slovenia is no exception. In Slovenia we have written and talked about this a lot, but the effects are small and seen only in companies that understand and use the advantages.

What kind of development scenario do you foresee for Slovenian tourism?

I don't feel competent or experienced enough to make deeper assessments of the global picture of Slovenian tourism. All I can say is the following (which is probably also true for other industries): we will have to move away from our ways and habits, we will need to cooperate and grow beyond our boundaries. First of all, we all have to sell Slovenia, after that the destination (not just Bled, Portorož and Ljubljana), and in the end the accommodation and other offers. Why? Because we are small but we all exist! And what we have is beautiful.

Do you adhere to the eco-philosophy in your private life as well?

Since I was a kid I was taught to conserve water, electricity and other things. Given my hobbies I spend a lot of time in nature, mostly in the mountains, so care for the environment is very important. As I spend a lot of time on the road I would also like to have an electric car, but I can't afford it at the moment.

Are you a sports fan?

I'm not a sports fan, I only cheer for the winter season – that a lot of snow will

fall and that it will be cold. And that the conditions to climb will be favourable.

Which music gives you an adrenaline rush?

Nothing specific, it depends on the situation. Sometimes it's classical, sometimes electronic. It really depends on the song or the mood, I couldn't really highlight only one song or only one genre, because I don't have a special attachment to any.

Who are the people that have had the greatest influence on your personality?

Definitely my parents, I got a little something from both - I like to think the best of both. Later, I picked up a lot with wide eyes and large ears, silently in the corner, from smart and experienced people – friends, acquaintances, relatives ... In a smaller measure I was also influenced by the environment I grew up in.

Which national culture and customs are closest to you?

I was never any good at culture or customs. I wasn't even average, so it's hard to be specific – I do like the proverbially punctual Swiss, exact and tidy Germans, talkative and panicky Italians and so on. Nothing specific, I like them all.

Simple people in remote places that I have visited during my alpinist expeditions around the world have made the biggest impression on me. When natives see tourists for the first time, they don't know they are tourists. So they act real and emotional. They curiously admire your reactions and you theirs. Even though it's a short time, you make incredible bonds with them when you are far from everything and you see how little you need to live. That's when you see what unnecessary details we deal with in our everyday lives. And this doesn't relate only to cultures or customs, nationalities or skin colour – this is what all of the people on Earth are like, we just have to give each other a chance.

BOŠTJAN HORJAK

One of the key advantages of being a part of the corporation is no doubt access to a client's market



BOŠTJAN HORJAK

Boštjan Horjak is the director of the company Liberty Incentives & Congresses. The company is part of renowned international corporation Liberty International, which has its representative offices in more than 30 states in the world and is one of the world's leading DMCS. The Slovenian subsidiary has been operational for six years and with its relatively young and creative team has gained the reputation of a reliable partner on the Slovenian market. Liberty Incentives & Congresses Slovenija is also the only Slovenian company which has ever organised world premiere of a foreign automotive trademark in Slovenia.

Can you give us a short description of your position in the company?

Being the Managing Director I look after the functioning of the company. I oversee all of the company finances, I plan sales activities, I assign tasks to employees and I check and evaluate completed activities.

What are key activities of Liberty International Group and what made you decide to become a part of it?

The Liberty International Tourism Group is a successful international company that has been working on the international tourist market for over 20 years. The company grew from one office into an international corporation with 43 offices in 33 countries in various parts of the world. We joined the corporation 6 years ago, mostly because we saw that access to overseas clients would be made easier this way.

How does the corporation function and what are the main advantages for its members?

The key information is the fact that this is not a corporation that could function on the basis of franchise system. Rather, each case is dealt with on a 'per se' basis. Owners and local management are linked - this way financial stability and security is ensured, which is extremely important in today's uncertain situation.

The corporation operates on two levels: on one level there are individual branches that operate with classic incoming tourism, on the other there are branches that work exclusively in the meetings industry sector. Nevertheless, the reality is that the changed market conditions have made it impossible to have two separate functions in branches that only have one small office (as is the case in Slovenia).

One of the key advantages of being a part of the corporation is no doubt access to a client's market, although we have to point out that individual destinations often compete for the same client. The second advantage is shared

marketing activities, such as shared exhibition space on international tourist exhibitions and the organisation of acquisitions where a key role is played by our sales representatives.

How strong is Liberty Slovenia when compared to other branches and what is its role within the entire corporation?

Liberty Slovenia is among the smaller branches, nonetheless we are always treated as an equal member of the corporation when dealing with common issues. I could draw attention to this being another positive trait. Liberty International is not managed centrally and it does not force decisions on its members - it functions as one big family.

Being part of an international corporation - what is the key added value for your clients?

I could say that the key added value is the high level of our services, which is a part of Liberty's philosophy. Equally important is financial stability and security, especially in today's environment, when we daily hear of some of our competitors going bankrupt. Liberty International has managed to stay financially totally sound, which is a consequence of the decision of our management to postpone some of the activities that were previously planned in times of expansion.

Describe five of your key products and tell us in which direction your offer is heading?

Up to the end of 2008 we focused the majority of our activities and efforts on the meetings industry. Then the crisis came and we realised that it is not a good idea to 'put all our eggs in one basket'. Hence we started to work in the classic field of incoming tourism, so we started to work on the so called serials for Asian guests, for whom we organise group excursions in Slovenia and in other SE European countries. We also dedicate a lot of our attention to smaller specialised groups that visit us because of some special characteristics, like culinary experiences, wine, sports, culture and so on.

Lately we have started to put a lot of our efforts into sustainability and social responsibility, as we believe that Slovenia has an advantage in these areas and this is also my general life philosophy. We were the first destination management company in this part of the world that won the prestigious Green Globe international certificate.

We are not only dealing with incoming tourism, however. We are also proud of our department for organisation of trips abroad. We are the only organiser of trips to sub-Saharan Africa and every year we take there a substantial number of Slovenians and guests from neighbouring countries.

When developing your offers and products do you follow Liberty policies or do you develop them in accordance with local conditions?

Liberty's policies are giving us basic directions, however it is impossible to expect that one policy will be equally successful in every country. That is why the management gives us a lot of freedom in terms of development of offers and products and they are even encouraging us to do so.

How important to you are the clients you get through the Corporation and who are your clients that you acquire beyond the corporation?

For us it is not important whether the client came through the Corporation or from outside of it. Every client is equally important to us and we fight to convince him to entrust us with a certain project. In this sense the corporation can also have some disadvantages. For instance, it can be a case where something is done badly by one of the branches and consequently every branch can lose the client. Because of this we work really hard to offer the same level of services globally. Clients we get from outside of the corporation are mostly from countries where we do not have sales representatives.

Market conditions have changed dramatically over the past few years, mostly for the worse. How have straitened economic conditions affected your business?

As I mentioned before, the situation has forced us to think on different levels and develop new products. Unfortunately it often happens that those that should help us in this situation turn their backs on us. Here I think of the state, which in my opinion has taken the completely wrong approach when it comes to the meetings industry and is not aware of its importance and the effects it has on the complete economy. I am not only talking of financial help and subsidies, which are inexistent or too small. What I have in mind are the basis of our work. We have the case of our national air carrier, Adria Airways. Because of the alleged loss-making they cancelled flights to some European capitals, which are key to our industry. Because of cancelled lines to Paris our company lost €200,000 worth of confirmed reservations, which for us is irreparable economic damage and for which no one will be held responsible. Instead of helping us in the deepened economic situation, the state is making our business more difficult.

You have dedicated your career to tourism. What have been the key milestones that have brought you to the position you are in today?

Love of travelling was probably instigated by my parents. I travelled quite a bit with them and this love of discovering new places continued as I grew up. I always liked to return home from my travels and this inspired me to learn about more of our places, not only foreign ones. Circumstances made me work more actively on incoming tourism. Partly also my character is to blame, as I enjoy dynamic and varied business and tourism is definitely dynamic and varied.

In an increasingly competitive world the flexibility of small companies is definitely an advantage. Your company is small and flexible,

yet you are a part of a bigger story. What are the advantages of both of these positions and where do they both have their negative sides? Yes, it is true. Flexibility and adaptation to the new economic situation is a must and here Liberty played an important part globally. We are not a rigid monster that takes a lot of time to adapt; rather we are a group of smaller, relatively independent units that can react quickly. Of course, it is the task of each individual branch to adapt to the new, changed situation.

Kongres Magazine is celebrating its 5th anniversary this year. The meetings industry has seen better days - what are your expectations for this year?

My expectations for 2012 definitely remain positive. If I were a pessimist, I would have done better to close the company 3 years ago when the crisis started. Nevertheless, it is hard to predict the future, as the way our clients think has changed dramatically and even decisions for larger projects are taken on relatively short time scales. That is why I can only say that our goal should be to keep the company stable and to grow, although with smaller steps.

How has your offer adapted to the current situation and have all the consequences been negative?

As I mentioned already, the crisis forced us to think and our answer to the crisis is a diversification of our products. Losing a part of our business is definitely the biggest negative consequence, nevertheless every negative thing also has a grain of positivity, and that is what we need to identify and build on.

In 2012, what will be the main reasons that clients will choose you?

Despite shrinking budgets, the quality of our services remains unchanged and this is our main comparative advantage. In 2012 we will strive to come up with original ideas and come up with proposals that are adapted to the needs of each individual client. Last

but not least, we will continue to work with an unchanged level of enthusiasm, positive energy and an outlook that 'every problem has a solution'... If I may use the words of one of our clients ... "it is a real pleasure to work with you, as the word impossible is practically non-existent, you always try to find a suitable solution".

When moving in new directions what is your guiding principle and where do you look for new opportunities?

When taking new directions, I'm partly guided by my experience and partly by my intuition. This is especially true for new opportunities that I look for where I believe there is a strong chance they will develop into something positive and not just a waste of time and money. Of course, this is hard to know in advance and often things only show the way they will go after a certain period of time. New opportunities are often affected by education; that is why I try to educate myself as much as possible and share experiences with my colleagues.

Which event that you organised are you especially proud of and would like to do again? Are 're-runs' part of your philosophy or do you always look for new ideas?

I think I'm most proud of the two car launches we've done for Renault. This was a very complex event that some 1,000 foreign journalists saw over a period of a month. One event was done in Slovenia and the other a year later in Croatia. In our business it is hard to avoid 're-runs' completely. We are striving to upgrade and adapt each event to the needs of each client.

What is the secret of your success?

I believe in what I do and I do it with my body and soul.

Every family has its story. What is your family's story?

I have always been interested in travelling, later foreign languages came too. When I

finished my high school I needed to choose which faculty to go to and at the time I was thinking of either law or economics. I passed the entrance exams for both, but decided to follow economics. The reason was probably my father, who at the time had a company in Austria where I occasionally helped with some activities. As the economics course didn't really enchant me after a while, I took some exams and changed to the Faculty of Social Sciences, where I started to study International Relations and I really enjoyed myself, as the programme was very dynamic and interesting. Whilst studying I started to work as tourist guide, which was definitely the right work for me. In the meantime I also tried to work as a journalist on television, however the wish to 'conquer the world' was stronger. That is why I took some time off after I finished my exams and spent half a year travelling around SE Asia. After a short break back home in Slovenia (after all, I needed some money for my endeavours!), I spent half a year in South America. As I do not like unfinished stories I graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences, then finished a second degree of Economics. It looks like the work as a tourist guide and my travels had decided my path. I spent some time toying with the idea of working in diplomacy, however tourism won out. I opened a travel agency with a colleague of mine and our main products were trips to Egypt and vacations on the Red Sea. We brought quite a few charters of Slovenian and Croatian guests to Egypt until we realised that we had different views on further development of our company and decided to go our separate ways. By coincidence I came into contact with the owners of Liberty International and we decided to work together.

Are you a sports fan?

For me sport is a way to relax and stay in good mental and physical condition. Every sport is interesting in a way and I have a lot of respect for all athletes, because I know how much effort and denial they've gone through to succeed. I have no sport that I could say I

am ardent supporter of; when I was young I always watched alpine skiing competitions on TV. Today this would not be possible because of my life style and the nature of my work.

Which nation's culture and habits do you have a special affinity towards?

I respect all nations and cultures and getting to know different cultures and traditions is one of the reasons that always attracted me to travel. Out of the European nations, the Greeks are closest to me, but generally I love sub-Saharan Africa and I visit it at least once a year.

Which persons affected your personality most strongly?

I could say that these were my parents, who taught me values that became the foundations for my future life.

Which type of music fills you with adrenaline?

Rock ... when I listen to quality rock I feel I draw energy from the music.

Your life motto?

Act correctly and honestly. Unfortunately this motto has come to have less and less significance.

JURE JEZERŠEK

We dedicate more of our attention to new products and brands that position us better in the market



JURE JEZERŠEK

We could say that Jure Jezeršek is a true hedonist. He likes to enjoy himself in good company, and a relaxed environment with delicious food and wine. Events are his life from a business and a private perspective. Jure has always liked to organise parties, events and concerts. From crazy teenage parties to being even more crazy in his early twenties, he moved on to great and serious events such as the 'Carniolan Sausage Festival' and 'Slovenian Day' on Grobnik. Jure is today the manager of the Jezeršek Catering family business, which has recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Could you give us a short description of your position in the company?

Director and Head of Operations looking after marketing and serving services.

The name Jezeršek is well known among meetings industry players in Slovenia and beyond. What do you attribute your success to?

We were the first and we remain the first, we have a premium team of people working with us, we have been launching new trends, we invest in knowledge and the development of our company. We dare to say that we dictate the development of the catering industry in Slovenia. Nowadays we notice that the business model of catering in Slovenia is often different from the European model. We think it is more competitive and for this reason we are now broadening our visibility and presence.

Market conditions have changed dramatically over the past few years, mostly for the worse. Looking at your offer from the outside, we can note that you have launched several new products over the past few years, developed new brands and substantially broadened your offer. Is this greater presence in the industry your response to the difficult economic conditions or is it a natural direction of development built from the time of economic boom?

Considering the fact that we have been launching catering trends in Slovenia for the past three decades, we can say that this is largely a natural development. Because of the market's challenging economic conditions we have to adapt more quickly to clients' needs. We dedicate more of our attention to new products and brands that position us better in the market and distinguish us from our competition and simply help us communicate with our potential buyers. The consequence of this are projects like 'Taste Slovenia', 'Taste the World', "'O" Concept', and 'Restaurant Slovenia'.

It is reasonable to suggest that that you built your position on traditional Slovenian dishes, which were in time creatively developed into contemporary Slovenian cuisine. Has the strong focus on Slovenian cuisine paid off?

We should definitely not be ashamed of our tradition and our diet, as we can compare ourselves favourably to countries which have a reputation for being interesting in this field. We don't treat our culinary art as a museum, rather we take into account contemporary ways of preparing food and dining trends. Nevertheless, we do take expert opinion into account, as any dish can be made anti-climatic quickly. I can definitely say that the brand 'Taste Slovenia' had the desired effect, as it became a true hit.

The other comparative advantage of your company is definitely that its a family. Companies that operate as homogeneously as yours are rare. Is a family working environment always an advantage or does it also have its downsides?

Managing a family company is not an easy task. Juggling family relations, emotions within the family and on the other hand business relations and the ruthless environment is a difficult task. In an ordinary company the pyramid is clear. The director is director, boss is boss, co-worker is co-worker. Often some people are not content with others, they might be angry with them, but still everything is clear and it is all a part of everyday business life. When the co-worker that does not perform is your brother, the situation can be much more difficult. The Jezeršek family is known for open, honest and sometimes stormy debates that some might perceive as 'rowing'. We believe that every business needs such honest debate. Nevertheless, one has to be able to get over such situations, be able to forget some words, calm down and never hold a grudge. That is much easier within a family. I believe that in our case family ties are a big advantage.

Considering the fact that all the brothers are now working for the company, the division of roles must be key. What are these roles today and how did you allocate them? Do you complement each other or is there one job that you would all like to have?

All four of us have performed in various roles in the company – from the most basic ones to management roles. It is a fact that our capabilities and goals in life are different, so we gradually came to a natural division of functions and roles. I think that we need to point out that management functions are not exclusive to family members, as we have numerous co-workers that take these roles in the company and they are often better at it than we would have been ourselves. The youngest brother, Martin, who is currently studying hospitality management at the well known Swiss University EHL, will take over the role of Managing Director of the company this year. Luka took over the role of head chef in the kitchen; the oldest brother, Rok, is heading technical issues and procurement. Through my work I have gained knowledge in the field of ‘business development’ and I’m managing the development of our business and I also head services and implementation of catering. In 2010 I temporarily took over the position of Managing Director of the company.

Kongres Magazine is celebrating its 5th anniversary this year. The meetings industry has seen better days. What are your expectations for the year ahead?

We are entering 2012 with a lot of positive energy and we are focused on attaining new business and development in new markets. This year will no doubt be extremely difficult and full of challenges. I’m sure we will be able to deal with them.

Catering accompanies every event, from birthday parties to state receptions and large congresses. How has the challenging economic climate affected the catering industry?

We notice that the number of events has not

changed dramatically in the current situation. On the other hand budgets are smaller; expectations of buyers are higher and they value the so-called ‘value for money’. Thus we have to provide added value for less money and we have to adjust events to individual clients.

How do you adapt to the changed circumstances and are the consequences solely negative?

We adjust to the circumstances by tapping our ‘inner reserves’, however never with the consequence of diminished quality of our services. We are also looking out for opportunities in new markets. Outcomes are not only negative in our case as it turned out that we had large reserves in the work processes. We have changed these and we restructured some departments. The situation is above all a good training ground for the young management. We have learnt a great deal, and we are still learning because of the recession in the past few years and because of the current depression on the market.

The Jezeršek offer is spread across catering, hotel and restaurant. On one side this gives you improved chances for successful growth, but on the other hand it requires a multi-layered process of scoping for new opportunities. Which is your flagship product that you consider a bedrock for 2012?

Dvor Jezeršek in Zg. Brnik opened 5 years ago, where we extended our activity to the mentioned areas. Results show that we made the right decision, as the fall of business here was much smaller than in catering. Catering still is and always will be the main business of our company.

What will be the main reasons that clients will choose you in 2012?

Our adaptability, creativity, the top quality of our dishes and our service. These are the things we will not compromise on despite price pressures!

What guides you in taking new directions and where do you look for new opportunities?

Personally I am guided by my wish to be better and to grow as a person. I think the same is true of my co-workers and the company as a whole. We are looking out for new opportunities in various fields. We are thinking aloud of an extended, international catering offer. In this field we are connecting with the Swiss INTEHL institute that will help us with preparation of our strategy for extending our offer.

Which event that you worked on are you especially proud of and would like to do it again? Are ‘re-runs’ a part of your philosophy or do you always look for new ideas?

We are proud of every event we worked on and we would definitely like to work again with clients that appreciate us and treat us like a partner. This way we can all achieve the set goals.

What is the secret of your success?

I enjoy the work I do tremendously, but I’m not sure if this is a secret?

Everyone in your family has their story. What is your story?

There are a lot of stories. Mostly I am proud of my family – my wife Petra and little Jera. Lately I finally found a hobby that I really enjoy. I play drums in a rock band, which was established with our partners from the meetings industry. I also enjoy creating stories outside of professional life. Events like Slovenian day at Grobnik (a motorcycle festival) and the Festival of Kranjska sausage are two of these stories that we created together with our friends and that we dedicate our time to on voluntary basis.

Are you a sports fan? If so, how ardent?

I’m not an ardent fan although I do like to watch any game in which Slovene athletes are participating. We became the partner of

the Slovene Football Association in 2009 and hence I started to follow football more closely.

Which nation's culture and habits you have a special affinity with?

I feel very good in the company of nationals from ex-Yugoslavia.

Which personalities have influenced your personality the most?

My father Franci Jezeršek, the innkeeper Naci Rajh and the musician Slavko Avsenik. Each of these personalities is a leader in their field and they are all completely committed to their work.

Which type of music fills you with adrenaline?

Rock!

Life motto?

If you are true to yourself you will succeed in the end!



MIHA KOVAČIČ



MIHA KOVAČIČ

Miha Kovačič is known for his high levels of professionalism and motivation, dedication, positivity, enthusiasm and also as a hearty and constructive co-worker. Under his management, the Slovenian Convention Bureau has become an important and efficient marketing and promotional institution of the Slovenian meetings industry and a connecting point for more than sixty of the most important Slovenian congress event providers.

What kind of a meetings destination is Slovenia?

This is a very broad question and as the Director of the Slovenian Convention Bureau I could dedicate an entire article to it. Slovenia is undoubtedly still an emerging congress destination in Europe, mostly from a profile perspective. Some still refer to us as a “Best kept secret”. On one hand this is very flattering, on the other hand it hinders our development. Considering our location, size and variety of our offer, and rich natural, cultural and historical heritage, the meetings industry is in our blood. It’s a shame the decision makers haven’t caught up with this way of thinking yet.

What are Slovenia’s unexploited advantages for hosting a congress?

Every year we make progress in the development and recognition of Slovenia as a congress destination. We look for possible synergies between public and private interests. The biggest progress would be made if we were able to establish a well-rounded congress destination or a long-term cooperation. With that the destination would recognise its roles in marketing and acquiring all kinds of events. The state benefits most from all types of meetings, so its role in developing the meetings industry and supporting the national Convention Bureau should be much greater, since the benefits would be enormous.

What makes us better than our competition in neighbouring countries?

In the meetings industry our competition is the entire world. For every project the clients receive multiple offers from destinations in Europe or worldwide. If this is the case, who are our main competitors and who are our neighbours? We have been competing with a variety of countries, therefore we are aware we are competing with the entire world. Our every project needs to be carefully prepared and we need to check who our potential competitors are and work with that. Of course, we firstly have to fulfil the technical

conditions. The offers of the countries in the region are supplementary more than anything else. When comparing their offers in detail we come to very different results. Here the professionalism of the staff and their exposure to the international environment comes into play.

Data on the performance of Slovenian tourism in 2011 is positive. What is the realistic picture of tourism and the meetings industry?

According to the Statistical Office of the RS, in 2011 Slovenian tourism achieved positive results in the area of incoming tourists and overnight stays. In any case this is a positive outcome, yet unfortunately we don’t have the data on who these guests are, where they stayed, how much they spent and other important information, which would help us plan new investments and develop strategies. Unfortunately the picture of our tourist suppliers isn’t good and hasn’t changed for years. The index in the meetings industry is better than in regular tourism. Considering the spending of international event participants the focus on the meetings industry will continue. New hotel investments are giving more attention to this industry than most of the current suppliers.

What would be the first thing you would do if you were the Minister of Tourism?

I don’t know if we can establish a Ministry for Tourism in these difficult economic times, but it would certainly be an interesting challenge. First we would need to establish a better cooperation between tourism and the government or the public sector. Actually the government should be a kind of service to the economy since it needs to create an environment in which the economy can prosper. With it, Slovenia would have a better chance to carry out all that policies and activities that are the responsibility of the state. Where there is no pure economic interest we would develop public-private partnerships. With these we would establish

an important and key bond between public and private interests and we could carry out wider projects. In the current global economy we should help develop success stories, which are the result of domestic knowledge, are sustainable and enable long-term progress.

What does 'responsible meetings industry' mean to you?

A responsible meetings industry demands a very wide inclusion of all participants, from the supplier, client and participant side. We know the stakeholders of international meetings are more environmentally conscious, which makes it easier for us to follow this agenda. It is, however, important to ask how the client sees it. Of course, the biggest

initiatives should come from the government, destination and supplier, in that order. It doesn't help if, for example, we have the most sustainable congress hotel, yet the destination pays no attention to this area. An important role is played by the state, which develops this industry through its tools. The state plays a bigger role that is not only linked to expenses. A shining example are the Danes, who prepared a protocol for COP 15, and now when Denmark holds the presidency of the EU they will certify their events and make Denmark a top sustainable country. Their approach is very thoughtful and successful. The entire country will benefit from it – the economy and the public sector.

What do you expect from your current term as Director of the Slovenian Convention Bureau, a role that started in 2009?

My second four-year term will end in September 2014 and by then I would like to make the meetings industry one of the main tourist products of Slovenia, not just on a declarative level. The aim is to provide a well-rounded destination where private-public partnerships are necessary, which would be more successful if the cooperation was operative and long-term in the area of promotion and marketing as well as product development. Also, I've always put a lot of emphasis on education and professional training, so in a few years Slovenia will have professional experts in the area of the



meetings industry who will be as competent as their counterparts abroad. Original and sustainable stories will consolidate Slovenia on the international meetings market.

Which qualities should a good director of a national convention bureau have?

I think they first have to understand the role of the Convention Bureau towards clients as well as the industry it represents. The experience from the meetings industry is very welcome, if not crucial. This is not a political function and all parties expect very competent solutions. Undoubtedly this person has to be excellently connected with the international environment, open to new ideas and innovation, have the ability to bring people together and find common solutions in favour of the industry and the country.

How can Slovenia attract more foreign congress guests?

Firstly, set an appropriate role for the Slovenian Convention Bureau, then as a national destination (in cooperation with convention bureau members) start acquiring international scientific congresses. Secondly, in cooperation with the members, I would focus on key countries and conduct appropriate marketing activities, which would attract the agency as well as corporate market. We are all aware that air access is one of the main priorities when competing with other destinations. Here we need to connect all the private and public actors to establish new air connections to important destinations.

How important is the Conventa Trade Show for Slovenia and Ljubljana?

In a very short time Conventa has become an event known for quality and energy and has caught the attention of many people around Europe. Even though Conventa represents SE Europe, Ljubljana and Slovenia also get the opportunity to present themselves. What the are benefits for Slovenia and Ljubljana is mostly up to those behind their promotion. Undoubtedly this is the biggest

marketing project for Ljubljana / Slovenia / SE Europe. With the Conventa Trade Show we are putting SE Europe as a well-rounded meetings destination on the global congress map. Everyone in marketing knows what that means.

What kind of reputation do Slovenian companies and experts enjoy in the region of SE Europe?

They certainly have a better reputation than in Western Europe and beyond. It's a pity we started being aware of this too late. Many international companies have already settled in this part of Europe. Of course, our reputation was not given to us but is the fruit of many years of building an image even inside the former Yugoslavia.

How does Slovenia's journey towards a low-carbon meetings industry look?

Personally, I hope it's brief and as comfortable as possible; we have the conditions for it. What we're missing are national strategies to guide and help active companies in this direction. I can again highlight the best practice example from Denmark.

What is your favourite getaway for holidays?

Around two years ago the seaside town of Piran became my new home. This is where I spend most of my free time and where I find my personal peace.

Which national culture are you closest to?

I respect all cultures, since they enrich the world and the people getting to know them. I have worked on almost every continent and have acquired rich and wonderful experiences. During the development stage of Conventa I annually visit almost every country of SE Europe and I always get reminded that we live in a really interesting region.

Which music fills you with adrenaline?

I must confess I'm not a musical connoisseur. I like to listen to it and choose it according to the mood. From classical to rock, pop,

and even electronic. I have to admit that the Croatian singer Gibonni has been my favourite for years now, I always go to his concerts because they fill me with energy.

Are you a sports fan?

Sports, especially running and triathlon, are the right counterbalance to my work challenges, so I am rather a passionate amateur sportsman, than a passionate fan. Of course I always cheer for Slovenia at large sports events and try to be aware of what sportsmen have to do for their success. They should be an inspiration to all of us.

Your life's motto?

"Be the change you want to see in the world"
- Gandhi.

DIMITRIJ PICIGA

We don't do it all – but what we do we do great and with profit



Mag. DIMITRIJ PICIGA

The Executive Director of Kompas Slovenia is also the ex-Director of the Slovenian Tourist Organisation and a sworn tourism worker. His mandate as the Head of the Slovenian Tourist Organisation is marked by numerous accomplishments, above all the implementation of 'I Feel Slovenia' brand and exemplary co-operation with tourism business. In his leading role in Kompas Slovenia he is working towards maintaining and strengthening the position of the leading Slovenian tourist company, which will be known for its excellence of service.

Komaps is the leading DMC in the SE Europe region. How do you plan to maintain this position in the future?

The position of leader can be achieved when a number of conditions are in place: years of good work in marketing, planning and execution, following trends and carrying out different activities in the meetings industry. We hire the best people who form a chain of value for the clients, from planning, to marketing, to execution.

In the future we plan to keep our position through combining best practice of all 20 Kompas companies throughout Europe adapted to the SE European market. Our knowledge and energy is combined with the desire of the client and together we create an unforgettable experience for the guests. Another advantage is the symbiosis of outgoing and incoming tourism, which is a unique feature for this part of Europe.

When we got a large incentive business from Norway, we were able to cut the costs by securing seats on the plane of a Slovenian telecommunications company's trip to Oslo that we were also organising.

What is your vision and business strategy until 2020?

It is clear and brief in three points:

- to surprise and thrill clients with ideas, services, synergies. We believe the best idea is the one we will realise next time with our partner;
- we want to include sustainable tourism into all the pores of our work, not only in our offices, but to suppliers, clients and beyond. We believe green is also profitable;
- SE Europe is our home and here we want to remain market leaders and strive for business excellence. We want to host clients from all continents; I believe we will eventually even host Eskimos. If we take Slovenes to the Antarctic and to North Korea, why not?

The meetings industry is an important part of Kompas business. How has your attitude towards this industry changed in-house in

light of the economic crisis?

We started developing the meetings industry in the '70s and even more so in the '80s, when we supported it with our own capacities (buses, hotels, restaurants), achieved excellent business results and also had control of the process. Today, Kompas is in control of the distribution and desires of clients and less in operative control in terms of ownership. Everything is happening faster, every event is more demanding ... there is more competition among destinations and within the destination. We all have to face up to that. In light of the economic crisis, flaws of market actors quickly become evident. Quick reactions like a lean organisation, more cooperation with partners in creating the congress product and brainstorming led to our rise in competitiveness in 2011. We don't do everything - but what we do we do great and with profit. I believe the boundaries between the various segments of tourism are erasing, the intertwining of leisure and business tourism and the meetings industry is perfect for an organisation such as Kompas. We are just finishing a deal with a Slovenian team building company - we are choosing between Bovec, Northern Cyprus and Baranja (a part of Slavonia, for those who didn't know). The requirements are contact with nature, night life and water adventures. Sometimes incomparable destinations are complementary or even competing today. I can also claim that the crisis improved value for money.

What are your 2012 predictions for the meetings industry?

Considering last year's results, I dare to predict a 15% growth in profits, which is the only category important to the owners. A lot of marketing activities in times of crisis went into this segment and the results are slowly but surely noticeable. SE Europe is unknown to many European clients, also in the meetings industry. Most people know our region as a tourist destination and trust it as such to be promoted and sold successfully. I am certain we will soon manage a further breakthrough

on the meetings market. The trend of value for money, or “how can you surprise me this year?” is rising exponentially.

What kind of marketing channels and activities are the best for results? What would you highlight as a good practice example?

There are many marketing channels. Of course, we participate in the major meetings industry trade shows IMEX Frankfurt and EIBTM Barcelona. Through our network we are trying to achieve a higher market power. Conventa is also one of the successful projects. I am most surprised about the actual growth of new markets, ideas, potential and new segments. For example, our partner, who was strictly in charge of incoming tourism in Turkey, reorganised and started working in the field of outgoing tourism and will now organise three (!!!) events in the region for an Italian partner. Tourism is surprising. Another positive is also the further development of so called soft incentive trips from Slovenia abroad. After a few years we have received requests for such trips to Thailand, the Maldives ...

What larger projects are you currently working on?

In the area of meetings industry we are ‘polishing’ a few events for the spring. We are not planning any larger development novelties. Of course, being green is a strategic project for Kompas and influences the meetings segment as well. Many events want to measure their carbon footprint, therefore we completed a CV of Kompas in this area.

How do your events, conferences and incentive trips differ from other agencies’?

Our events, conferences and incentive trips are different in that we offer the client a really wide selection of possibilities which we derive from our experiences and other markets (best practice of partner Kompas companies). Our team daily faces different inquiries, which are sometimes borderline science-fiction, yet with

the help of these we often learn new things. We don’t wish to only stress the differences among agencies, since we also need to emphasise that agencies have to cooperate and win business together. Maybe there are a few of us in the region who understand this and are therefore stronger as individuals and as a group.

How important is the direction of the Slovenian meetings industry towards green meetings?

More important than the direction of the Slovenian meetings industry towards green meetings is the idea of moving from idea to practice. I wish we took advantage of the advantages we have as one of the greenest countries in Europe and that we are not only safe and green, but also clean and, even in our tourist offer, ‘eco’, in the use of electricity, water, in using natural resources, cleanliness, all national actions and events where we see ourselves as a green Slovenia. To sum up, I am a supporter of green meetings.

Are you disappointed or content with the current attitude towards the meetings industry in Slovenia? Where do you see it in 20 years time?

I think the meetings industry service providers have an attitude that is important, if not crucial, for it. Despite this, the status of the meetings industry is not well defined and regulated. Who leads a team of individual providers with a good and proper development strategy? Strategic guidelines must be provided at the national level; they can also be suggested by the actors in this industry – this would be an acceptable concept of developing this industry to the highest level. It is also true that Slovenia offers incredible starting points for the development of this industry and this is a fact we don’t fully take advantage of. In my opinion the attitude towards the meetings industry is vague, but the relations within the industry itself are also vague and undefined. On leading the meetings industry and the relationship with the state I wouldn’t like

to comment, since my opinion differs from the majority – we are firstly responsible for what we have and the state comes in later. We should first clean up at our own doorstep then look to others. I often miss constructive criticism.

If we look 20 years back we built walls, centres, excellent hotels, but we lacked flexibility, innovativeness and daring.

What would we have to do to make our country more recognisable?

Win the World Football Championship or find the oldest human remain in Postojna Cave ... he he he! I think we pay too much attention to recognition at home. We can do a lot with an excellent service, a collaborative appearance abroad with all the representatives and with a unified image.

Keep appearing at all larger events where the main actors of our business meet. Carry on with projects such as the BeBee Campaign, IMEX Challenge, etc.

In which direction should the Slovenian meetings industry develop?

As I’ve mentioned, Slovenia and its regions have an excellent basis for the development of the meetings industry. Nature gave us a lot. The infrastructure is good, not great, although there are some traces of excellence. We need top-notch creative projects, stories that attract, appealing communication, hospitality and innovation, all of which will impact the international market.

Our partners want more and keep ruthlessly challenging us: “what do you have that others don’t?” It’s a hard question, especially after spending three days in Istanbul with a view of the Bosphorus strait and after driving a Formula 1 car on the bridge between Asia and Europe.

If you were in charge of Slovenian tourism, which issue would you address first?

Many problems, one solution.

I would change the law on advancing tourism and give to promotion a half of the VAT

collected from foreign guests. This is nearly €200 million. Well, let's see if Santa Claus answers my wish, I've been asking for it for two years.

Where would you take your business partners for a business lunch in Ljubljana?

For a picnic in Tivoli, to let them feel the green Slovenia in the capital. I'm afraid I can't find the entrance to this restaurant (he he he!), so if I can, I remain loyal to restaurants where they serve original Carniola Sausages.

Physical shape is important for psychic stability. How do you take care of your physical shape?

This is a serious question – running and Nordic walking daily, and if I can I add something else.

What are your thoughts on the Slovenian culinary offer?

I am a huge supporter of the project 'Gostilna Slovenia', this is what separates us from the average. Promoting tourism means promotion of the culinary offer - unfortunately promoting food doesn't promote tourism. The budget for agriculture and the promotion of the Slovenian food-processing industry can easily beat the budget of the Slovenian Tourist Board. I have not yet felt these investments in tourism. I hope Santa Claus hears me now.

Are you a sports fan?

I am a huge fan of sports, I enjoy individual sports for myself, but I like to watch team sports. I like the competitive spirit of the players and the atmosphere that is created. I have always enjoyed the achievements of

Slovenian sportsmen. Sport truly connects – people, players, competitors, nations, continents. As does tourism. Of course I am a huge fan of football and all sports where Slovenia is winning.



DANIEL MARUŠIĆ

*The future is already in
the world of DMCs*



DANIEL MARUŠIĆ

Tourism is part of the family heritage for Daniel. He founded his own incoming agency in 1998 as agency, which since 2000 has specialised in meetings and congresses. The agency Dubrovnik Travel today has 35 permanently employed co-workers and their good work in 2011 has been recognised with the 'Zlatna kuna HGK' and Croatian 'Gazela' awards. Daniel is known for his numerous innovations - thanks to him the first Sea Star congress cruise took place in Dubrovnik.

What is dominating your thoughts at this very moment?

How to make it all work, reorganise myself and spend more time with family and friends wherever and whenever possible.... Life is running along like a racing car for most of us today and it seems like there is no time to sometimes really slow down and enjoy the most desirable 'panoramic drives'.... to stop here and there to enjoy the slow moments.

As a leading supplier to the industry in the region, what are your impressions of the industry today?

It has been a great pleasure to experience over the last decade and a half all the major changes of the M&I industry in the region! When we started not many knew what we were doing and why we were doing it; today everybody is moving in the same direction and there is the feeling that everybody is dancing to the same song. That's good in a way for the industry, brings us as well as everybody else to a more important level when there are issues within the region about the economy or any higher level commercial discussions. Individually speaking, however, we generally see no higher quality if everybody runs to dance to the same song - so we at Dubrovnik Travel have once again chosen to play and dance to our own song!

What is a DMC agency's role in the future of the meetings industry?

The future is already in the world of DMCs. As a good DMC one has to be one step ahead, working in the future, and feel comfortable being there. Always look for cost effective and creative solutions, be able to read minds and jump before others jump. A DMC is not needed when one can guarantee that everything - and I really mean everything - will be ok, that success is guaranteed. But who can guarantee this today? - nobody! Everything can be fine when all is smooth and easy, but this is certainly not the rule. So, to be on the safe side, a good DMC is one to have through good times and bad.... A good

DMC as a partner is like a very good long term investment for clients!

What organisational changes have you implemented and what have been the results?

We have implemented a mix of standard 'theoretical' actions with a huge amount of experience from our past events and collaborations with leading event and incentive houses from all over the world. The results are obvious; today we are proud to say that we can handle big and small group movements in the region - and when I say big I mean big with a capital B - with the same quality and service as is expected for any smaller size, high-scale incentive group. Our numerous multilingual staff are completely dedicated from beginning to end of the event, with the support of the DT management that is today still involved in all events that we operate for our partners and clients. This is crucial and shows our complete responsibility for the business that is handled by our company.

In the future, why should a DMC agency be chosen over similar service providers?

Well, a DMC is not only a re-named local travel agency nowadays, although many travel agencies do like to call themselves a DMC and have stunning websites and sometimes nice cars too etc. It's very important to be careful and professionally check the DMC many times over before choosing the one to work with. Local service providers (hotels, guides, restaurants, transport companies etc.) need DMCs as local partners just as much as clients need us for their event. Real DMCs help the service providers to deliver higher quality and often service providers use the local DMC as a bridge to make an event cost efficient for themselves and to ease communication, ensuring high quality service overall. Service providers do know who is a real DMC and they know how to value the good ones.

What is a DMC agency's promotional role compared to public bodies officially active in the destination's promotion?

The public bodies are very passive (as all public bodies are supposed to be – don't do much as you have to work more). Public bodies have to spend the money, their budgets, as if they don't the next year they will receive less. On the other hand we, the agencies, we look how to save money and how to invest wisely. A real DMC fights for its own interest but also participates actively, very actively, in the destination promotion. We move quicker and we make our targets tangible. Statistics are not our interest – our interest is only a full platter of many satisfied customers and some profit on the side!

What will a successful event look like in the future?

It will look just like a good one today, where all parties are winners. Due to the economic

situation today, less and less people are impressed with luxury and sophisticated entertainment. We see more investment in education, communication and making an impression.

How will you be able to measure the success of your events?

It is very easy for us: we always look our customers, our clients, in the eye and we speak to them and we ask questions and are all the time with them – there is nothing better than when one can measure the event directly like that. As a DMC we have no direct contact with delegates, so our job is to 'measure' our client, the organiser's, satisfaction, and we do it one-to-one.

How important for your business is partnership with Ovation?

Firstly we are talking about a great team that has great experience - so it is a real pleasure to

be able to work closely with Ovation. They are important to us, we respect highly all of our global partners today and Ovation is really a good partner to work with.

... and a final message for our Kongres magazine readers?

2012 has begun, we need to be ready for the new challenges and new standards. Many markets have changed, new markets are emerging, new trends too. In this business of ours it is too expensive to 'wait and see'. I wish you all a very successful 2012 – keep moving!



MILOŠ MILOVANOVIĆ

Association events will still be the main target group for us



MILOŠ MILOVANOVIĆ

Miloš Milovanović was born in Serbia in 1977. He completed his studies in Economics at the University in Belgrade and his Masters study at the Ecole Centrale Paris in France. After his Masters he worked in the M7 project management consulting company in Paris and was Director of 'Project Belgrade' during the 2006 Venice Biennale of architecture. Since 2007 Miloš has been appointed as the Director of the Serbia Convention Bureau (www.scb.travel), a newly formed department of the National Tourism Organisation of Serbia. During this three-year period the Serbia Convention Bureau has managed to assemble the most important stakeholders in Serbia and begun to perform all the tasks and responsibilities of a Convention Bureau. From the foundation of the SCB, Serbia has been making constant progress in the ICCA rankings and represents one of the new and emerging convention destinations in Eastern Europe.

How would you describe your work?

Working as a CEO is certainly one of the most challenging jobs. On the one hand, together with my colleagues from the Bureau I am working closely with international clients, understanding their needs, requirements and any doubts they might have about the emerging destination. On the other hand, an equally important task is managing relationships within the Serbian meeting industry, making sure that all the stakeholders are satisfied with the work we do.

What are Serbia's main assets as a meetings destination?

The Convention Bureau was established 4 years ago and since then I am proud to say that Serbia has gone from an emerging destination to one of the fastest growing destinations in the world. Being one of the largest countries in South East Europe, Serbia is a hub of scientific, social and economic activities in the region. In addition, our medical and academic professionals are respected around the world and are eager to help their associations move towards new destinations and broaden their goals. The significant congress infrastructure and hotels are in place to ensure that events of up to 4,000 delegates can run very smoothly.

How is Serbia building relationships with the international meetings community?

It is very important for Serbia to be recognised internationally by both clients and colleagues. Industry networking events are the right place to exchange ideas and initiatives and to learn from the better and more developed destinations.

Does Serbia continue to see international associations as its prime target when it comes to meetings?

Association events will still be the main target group for us, although long term these events still have more or less clear communication and decision-making channels. In the near future we are continuing with our Ambassador

Program as well as active bid production. When it comes to the corporate market, we regularly receive requests. In addition, our DMCs and hotels are doing very well in this field and the bureau is there to support all of their initiatives.

What are the links between the convention bureau and ambassadors?

We initiated the Ambassador Program almost two years ago with the main task of highlighting to Serbian doctors, professors and professionals that they are not alone in the process of bidding and organising international events. Our sources of contacts vary, but database information and PCOs are the main way how we are getting to them. Also, 'word of mouth' is helping out a lot, and usually new ambassadors are ready to start the bid process after they have learnt from their colleagues about what the bureau can offer.

In your opinion how does a South East Europe destination differ from, say, a Western European one?

South East Europe destinations are becoming more important, from both the supply and the demand side. Our region offers new experiences which will give a special feature to events taking place in Serbia or any other destination in South East Europe. We need to preserve authenticity, but also to make better use of it and to find the unique way of communicating it.

Do you foresee any trends developing that might have an impact on the global meetings and events industry in the near future?

The industry is becoming more and more professional, particularly within the associations market. AMCs and core PCOs are becoming more and more influential, mainly with large scale events. Sponsors and exhibitors are becoming very important in the process of decision making, looking for a higher exposure and new markets. New technologies, especially mobile, are changing

the way delegates and organisers think, and therefore changing the way destination marketing organisations communicate all of their USPs. When it comes to events content, networking elements and new knowledge are the most important issues. With the rise of the role of Generation Y, unusual social programs have become a must.

What do you think the impact of virtual meetings will be on the meetings industry and why?

Although we are witnessing a great debate about virtual meetings and the influence of the internet on our industry, real congresses and conferences will take place in real destinations, using the capacities of real service providers. No e-Meetings can replace face-to-face contact, but it can make pre- and post-communication easier, expanding the effects of attending the real meeting.

What three items or virtues are essential to your job?

1. Industry partnership in the process of co-creation of the destination promise.
2. Client relations and business oriented work to match client needs.
3. International integration of local professional and business associations.

What is Serbia's 'X-factor'?

Our 'X-factor' is Generation Y, a creative and dynamic team of young professionals in the Serbia Convention Bureau.

What factors have helped Serbia achieve such huge progress in recent years?

Since the convention bureau was established in 2007, Serbia has progressed from 64th place in the world to 43rd, with Belgrade at the same time reaching 55th place and Novi Sad joining the list of internationally recognised destinations. (Source: ICCA) By establishing the bureau, for the first time there is an institution to monitor statistics on one side, but also to proactively produce bids, assist PCOs with their own bids, and support

international events already taking place in Serbia. In addition, a lot of new hotels have opened and forthcoming projects have been announced, showing that the market counts on this part of Europe. A good lifestyle, great entertainment options and historical sights are also a plus.

How do you evaluate your marketing campaign from when you promoted Serbia as the cheapest destination?

We have never said that Serbia is the cheapest destination, but that meeting planners and delegates can expect real value for the money they pay. Research conducted by various international institutions showed Serbia as one of the least expensive destinations, offering the same level of infrastructure and services as anywhere else in Europe, but at more acceptable prices. This fact helps local associations to negotiate lower registration fees, which increases the number of delegates from the SEE region.

The Serbia Convention Bureau has launched the first Mob App - "SERBIA DESTINATION" - aimed at meeting planners and delegates. It puts the spotlight on Serbia for applying digital marketing principles and shows that the country is a technologically advanced destination. It is also giving us a theme for further promotion campaigns and the possibility to follow and evaluate the results of our marketing campaign very easily.

ROMAN MATEK



ROMAN MATEK

Without Roman Matek, tourism in Laško would not be what is today. He transformed the health resort Zdravilišče Laško into the successful company 'Thermana', which also includes a modern multifunctional congress centre. The Wellness Park Laško also won the Environment certificate 'EU Daisy' last June and Roman is convinced that "Within 20 years, all the touristic facilities should be eco-friendly, otherwise there will be no possibilities for business in tourism and that is why this special eco-label will not be in use anymore."

Did the investment in a new convention centre fulfil your expectations?

The investment in the congress centre is the last phase of the project we now call 'Wellness Park Laško'. The investment rounds off the fullness of our offer, from accommodation to wellness to business and congress tourism. In the meetings industry the quality and integrity of the offer are very important. The combination of quality accommodation and wellness services we now have is very good, competitive and one that guests are satisfied with.

How do ideas for your new projects come about?

They are born in the heads of my co-workers. We have a very good team of young professionals. I am particularly used to team work and all of these projects take seed in our heads. We look for ideas through our knowledge of the market and attractive offers around us, we find interesting programmes, solutions, ideas and try to realise them through projects. Everything we have built in Laško was built this way, without help from outside consultants or anyone else impacting upon what we do.

How did your company perform in 2011?

Despite all the investments our company continues to grow. This year we realised an 8% increase in income. Because of the investments we have a lot of obligations in the form of credits and interest, but despite that the financial results are positive and we ended the year with a profit.

What attracts demanding customers to your centre?

Our services are based on quality and the constant and direct engagement of our staff with our clients and their involvement with our maintaining the high levels of what we offer. We try to offer the best congress service and very good services around this. It starts with the parking space and continues through to the venues themselves and entertainment possibilities.

The meetings industry is an integral part of the environment and the destination. How do you see this being performed in Laško?

We try to incorporate the city into our congress and other offers as much as we can. Laško is properly organised with a local tourist organisation and is now a part of the wider Dežela Celjska destination. All of this is very important to make people feel welcome by offering them the possibility to get to know the local environment via trips, visits to the brewery or to other local businesses and by enjoying the local food.

What is your decision on cooperating with nearby Rimske terme, which is currently experiencing difficulties?

We are always open for cooperation. Everyone should first solve their own problems, however, no one else can do it for them. The precondition for cooperation is that Rimske terme, with their owners and management, first establish a quality offer, then they can start thinking about cooperation.

In the Slovenian tourism arena you are regarded as one of the best managers. What keeps you in good managerial shape?

A part of it is having a feel for it. It's about leading a team in a professional manner. The precondition of gaining knowledge is talking to people, trusting people, accepting their initiatives and then shaping and implementing common solutions. For all of this you require knowledge and have to be in good shape. Knowledge needs to be maintained, however you also need to take care of your psycho-physical shape and health to keep everything running.

How do you deal with tourism's turbulent waters?

I think I'm doing well, I know my way with water well, as I'm also a fisherman. I am close to water.

In your opinion, in which direction is Slovenian tourism moving?

Slovenian tourism is mostly going wherever the wind takes it. I think Slovenian tourism has a lot more potential than we take advantage of. More should be done in the area of promoting the Slovenian brand, we should all believe in Slovenia more than we have done so far and be proud of it, since we live in a beautiful country which makes a great tourist destination and should be promoted as such. Within the framework of this larger, more prominent promotion, tourist service providers will know how to ensure the proper quality of service and develop their part of the product.

How has your client pool changed? Where do they come from?

We are oriented towards the global market. Our facilities are built according to global standards and in comparison with the narrower Central European competition I think our facilities and services are at the right level of quality. The clients are of course very well informed, the information channels have changed, everyone can use the internet, all information is available and there are no more secrets. The clients are familiar with other suppliers, so nothing can be hidden anymore. We simply have to organise and offer the proper quality of services and exceed the expectations of the client.

What do the awards you have received in recent years mean to your company?

Of course we are glad to receive any award for our company or for any of our employees. It's a recognition that the public noticed how organised and quality oriented we are. We plan to maintain the quality and so hope to receive more awards in the future. We also tell the public about our awards to positively impact our promotion.

What are your predictions for 2012?

2012 is a leap year, so it will have one additional day, which means one more possibility to do business. I think we are sometimes too pessimistic about progress. To

us and to me personally, the crisis represents only a change in business conditions, which we need to adapt to. The crisis doesn't mean the world will end, even though it has been predicted many times. We adapt to the crisis with a good internal organisation, proper quality and an individual approach to our customer. This is why I believe 2012 will be better and more quality oriented than 2011. We will become more recognisable on the market, get new guests from a wider geographic area and use our advantages to their fullest extent.

How important is the Slovenian meetings industry's direction towards green meetings?

This is a possible way forward, the green and eco conscience in people is getting stronger and becoming a part of our everyday life. I believe it is right that the meetings industry offers something that people strive for in their everyday life. It will be beneficial for the people and for our planet.

What are your green measures for the future?

In the area of sustainable tourism we are executing a number of technical measures on a daily basis and are trying to strengthen the local element of our offer, so more local service providers are included in it. We have already included honey, beer and hop growing and we are always open to new ideas. In the next year we will continue to try to adapt and aim at new markets. Following eco-tourism we will try to achieve the 'halal' standard in the Arab world, which is based on the criteria of life in the area.

What are the advantages of your hotel in comparison to other hotels?

I think our guests know that best, when they choose us. We try to be an open and friendly wellness hotel with a focus on eco-tourism and local cooperation. This is what the guests find in our hotel. Considering the growing number of guests I think we are doing well.

If you were in charge of Slovenian tourism, which issue would you tackle first?

I think Slovenia needs to establish confidence, become more self-assured and promote itself as Slovenia, a pleasant tourist destination and Europe's best kept tourism secret, thereby putting itself on the global tourism map as a unique country. This is what we need to do first and within that global goal organise internally.

Where and how do you spend your vacation?

I often say I'm on holiday while at work, because I work in a tourist organisation, which makes me feel this way. I am a very active sportsman, I like nature, I love going to the seaside.

Are you a sports fan?

I like to follow local sports events and analyse them. I follow a lot of sports. I wouldn't say it's a passion, it's more a way of life, which includes acting sportsman-like and getting to know new sports. I'm not a big enough fan to get into fights, though.

Is there a place outside Slovenia where you would like to live?

There are plenty of nice spots outside Slovenia, but I always like to return home and plan to continue living here.

Do you have a special message to Kongres magazine readers on its 5th anniversary?

I hope they keep reading it.

ZLATAN MUFTIĆ

Improving the overall quality of the product is our main goal



ZLATAN MUFTIĆ

The Director of Convention Bureau Zagreb and his team are part of a success story of congress tourism. Last year Zagreb made 11% progress on their 2010 achievements, the consequence of an intensive promotion of the Croatian metropolis that hosts more than 50% of all Croatian congresses. Zlatan is surrounded with tourism and Zagreb. He has been active in the Tourist Board of Zagreb since he was student and knows even the most hidden corners of his city.

Current job responsibilities:

As a Convention Bureau Director I am responsible for the city promotion as a destination for meetings and incentives. The Convention Bureau is helping and supporting local and international event organisers, publishing promotional brochures, videos, a website and other initiatives. We organise site inspections and familiarisation trips. In co-operation with the Croatian Convention & Incentive Bureau and industry representatives we participate in all major trade shows, workshops and other important events.

As we celebrate Kongres's anniversary, what do you consider to be the primary issues of concern for the meetings industry?

Generally speaking, there are many issues nowadays affecting the meetings industry. It is because of its strong connection to the economy, science and education. I would say that the main issue affecting most markets is economic uncertainty. Other challenges include shorter lead times, extended use of technology and technology-related services. That implies that we need to have highly educated and flexible professionals prepared for constant change. Sustainability is becoming extremely important and this is affecting all aspects of the industry, from transportation to the destination, venue, meeting preparation, brochures, name tags, social programs, internal transportation - in short, every aspect of meeting organization. There is a demand of getting more for less and the industry should be prepared to deliver value for money.

What signs are there that confidence is returning to the market? In the wake of latest financial crisis, how is the meeting market in your country placed?

According to Croatian Bureau of Statistics and comparing the figures with those of 2010, Croatia has 13% more meetings in the period from January to September. 14% more meetings took place in Zagreb in the same period. According to ICCA, Zagreb has

significantly improved its rank - from 171st to 79th place. That gives us good reason to be satisfied, but we also need to be aware of the fact that global economic uncertainty can affect the positive process in our micro locations.

What are your plans for the Zagreb Convention Bureau in terms of strategic development?

From the legal side, our main role is promotion. We will, therefore, try to open new markets for Zagreb and wherever possible to improve performance to increase business volume. Improving the overall quality of the product is our main goal, and this is something we need to achieve together with our meetings industry and all stakeholders.

What key source markets are you targeting and why?

We try to target markets from the region and Europe, as well as overseas, especially the American market, which is very important for us. Direct flights and/or good flight connections are strongly related to this issue. Due to a lack of time, many corporate meeting and incentive organizers are looking for 'new', closer destinations offering value for money.

Why should meeting planners choose Zagreb over any other destination in region?

The whole region is very interesting for organizers, because for many of them it represents something new and different. Flight connections within European cities and major hubs are very good and are constantly improving. The uniqueness of Zagreb as a destination lies in its combination of central Europe and Mediterranean influence. It is also a city which offers a broad range of different venues; hotels, museums, galleries and other historical venues ready to be used for events. There is a good selection of 4 and 5 star hotels, as well as other accommodation facilities. Many of the historical venues are very close to each other and can easily be combined with hotels. There are lots of street

events the whole year round, making city life more vibrant and interesting. Last but not least, Zagreb is a safe city that is friendly and welcoming to its visitors.

What will be the Zagreb highlights in 2012?

We hope that the positive trend will continue and that the efforts of our industry will be rewarded. Some of the announced meetings in 2012 are General Assembly of European Cities Marketing, FEA AV Conference (Spanish federation of travel agents), and the Child in the City conference.

Any new meeting spaces and hotels in Zagreb to come online in 2012?

Yes, the Double Tree by Hilton will be opened in Zagreb in 2012. The new hotel brand with meeting facilities will contribute to the overall positive picture of the city as a business destination.

If you could visit any meeting destination in the world, where it would be and why?

There are many meeting destinations I would like to visit, but if I need to choose just a few, they would be somewhere in Asia; Kuala Lumpur, Singapore or Hong Kong. I would like to visit their convention centers and explore what these cities have to offer.

How would you describe your typical day?

Anyone working in this industry knows that there is no such thing as a 'typical day',

and that's the beauty and the challenge at the same time. Morning coffee and briefing with my colleagues, checking and answering emails, meetings and paperwork are daily routine.

Tell us something we don't know about Zagreb?

The best kept secret about Zagreb is waiting for you to be discovered.

What are your personal ambitions at the Zagreb Convention Bureau? Where do you see Zagreb in five years time?

I see Zagreb as a modern European metropolis, with a convention centre and new airport terminal. I see a lot of work for all of us in the industry in order to increase the quality and maintain the growth of the destination.

Do you support the Croatian Meeting Professionals Association? What do you consider to be its role?

I support the effort of the association to articulate the interest of their members. With the right strategy, I think they can help them to achieve better results by setting new, higher quality standards.

BREDA PEČOVNIK



BREDA PEČOVNIK

Breda Pečovnik is the Director of the Congress and Commercial Department in Cankarjev Dom. She has been working in Cankarjev Dom for many years and in 2006 took over the meetings professionals team. Numerous meetings professionals have started out in their career at Cankarjev Dom and we can rightly consider it as the cradle of the Slovenian meetings industry, with numerous references and memberships of leading international associations testament to that.

The meetings industry represents an important part of Cankarjev dom's business. How has your attitude towards this industry changed in-house in light of the economic crisis?

The meetings industry occupies 30% of the total operational capacity of Cankarjev dom (CD), as defined in our strategy document. In comparison with other public institutions Cankarjev dom carries out its activities in a market-oriented way. The marketing activities of Cankarjev dom are not co-financed by the government.

The mission of the congress-commercial sector on the market is multi-dimensional. Indirectly we boost the tourist development of the city, we provide a space for all interested organisers to hold their events and by holding international congresses, conferences and symposia we enable the development of individual scientific fields. With the technical and special equipment and professional technical and business staff, CD can guarantee quality to all cultural events and congress-commercial projects held at our facilities. Every crisis situation impacts the industry. The economic crisis at a global level caused a crisis at all levels, even in the service industry of which the meetings industry is a part.

What is the importance of professional congress organisers today?

I think the offer of the meetings industry in Slovenia is good, but only if it's being offered and carried out by those actors who have been doing it for years and are professional congress organisers by the standards of IAPCO. Unfortunately inexperienced actors also appear on the market. They don't know what they're doing and make the rest of us look bad. The references professional congress organisers gain through years of tradition and quality of services mean something not only on the domestic, but also on the international market. Professionally trained staff and know-how are the advantages we can offer in the meetings industry. With modern technology and proper venues we can compete, but other factors

and circumstances have to be in line with the expectations and preferences of organisers. The organisers now consider a much wider array of factors – even the reputation of the country.

Slovenia now has a lot of congress suppliers who are doing their job professionally in Ljubljana, Slovenia and abroad. Large congresses don't require just a hall with enough seats, but also all the other accompanying facilities and services.

What are the priorities of congress clients now, as opposed to previous years?

In the past the clients were mostly concerned that the congress contributed something to science. Nowadays, networking is very important, also the recognition on the domestic and international market and reputation in the profession, then economic effects and lastly a contribution to science. We can see congresses and educational events that are still happening, but with less participants; the organisers have reduced the expenses for the event, accompanying events are poor or nonexistent, only the professional part of the event is still happening and periodical events now happen only every three or four years. There are less and less corporate events and those that remain have smaller budgets.

What do you think about the entry of global PCOs onto the Slovenian meetings market? How do they perceive us?

How do they perceive us?

I see the arrival of global PCOs as a healthy, competitive environment where all the industry actors can learn from one another. I believe they will learn from us as well. With the arrival of foreign PCOs the clients will benefit the most, since we will all try to offer a higher quality of services. Even though their arrival takes a piece of the pie, I see it as something positive and look forward to cooperating and sharing knowledge.

What are your 2012 predictions for the meetings industry?

2012 will be one of the hardest years. Nobody

can accurately say which way the economy is going, but the predictions are not optimistic. From our experiences and the current state of congresses according to statistical data (ICCA data), I can deduce that the meetings industry is not growing. Maybe the members of the Convention Bureau have some more requests for proposals but no more closures. Because congresses and annual conferences are organised periodically, their number can be small one year but then they might reappear the next. I see the potential to acquire new congresses abroad and domestically through professional associations. I think we need to focus on foreign markets, not only on the Balkan states but on the global market.

What is the current state of values and ethics in the Slovenian meetings industry?

Even though the Slovenian Convention Bureau prepared and published an ethics code for the Slovenian meetings industry, the level of our values is still very low. A lot more needs to be done in this area so we can talk about ethics in the meetings industry. It depends on us alone how long it will take us to reach this level.

The meetings industry is a part of the environment and the destination. What are your thoughts on Slovenia as a destination?

Slovenia as a destination is interesting for the meetings industry, some of our qualities brought us the EU presidency in 2008 and brought the name of Slovenia to the world. We are definitely known among all members of the European Union. The ICCA congress city barometer placed Ljubljana in 69th place in 2008 and 64th in 2009, so progress is evident. However, even if we wanted we couldn't host medium to large congress events above 2,500 participants – we just don't have the infrastructure. What is also true is that the meetings industry is like fashion – one day a destination is in, the next day it isn't. If we look around our neighbourhood need look no further than Serbia and Croatia, two rising stars on the meetings industry map of SE Europe. The small size and loveliness of Slovenia, its

natural beauties, security, easy access from Vienna and Venice mean a lot in the meetings industry, because everything is within easy reach. Every region of Slovenia has certain advantages, with Ljubljana at the juncture of all of them and a good starting point for participants. If we organise a congress in Ljubljana, we can ensure easy access from the airport and organise trips to the rest of Slovenia, all within an hour. As an unexplored destination it is interesting for the meeting industry.

How would you assess the current situation of the Slovenian meetings market? The data reads positively, but what is the reality?

The meetings industry in Slovenia is developing. Key suppliers are organised in the Slovenian Convention Bureau, which represents our interests and calls attention to the needs of this industry - the media is paying attention, the politicians are starting to understand us. In general, the number of potential venues as well as organisers has grown immensely since the outset. It is good that there is more offer so we can all strive for a higher quality, yet we wish to keep the organisation in the hands of professionals. If an organisation lives off event planning and has congress halls made for it, we want to be able to trust it with organising our event. And we want that our clients would keep trusting us. The reality won't be so optimistic for a while. Surveys show congresses and similar events won't die out, but we can expect structural changes.

What larger projects are you currently working on?

For now we are not working on any larger projects, but they could appear tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. It's very uncertain. In 2012 we will host 16 smaller congress events, which is not necessarily an indicator of the meetings industry in general. We have to accept that every year is not a congress year and pay close attention to the time intervals of periodic congresses.

What do we need to do for a more solid development of the meetings industry in the future?

We need a strategy that will be implemented at the national and regional level. We need good business partnerships among industry actors. We need to put in order the necessary infrastructure for our industry and try to move something in the governmental and municipality policies and propose a way of cooperating on individual projects.

How can we safeguard the competitiveness of the Slovenian meetings market against rapidly developing destinations in the region?

We need to find a way to become more recognisable, be original and special to make sure we stand out and get noticed. We have to add something big that the others don't have, despite our size, as we say.

Where in Slovenia would you take your special guests if budget was no object?

I would show them the entire country. With the help of the trademark 'Taste Slovenia' I would let them see our culinary offer and, as we are a wine country, I would introduce them to our wine and take them wine tasting.

How did you end up in tourism?

I was thrown into a rapid river in which I continue to swim today!

What do you think you do differently to other managers in the Slovenian meetings industry?

Because I know very little of what my colleagues are doing, I can't really say what I do differently. I think there isn't much difference, considering the current state. Every person is an individual and these particularities distinguish us and sometimes attract us to one another.

Which experience in the business world has taught you the most?

The experience of trust, honesty and respect towards our business partners.

NIK RAČIĆ

Croatia is a renowned and famous congress and incentive destination on the meeting and incentive market



NIK RACIĆ

Nik Račić, born in 1950, graduated from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Zagreb and then gained a Masters degree in Tourism. The Director of the Croatian Convention and Incentive Bureau since 2001, he is also part of the Croatian National Tourist Board. Amongst his numerous other activities, in 2009 Nik was chosen to be President of the most significant global organisation of tourist managers at the 70th world Skål International congress in Budapest.

In your opinion, have things changed in the past years and, if so, how? What industry trends are you witnessing?

The international meetings and incentive market witnesses constant change brought about by new requirements of the representatives of the convention and incentive industry customers. The meetings are of shorter duration and great attention is paid to the so-called 'green factor' in the organisation of meetings and incentives. The meeting and incentive offer adjusts to those requirements.

What impact will the financial crisis have on your destination?

In 2009, the financial crisis and recession had the impact of a decrease in the number of meetings and their participants in Croatia, just as was the case world-wide. The year of 2011 is the year of recovery, which is supported by the following data: as already said, in 2009 a decrease in the number of meetings and participants in comparison to 2008 was recorded. The number of meetings decreased from 6,000 in the record year of 2008 to 4,900 and the number of participants dropped from 500,000 to 390,000. Already in 2010, stabilisation and growth by a few percent occurred, and the recovery began in 2011.

What are the biggest challenges facing events in your country?

Organisers have to make do with smaller budgets, which means quality service and facility programmes need to be procured for less money.

What were your key achievements as a director of the Croatia Convention Bureau?

High-quality organisation and functioning of the Croatian Convention and Incentive Bureau, as well as of the convention bureaux of the lower-level systems. High-quality realisation of ambitious programmes, marketing and Croatia's placement on the international convention and incentive market.

Which destinations are currently popular for meetings in Croatia and why? Also, which Croatian destinations will become increasingly popular for meetings and events in the future and why?

The popular congress destinations in Croatia are: Zagreb, Central Croatia, Slavonia, Istria, Kvarner, Lika-Karlovac and Dalmatia, with the regions of Zadar, Šibenik, Split and Dubrovnik. Moreover, the Croatian Convention and Incentive Bureau works intensely on promoting the above destinations and we believe their popularity will keep growing. Croatia's entire territory is included in the meeting and incentive activity and it is integrally placed on the international meeting and incentive market.

How green is the Croatian meetings industry?

According to world standards, a large number of meeting hotels and DMCs apply the 'green factor' to the maximum extent in organising meetings and incentives.

As a professional, what annoys you most about the industry?

For years now, I have been advocating the need to build multifunctional, so-called 'smart congress centres' in Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Split, Opatija and Istria.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Working with people.

What is Croatia Convention Bureau added value for member and for buyers?

The public and private sectors operate in excellent synergy.

What is Croatia's 'X factor'?

Croatia is financially both attractive and competitive, considering the quality it offers in the organisation of conventions and incentives. In addition to that, safety, a preserved environment and quality fresh water are very important. Croatia is a renowned and famous congress and incentive destination on

the meeting and incentive market. Its congress and incentive structure is characterised by a high-quality congress infrastructure that includes congress hotels, DMCs, PCOs, the national airline company 'Croatia Airlines' and other transport companies, as well as all the other services related to the organisation of international meetings - information equipment rental services, translation services, etc. Croatia is a safe destination for convention participants, with excellent traffic connections to the entire world, and its favourable geographic location in the centre of Europe is of key importance. The richness of the cultural, gastronomic and sports and recreational offer, as well as the value for money it offers, make it an attractive destination for organisers and participants alike.





KONGRESNA ZVEZDA **MEETINGS STAR**

MEETING STAR AWARDS

In 2011 Kongres Magazine introduced the MEETING STAR award for exceptional achievements in the field of market communication on destinations, congresses, events and meeting suppliers in SE Europe. The award is recognition for outstanding creativity and knowledge based on team work and professional experiences that have delivered tangible and measurable results.

From their assessment of the preliminary applications, the editorial board of Kongres Magazine, alongside an expert jury, have selected the special category winners that had been voted for by readers and partners of the magazine. As part of the overall decision-making process, formal and content criteria were also taken into consideration.

The selected individuals and companies have made a clear, successful contribution in the affirmation of their marketing philosophy and their successes are reflective of consistently creative work over a period of several years.

For 2011, three special category awards were presented as well as one gold meeting star award for the most productive marketing campaign. These were:

KONGRES MARKETING PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR 2011

MILOŠ MILOVANOVIĆ, Serbia Convention Bureau



Miloš Milovanović stepped into the world of congress tourism in 2007, when he took over the management of the Serbia Convention Bureau. In a very short period of just four years, he has managed to implement a marketing strategy and has achieved exceptional results. With its 'goal-approach' to the international associations market, measured by the number of organised congresses Serbia sprang from 72nd to 43rd place in 2010. Belgrade managed to progress even faster in this time, jumping from 179th to 55th place.

During his four-year tenure the entire marketing infrastructure and numerous campaigns have progressed considerably. Special mention is deserving for the first European mobile application congress, "Serbia Destination", which offered attendees and organisers all the necessary congress information on a mobile portal. The application is innovative and progressive in using contemporary technologies to bring a new form of communication to the European congress industry. The application was presented for the first time at the EIBTM trade show through the successful "Serbia: Europe's fastest growing destination goes mobile" campaign. Miloš Milovanović's team have also carried out pioneering work on social networks, being active since the very beginning of the Bureau. The future will see the establishment of a congress destination structure with centres in Zlatibor, Novi Sad, Subotica and in Kopaonik. And so far, outside of the capital Belgrade, the convention bureau has been successfully opened in Novi Sad and Subotica.

Everyone who has had the opportunity to cooperate with Miloš have acknowledged his authority, proficiency and huge levels of energy.

MEETINGS INDUSTRY MARKETING AGENCY OF THE YEAR

CENTRE FOR BUSINESS TOURISM, Daniela Kos



In October 2010, Daniela Kos and her team opened the Internet website Poslovni turizam, a guide to Croatian congress tourism that included information on all the congress resources of Croatia. Last may 2011 the portal was translated into English and named CroatiaMeetings.com. In a very short space of time the portal became the crossroads of a complete range of information on Croatian congress tourism, deserving this award especially due to its integral, quality-content marketing. In-depth interviews, sound advice, best practice examples and other forms raised the portal to the foreground of new communication in Croatian congress tourism. Daniela's team, with their high level of journalistic ethics, unlock and look to resolve problematic and other up-to-date topics of Croatian and regional congress tourism. The content and structure of specific contents areas within the project were quickly at the forefront of a dynamic web environment, one that was suitably adapted and optimised for readers. With all this, very high standards of communication were set for Croatian and regional congress industry.

MEETINGS INDUSTRY YOUNG CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL

ANŽE ČOKL, Bohinj Park EKO Hotel



A lot of space could be given over to describing the creativity of Anže Čokl. Mountain climber, cameraman for adventure and mountain movies, engineering graduate, blogger, and director of Bohinj Park EKO hotel in Bohinjska Bistrica, just to begin with. Anže has gifts in many different fields, but stands out mostly for his creativity. He is probably the youngest hotel director in Slovenia (at a spritely 29 years old). The hotel was a great communications surprise, as it was the first genuinely 'green' congress hotel. His previous editorial company experiences, where he was in charge of marketing operations, were very helpful to Anže when he was launching the hotel project on the market. Last year he won the Zlati Sejalac award for innovativeness.

On this occasion the award was presented for the trademark 2864 that will complete the Bohinj Park EKO hotel offer with the construction of the Bike Park and eco ski-resort, including the longest ski slopes in Slovenia. Anže has presented his philosophy of the project in a 3-minute movie available to view at www.2864.si His communication on sustainable tourism demonstrates a wide comprehension of the subject, as proven through the development of consistent trademarks. All of these achievements are reflected in business results and a host of awards for his contribution to new ideas and ongoing improvement.

BEST OVERALL PRODUCT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

HOUSE OF GASTRONOMY JEZERŠEK CATERING, product campaign: 'TASTE THE WORLD'



The new trademark product of the House of Gastronomy Jezeršek catering was presented for the first time at the opening of the Festival Ljubljana on July 3rd, 2011. The leading trendsetter in the field of catering for 30 years now, in 2009 they launched their new 'Taste Slovenia' trademark on the market, one that today represents Slovenia very successfully at trade shows and tourism fairs across Europe. The initiative also deserves praise for being responsible for stimulating the notable progress in the development of Slovenian gastronomy, raising the national gastronomic consciousness and encouraging the new trend in gastronomy one could call 'The New Slovenian Cuisine', work for which The House of Gastronomy Jezeršek can rightly be extremely proud of.

Due to market demand for improved quality of the international offer, they have last year also developed the new trademark that completes their international catering offer. The trademark 'Taste the World' supports the new concept of catering banquet, which they have called "O". Essentially, the matter is a simple one: catering combines different tastes in the same way the world brings together different people, cultures and languages. In the same way that the world is round, the Jezeršek family have managed to bring the world's tastes together in a well-rounded banquet.

The entire project is an example of well-planned and executed product renovation and a campaign in which factual results reflect an excellence of communication.

The last word



Rok Klančnik

EROTICA

Yes, erotica!

After my previous article on “sexy congress destinations” I was reminded by readers that the article didn’t actually feature any sex. They were expecting something hot, spicy, Rocco-Siffredian, and I wrote about palm trees and cocktails ...

But let’s not be hasty! The topic of this issue of Kongres and Conventa 2012 is the future of tourism, or as I especially like to call it, ‘the aristocracy of tourism’ – the meetings industry, business and incentive trips. Let’s look at the future with trust and confidence and if my colleagues and co-authors compete in who will make the best predictions, I don’t want to fall behind. Rob, Linda, Ray and Christian stripped the meetings industry fully and could make a person a bit jealous with their knowledge, but I dare say they haven’t said it all.

THEY PREDICTED CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY, NEW TRENDS, PRODUCTS AND A LOT OF OTHER THINGS, WHICH SEEM TO BE ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG - THE TIP, THE BIT THAT CAN BE SEEN ABOVE THE WATER LINE, YET BELOW SEA LEVEL THERE IS SO MUCH MORE.

I will immerse myself under water and try to report on what I saw once I return.

Let’s just start by saying to “urbi et orbi” that I am willing to fight anyone who will swear only on new technologies and, for example, new social media. The basic thesis of my work is that the more technology progresses and changes, the louder is the need for real human contact. Actually for sensuality. Therefore I swear by ‘high-touch’ rather than ‘high-tech’. Isn’t Conventa (including Academy Conventa) made just for that? If Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are such fun, why don’t we just carry out Conventa online, with everyone behind their desks or even on the couch? We will also save on travel and accommodation ... Yet, exactly the opposite is the point of everything we do as tourism professionals. The point of tourism, business or congress in particular is in travel, staying somewhere else, meeting friends and new acquaintances, who later become friends – using all of the five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. Do you want more? Yes, even the sixth sense – the sense which helps us recognise good people from bad, potential business partners from freeloaders, who understand congress only as the opportunity to eat and drink.

Have we reached erotica yet? Almost.

So, we’ve covered technology. We know we can’t do without it, but even the late Steve Jobs once said, ‘only passionate people can change the world’.

Technology and the innovative social media will soon become what they really are: just a tool.

Try to taste a Cabernet over the internet if you can. Who even thinks of the internet nowadays? Nobody – for a decade internet has been as necessary as water. Senses, sensuality, are becoming more important in strategic communications and marketing in tourism. And, wouldn’t you know it, all the emotions are connected with wishing (in Greek ‘eros’, ἔρως).

Even the guru of modern marketing, Philip Kotler, once said markets change faster than marketing. In (mostly leisure) tourism, a lot of people have still not grasped that the SSS paradigm (sea, sand, sun, snow, and even sex) has long ago changed. Nowadays we market Es.

THE EEE MODEL INCLUDES EMOTIONS, EDUCATION, EXCITEMENT, ENTERTAINMENT.

Well, even erotica, if you must (which is covered under the ‘emotions’ category). Destinations, professional congress organisers or incentive agencies that are aware of this will be able to market their product easily. While models of strategic communications from Aristotle’s Rhetoric (25 centuries ago) over Laswell, Schramm, Berl and McLuhan remain unchanged, marketing has changed completely. It was forced to stop hiding in cabinets of market research and leaning on advertising and other tools. Nowadays, when we are looking towards BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China), we can’t do without cross-cultural communications,

mass psychology and sociology. Because life is unpredictable we also have to know a bit about crisis communications. Globalisation is giving way to glocalisation, competition and cooperation.

But there's more! It's happening in sync all over the world with the global economic crisis – except to the über-rich, it has clearly demonstrated that our perception of the economy, fellow human beings and the planet needs to change.

THOSE WHO WILL GIVE UP EXCESS GREED, UNETHICAL BUSINESS TECHNIQUES AND HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT WILL BE THE FIRST TO JOYFULLY REALISE WHAT PPP REALLY STANDS FOR (PEOPLE, PLANET, PROFIT).

The message of ILTM (International Luxury Travel Market – every December in Cannes) is clear: what's the use of a fancy hotel if the environment around it is destroyed. The riches and prestige of destinations and tourist companies start with the quality of the natural environment, a happy diversity of local cultures and satisfied people. As stated by Guy Bigwood in this very magazine, sustainable development isn't a fad, but a necessity and the only alternative for the future. This is exactly what the meetings industry clients want. Among them are new decision-

makers and opinion leaders who identify with the LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) principles. The 'Generation Y' Rob Davidson addressed is erasing the line between business and private. Their intimate knowledge about the 'good' surrounding us starts to prevail in the business and communications world. They are becoming more innovative and creative as brilliantly suggested by Linda Pereira.

Still not enough?

We are living in uncertain times. Often talks of a fancy congress or an expensive incentive trip fall apart because of a lack of trust among the partners.

WE WOULD ALL BENEFIT FROM THE (NEARLY BUDDHIST) ABBREVIATION HHH: HONESTY, HUMANITY, HUMILITY AND HUMOUR.

These four words, spoken and experienced together, can work miracles.

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." - Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

All sensuality stems from this desire.

Nothing about sex, I will be scolded again.



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