There are so many variables when planning an event, we have to define and identify the goals, the objectives and outcomes that we need to accomplish, as well as aligning all the different stakeholders involved in the planning.

SYNCHRONISED MANNER
We need to consider preferences, expectations, schedules and different cultures and all these elements must work in a synchronised manner. Perhaps instead of a to-do list we can summarise the driving concept of a successful meeting in two important concepts: collaboration and collaborative communication.

IN OUR INDUSTRY WE BUILD AND FACILITATE RELATIONSHIPS. IT IS ALL ABOUT CONNECTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT TIME

In our industry we build and facilitate relationships. It is all about connecting the right people at the right time. Unfortunately the more moving parts you have to get the work done, the more chance there is of creating confusion. Any product or service is the result of a much larger set of people, organisations, places and processes; a large number of interactions with people who must all be on the same page and that goes for the people within the same company. Collaboration becomes the key, whether it be between the PCO, the association, or suppliers. We have to align our vision to the objectives, PCOs must consider themselves as an extension of the client’s company and the suppliers and partners must become an extension of the in-house team.

If you are a PCO you need to understand your customer, if you are an association you need to understand your members and that means we need to listen and pay attention, be innovative and not just an imitator, be market knowledgeable and have the right resources and, most importantly, deliver what we promised. The strength of the conference organiser is in the service and the ability to use collective intelligence to the benefit of the event.

TRUSTWORTHY NETWORK
Excellent supplier relationships win business for a destination, enhance the relationship with clients and improve service and reputation. This trustworthy network of suppliers and partners is built and these relationships require two-way information. Most companies focus on what suppliers can do for them rather than on what they can do with the suppliers to lower costs and to increase the service level. A true partnership requires collaboration and communication. Share critical information as early as possible. Meet them face to face so that they can understand your client’s needs and the needs of the conference, make relationship meetings meaningful, work together to improve successful case stories, involve them in the meetings and site visits. And after the event it is important to have a wrap-up meeting, this helps everyone to understand what went well and what could have been done better and this is a great time to review feedback from all stakeholders.

The do’s and don’ts of conference organising

COLLABORATION AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION

Organising an event allows a meeting planner or a PCO to demonstrate their ability and the level of their service. If they get it right it is an opportunity to show how good they are, but if things go wrong… and it will be hard to live down. Can a meeting be boiled down to a list of do’s and don’ts; a sort of roadmap to success?
A good buyer-seller relationship is a partnership, a win-win situation over the long run. A responsive supplier is an asset for our event and a supplier who is treated equitably and professionally is likely to communicate his positive experience to the external word raising your reputation. In our job there is nothing more rewarding than working with a team of creative, enthusiastic and smart people to put together a valuable experience for others. All about growth and value creation, the market is becoming a forum for conversation and interaction between consumers, consumer communities and firms, it is this collaborative communication and collaboration that makes up our ultimate to-do list in the meeting industry today.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, Past President and Council Member of IAPCO, and Vice President of AIM Group International, Rome, Italy. IAPCO represents today 120 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org