

The perfect equation for a successful Annual Meeting

High quality education + networking x cultural understanding = a memorable IAPCO gathering



by Sarah Storie-Pugh

IAPCO started the year in style as it commenced its 50th anniversary celebrations at their largest-ever Annual Meeting in Tokyo last month. Mathias Posch, President of International Conferences Services Ltd, was elected IAPCO President, and takes over from outgoing president, Jan Tonkin.

Jan's successful presidency spanned a two-year term, where she presided over two very different Annual Meetings, Dubai in 2017 and Tokyo 2018. Dubai started the trend of record-breaking attendances, displaying the high level of engagement within the IAPCO membership to the Association. The key elements to this success were simple – high quality education, combined with plenty of time for networking and exchange, whilst learning and understanding a new culture and the destination.

Both Dubai and Tokyo embraced this formula and showcased their fascinating, diverse traditions and cultures in very different yet still successful formats, leaving the participants with a clear understanding of the destination and the potential for bringing future business.

Japan has a rich historical culture, which was carefully entwined within the IAPCO Annual Meeting education programme. 'How to apply the spirit of Chado in Today's World', presented by Randy Channell Soei, tea ceremony master, was a prime example. The four principles of Chado, commonly referred to as the tea ceremony, are harmony, respect, purity and tranquility. Despite having been around for centuries, what better teaching is there for today's incredibly hectic world?

Meanwhile, 'Why Storytelling Matters: 10 tips to improve your presentation' from

Garr Reynolds, author of 'Presentation Zen', encouraged the audience to change their thinking with a provocative mix of illumination, inspiration, education and guidance.

But perhaps the most telling and high scoring of the cultural sessions was 'Lost in Translation', a panel discussion led by Hisao Kawashima. The respected consultant was joined by contributors Tokuro Matsuo of the Advanced Institute of Industrial Technology; Asako Shiomi, Osaka CVB; and Mathias Posch, then Vice-President of IAPCO and now President.

The focus of the session was on the cultural nuances that will make all the difference to international clients/PCOs when bringing meetings to Japan. It proved to be an eye-opener to the majority of the audience as they realised the potential offence they might have committed in the past during meetings and negotiations when in discussion with their Japanese colleagues. Now they will have a much better understanding of the small details that make a world of difference when conducting business in Japan.

The programme also had inspiring presentations from Claire Smith, PCMA Chair Board of Directors, on 'Innovative Meeting Formats' that was again well received. There

was also an intriguing insight from Miyu Nishikawa on the emergence of Virtual Reality; while Shin Hasegawa, MD of Facebook Japan, looked at the 'Global Emerging Trends in Communication' by Facebook.

Hazel Jackson also captivated as she explained how to appreciate more 'the now', and an eye-opening takeaway of what event professionals could do to finally get a life.

Ultimately it became clear that associations would do well to take heed of different cultures and take advantage of contrasting cultures from one event to another. Having moved from Cape Town in South Africa two years ago to Dubai in the UAE last year and then Tokyo in Japan this year, the IAPCO has certainly benefited from such contrasts and this diversity has been instrumental in attendance increases year on year.

As advocates of quality, key learning, engagement and business advancement, IAPCO is keenly aware of the benefits of taking advantage of the experience and cultural values on offer in destinations, too often understated but nevertheless of great benefit. It is one of the main reasons we have enjoyed increased membership and we are certain that all of our members will be excited to see where we will travel to in 2019. ◦

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Sarah Storie-Pugh, IAPCO Executive Director



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