

A Search for Unity & Cohesion

It is not an easy task to add additional insight to the wealth of articles already existing on the topic of legacies. Yet, there are not many or nearly enough indicators out there, and a recent study carried by the UTS Business School entitled *Business Event Legacies* showed that clearly.

Words Louise Gorringe

While we won't touch on specific metrics, we believe that there is something very powerful in synergies that are often hard to pin or measure. And no matter the uncertainties, Professional Congress Organisers (PCOs) and Association Management Companies (AMCs), have the critical role to search for unity and support the missions of both societies and destinations alike.

THE ASSOCIATIONS

Legacy and impact are at the core of any association, they are formed for the purpose to relieve the world of a certain disease (if a medical society), alleviate an issue burdening society, or support a given profession. Thus, they need to create an impact and leave a legacy with each of their actions.

Some organizations aim to create an impact and long-lasting legacy at a universal level, such as the World Stroke Organization (WSO) and the International Papillomavirus Society (IPVS). Both societies hold awareness campaigns each year, with a global reach, using their international network of organizations to reach millions. While such campaigns offer a relatively quick way to raise awareness on a given topic, the legacy is something that is achieved through the actions

and events taking place at a national level. Many occur in conjunction with awareness day activities, and this can be supported by reaching further up to local authorities and holding the annual meeting in a strategic location.

The International Society of Endocrinology (ISE) realized Africa's need for better education in the field. The information flow was laborious and only a few could afford going regularly to relevant international events. Thus, ISE brought its annual meeting to South Africa in 2018 and, as a long-term legacy, the organization supported the creation of a Pan African Federation of Endocrine Societies (PAFES). This was an important step for the African endocrine community.

WSAVA, the World Small Animal Veterinary Association, have a rotating congress, which in 2016 was hosted by Cartagena, Colombia. During the event, WSAVA held a companion animal outreach program with a local non-profit organization. WSAVA invited participants to join and contribute to a two-day hands-on experience, creating a clinic for dogs and cats. The delegates improved the wellbeing of pets belonging to people in areas of extreme poverty, violence, or financial duress, thus leaving a legacy long after the event.

THE DESTINATIONS

On the other side, there are several destinations, and their respective Convention Bureaux, which work hard to align the whole city and the entire supplier chain to a common vision. A good example is presented by BestCities Global Alliance, or other destinations such as Gothenburg. Each location has identified the core industries concentrated in the country, and these are matched to associations in the area, often resulting in additional support from local authorities.

Gothenburg stands out with its team approach and the superb blend between the different suppliers. Very few destinations give the feeling of having one cohesive meetings' organism in place. When the International Continence Society (ICS) brought their event to Gothenburg, not only was the supreme quality of the services ensured. Something more - the legacy that the event was to leave was foreseen long before the event took place. One of the ways that the Gothenburg Convention Bureau ensured a legacy was by providing financial support to local practitioners to attend the event. As a result, they are now better prepared and can ensure improved healthcare services to the local population, presenting in ways a multiplier effect of one single meeting.

THE SOLUTION TO THE CHALLENGE

To match the goals of both the association and the destination is obvious, and obviously hard. Non-profit organizations aim to deliver education to those that have a hard time obtaining it, and these individuals are often located in rather remote or smaller areas. To solve this challenge, PCOs and AMCs can provide a

solution through their established relationship with key opinion leaders (KOLs). Often KOLs are well known and connected in their destinations. This can mean that closing the circle can provide the answer to how to balance between finances and true change in the places where they most need it.

IN THE END

While PCOs and AMCs have an ace up their sleeves with long-term KOL relationships and a deep understanding of association aims, there are industry organizations, such as BestCities and ICCA who have set to create an infrastructure to support match-making of the goals of both destinations and associations.

We cannot be sure at this point how effective this framework would be, especially while there are not enough measurement tools to prove the actual impact of those accords. However, we trust in human relationships, which have proven time and time again in our industry to cause an impact. And as we see with participants at our events as well as host communities, when the destination is a good fit for the association aims, magic really can happen, and a meaningful legacy is left. And the examples are indeed endless.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers, author Louise Gorringe, Director Association Management Operations, Kenes Group. IAPCO represents today 137 companies comprised of over 9,500 professional congress organizers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. info@iapco.org | www.iapco.org

IAPCO
MEETING QUALITY

