THE FUTURE OF EXCHANGE IS IGNITED BY DISRUPTION
It has been four months since commercial flights were suspended in Rwanda in a bid to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and now, we are pleased to share that from the 1st August 2020, Rwanda resumed commercial flights and all of us at Rwanda Convention Bureau look forward to welcoming all of our expected delegates.

Meet in Remarkable Rwanda
ON THE COVER
ICS Connects: The Future of Exchange is Ignited by Disruption

Destination Rwanda 2
From the President – Ori Lahav 4
Martin’s Column 6
A Moment with Council – Alejandro 7
Getting to Know – What IAPCO’s doing 8
Task Force – National PCO Associations 9
Solution Driven – Creating Opportunities 10
Getting to Know – Japan Convention Services 12
IAPCO 2019 13
New Member – Downtown Europe/Europa 13
PCMA – Looking with Fresh Eyes 14
ECM Mentor Programme 16
UIA Report – Top Cities & Countries 16
Technology Column – COVID-safe Event Solutions 17
Speaker Assisted Recording – ACS 18
Risk Management – Hiscox 20
New Rules for Association Comms 22
How to Measure your Success 24
Online vs Offline 26
The Role of Diversity in Leadership 27
Leading through a Pandemic 28
Diversity and Inclusion in Asia 30
Destination Hong Kong 31
Dubai Kick-starts Business Events Safely 32
One Vision. One Destination. Endless Stories. 33
Melbourne’s MCEC unveils VenueSafe Plan 34
Corona Capacity Calculation for Hamburg 35
The Future is Hybrid 36
The Value of a PCO in our Virtual World 38
Event Design – New Challenges going Virtual 40
Virtual can multiply Sponsorship Opportunities 42
The Virtual & Hybrid Future has only just begun 44
Do not replace Humans, replace Human Work 45
Virtual is here to stay – Introducing the DCO 46
Members’ Events and News 48
Our Partners 57

GETTING TO KNOW...
IAPCO Creating Opportunities

NEWS AND ARTICLES
International Leadership Diversity

PARTNERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS
How our partners are managing COVID-19 Risk Management – Hiscox Speaker Assisted Recording – ACS Technology Column – fielddrive

ASSOCIATIONS
Features for International Associations

VIRTUAL AND HYBRID
Features and articles about our new virtual and hybrid world

MEMBERS’ EVENTS AND NEWS
Catch up with what IAPCO members are doing

The PCO: published by IAPCO
Whilst every care is taken in the preparation and publishing of The PCO, the views expressed are not necessarily those of IAPCO or its members and no responsibility can be taken for articles, errors or comment.
Editor: Sarah Storie-Pugh / Design & illustration: jo-harrison.co.uk
Back in 2018 the World Economic Forum published an article called ‘5 things to know about the future of jobs’.

The article predicted that by 2022, 75 million current job roles might be displaced by the shift in the division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms, with potential for the creation of 133 million new roles at the same time.

Emerging occupations include roles such as data analysts, software and application developers, and e-commerce and social media specialists. These roles are significantly based upon, and enhanced by, the use of technology.

The article also focused on the shift of skills that would be required in order to keep up with the pace of changing technology and the robot revolution.

In the table you can see the skills for which there is growing demand and those where demand is in decline.

What the World Economic Forum did not predict is the disruption that COVID-19 has brought upon us. This disruption has accelerated the skill shift needed, not only for the future but right now, in order for us to perform our daily roles.

In thinking about the events industry, sometimes perceived as a low-tech industry, we must consider: what are the skills we need in order to be excellent project managers or sales managers or leading executives?

Are we up to speed with the skills needed in this challenging new era? How many people in your team or in your company are emotionally intelligent, creative, complex problem solvers, analytical thinkers and innovators? How many are social influencers?

These skills and abilities can help your organisation to quickly respond to the COVID-19 disruption. Without having the right people with the right skills, your organisation might be at risk.

So how do we get there?

According to the World Economic Forum we will all need to become lifelong learners; employees will need 101 days of retraining and upskilling in the period leading up to 2022. Emerging skills gaps, both in individual workers and within a company’s senior leadership, may significantly obstruct an organisation’s transformation management. Depending on factors such as type of industry and location, between half and two-thirds of companies are likely to turn to external contractors, temporary staff and freelancers to address their skills gaps. A comprehensive approach to workforce planning, reskilling and upskilling will be key for the positive, proactive management of such trends.

I am a true believer in leading by example. If I want my team to acquire a new technological skill, it will start with me.

According to McKinsey’s Future of Work, managers cannot lead a revolution that they don’t understand. Senior executives need to enhance their own digital abilities to drive change from the top. This means learning about the implications of digitisation, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) for their businesses.

In addition, we will have to establish new flexible work style models to better accommodate these changes.
Here are some examples of best practice in adopting a digital workspace:

- Cultivate a one-team culture by holding frequent one-to-one meetings with staff and customers to enable transparent communication and collaboration.
- Clarify decision-making and reporting lines to reduce isolation and silos, making people both accountable and connected.
- Establish common platforms and technology across the company; shared goals require shared tools and technology.

- Leverage digital tools to create virtual team rooms that enable collaboration, communication and transparent decision making.
- Work in small agile teams to build effective structures for continual interaction and adaption to changing conditions.
- Raise awareness of cyber security risk and best practices, with frequent updates to enhance compliance and awareness.

So, are you really ready for the new era?

Ori Lahav, IAPCO President 2020-2022
Lending support and championing something to which you are committed is perhaps more important now than ever before. At IAPCO, we continue to support a number of significant projects and initiatives that make a difference not only to our IAPCO members but to the business and professional events industry and to the people that live and breathe it every day.

Most recently, IAPCO announced the formation of the IAPCO National Association Task Force, created to facilitate collaboration between IAPCO and the national and regional PCO associations. This provides a much-needed international voice for PCOs through the sharing of relevant data and case studies. It also promotes a co-ordinated, multi-national model and offers an indirect link between the national and the international association to clients, partners and the wider industry.

Since its launch in June, the task force has seen members from eleven nations work together to advocate a unified set of guiding principles for the safe reopening of meetings and conferences in their respective countries.

Advocacy work like this at a local level relies on the strength of partnerships to ensure international reach. Thanks to the network that IAPCO shares, and the strong partnerships we continue to develop, we are able to achieve that to which we put our minds. Our partnership with the JMIC (Joint Meetings Industry Council) and a shared willingness to collaborate for the greater good is no more evident than in The JMIC Global Manifesto (released in July 2020). In the creation of this manifesto, our task force, JMIC and IAPCO came together to develop the PCO-specific perspective and advocacy guidelines for PCOs around the globe.

Also at the core of IAPCO’s mission is advocating in support of the next wave of meeting professionals to our industry. The IAPCO Connectors and the new European Cities Marketing Mentorship Programme, fully endorsed by IAPCO, are tremendous opportunities to help those who are new to our industry to get the best possible start to their careers.

It is through genuinely mutually beneficial partnerships that advocacy can truly happen and make a positive impact. Partnerships which work together for the greater good, sharing a vision and an understanding of the opportunities available, are in a position to take pride in the work that they do and the difference that they make.
Tell us what you are working on at the moment for IAPCO?
I’m working with passion and commitment to lead a team representing LATAM within IAPCO. Just now, of course, I am responding with creativity and innovation to the coronavirus pandemic.

What is your personal philosophy?
Life is to be enjoyed and shared with your loved ones, resolving with equanimity any problems that arise, and accepting that every obstacle is a way to move forward.

What would you do for a career if you were not an eventprof?
I would work in a financial enterprise as an alternative career, maybe! Or as a teacher at a university.

Tell us something that might surprise us about you
I want to be a stand-up comedian (no). Actually, I want to live my life travelling on a sailboat around the world.

Any advice for someone joining the event industry as a PCO?
Keep trying, give yourself permission to put yourself first and make your needs an unwavering priority in order to be strong and tough enough to keep doing your job.
IAPCO DIALOGUE ON LEADERSHIP

Nicky McGrane, CEO, Conference Partners International (CPI), Kathleen Warden, Director of Conferences Sales, Scottish Event Campus (SEC) and Sherrif Karamat, President & CEO, PCMA, met in the IAPCO Impact Café to discuss ‘Leadership – Resilience and Transformational Change’ as part of the IAPCO Impact Dialogue series. Recounting their own experiences, the three, kept on track by moderator Martin Boyle, CEO, IAPCO, shared their challenges, stress levels and solutions. The recording can be viewed on https://bit.ly/2CQBtuM

MASS GATHERINGS AND BUSINESS EVENTS ARE DIFFERENT

Ori Lahav explains to the BBC

Ori Lahav, President of IAPCO, was interviewed by BBC World Business Briefing on COVID-19 and how it is affecting the meetings industry. He explained:

“One major challenge is the uncertainty; given that normally PCOs plan events two to three years in advance for their clients, now we don’t know what is happening two to three months hence. But there is also a need for governments to understand the need to differentiate between mass gatherings, such as rock concerts, festivals etc., and business events, such as conferences and exhibitions. Protocols are already published for many destinations enabling conferences to be conducted safely alongside COVID requirements. Safe environments can be created and conferences play a crucial role in the development of science and technology.”

View the interview on www.iapco.org/videos/

JNTO ADVISORY GROUP

Kayo Nomura, JNTO

Face-to-face meetings are a crucial component of the world economy and continue to be a strategic tool for associations and companies in the communications world. But we are not fooled by our beliefs: we know there is a need and a process to adapt to new technologies, to prioritise communication as a vital aspect of knowledge exchange…

These were the words of the late Mr Gonzalo Perez Constanzó, past President of IAPCO, at the opening of IAPCO’s 40th renowned ‘Wolfsberg Seminar’, back in 2013. Time has not dulled this sentiment and, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic, these words are precious and meaningful; they apply to us all, especially in the meetings industry.

We at JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization) are no exception. Amidst the turbulence, with so many challenges to overcome, there are growing demands to respond in innovative ways. We believe that ‘Together we stand!’ and towards this end, we sought out a valuable source for advice. Thus, we chose IAPCO, joining forces with this powerful global educational association.

The first IAPCO Advisory Board meeting, held in late July, was a very productive and informative one with Ori Lahav, current IAPCO President, and Mathias Posch, Immediate Past President. We discussed the implications of COVID-19 for the future of the industry and the importance of crisis communication, as well as JNTO’s long-running hosted buyers’ programme Meet Japan, which, for the first time, will be held online in late January 2021.

We are pleased to further deepen our educational partnership with IAPCO.
IAPCO has united eleven national PCO associations from around the globe for the first time to connect and share coronavirus-related data and case studies. Monica Freire, Business Manager Congress Unit, Lisbon Office AIM Group, is the chair of the task force. Their aim is to connect and share coronavirus-related data and case studies and use their combined expertise to create and distribute safe practice guidelines for PCOs worldwide. Whilst many governments around the world are beginning to reduce current coronavirus-related restrictions, others are doing the opposite by reinstating lockdowns and quarantines as they are threatened with potential second waves of the virus.

Monica, who is also an IAPCO council member, says: “I think that in these unprecedented and difficult times we need more than ever to join forces and promote collaboration among event professionals at all levels. We need to support each other, define best practices, disseminate correct information on the market and enable constructive dialogues with local authorities. We are working hard to define a common protocol for safe events around the globe which will be made available to all organisers and clients involved in this challenge.”

The task force will leverage IAPCO’s leadership on the international stage whilst also enabling the dissemination of the important work being done at national levels by the task force members.

Members of the task force are:

- AOCA – Argentina
- PCOA – Australia/NZ
- ABPCO – Great Britain
- HAPCO – Greece
- ICPB – India
- AIPCO – Ireland
- Federcongressi&eventi – Italy
- KAPCO – Korea
- PCO Meetings Mexico – Mexico
- SLAPCEO – Sri Lanka
- AUDOCA – Uruguay
- The JMIC Global Manifesto was published on 15 July and can be viewed on [https://bit.ly/3aIK52Y](https://bit.ly/3aIK52Y). It sets out the industry rationale for the use of business events as primary agents for post-pandemic economic recovery and renewal. Alongside this detailed manifesto, in collaboration with JMIC, IAPCO has produced ‘The PCO Perspective’, [https://bit.ly/32rz02T](https://bit.ly/32rz02T) which provides PCOs around the world with guidance on how to advocate for the safe reopening of PCO-managed business and professional events.

Khani bin Daud, CEO, MyCEB, Dato’ Sri Dr Hj Irmohizam Hj Ibrahim, Executive Director of World Trade Centre of Malaysia, and Janet Tan-Collis, Founder & CEO, East West Planners Singapore (by video from Singapore) in an interesting debate, which attracted a large virtual audience.

Friday 27th also saw the launch of the MyCEB / KLCC supported IAPCO’s Continued Professional Development Programme headed up by Barbara Calderwood, IAPCO Council, and Martin Boyle, IAPCO CEO. [https://webedge.iapco.org/](https://webedge.iapco.org/)
When crises strike – and let’s face it, we have never before had to cope with a crisis such as COVID-19 – innovation and the ability to quickly adapt come to the fore. These qualities are what will enable businesses to develop and surmount the current challenges.

This is certainly the case with PCOs, as IAPCO members reinvent their businesses, open new divisions and strive to lead the industry forward – into the new normal!

**ICS CONNECTS:**
THE FUTURE OF EXCHANGE IS IGNITED BY DISRUPTION

*IAPCO Member: International Conference Services, Canada*
*Author: Hope Mikal, Marketing Co-ordinator*

The unprecedented changes brought about by the events of 2020 have forced event planners and others in the MICE industry to deal with the disruption that has affected meetings and conferences across the globe. But the term ‘disruption’ does not have to be perceived negatively. In the PCO industry, it can be viewed as an opportunity – to discover a new way to engage with colleagues and to find answers to the questions that 2020 has presented to us.

Mathias Posch, President of International Conference Services and Immediate Past President of IAPCO, found himself being asked a similar question by clients, peers and employees alike: ‘What does the future of exchange look like?’ Mathias decided the best way to tackle this question was via genuine, unscripted conversations with key players in the MICE industry. Thus, a videocast, ICS Connects: The Future of Exchange, was launched shortly afterwards on 17 June. Initially, these conversations focused on deviating from the buzzword ‘pivot’ and looking into innovating virtual, hybrid and in-person meetings moving forward.

ICS Connects focuses on unscripted insights gleaned from genuine conversations with global meeting experts, trending topics and 360-degree meeting views. The goal is to bridge the connection between associations, convention centres, tourism bureaux, destination marketing organisations and thought leaders in the meetings industry. All guests encourage the exploration of emerging ideas, challenges and strategies as the industry navigates its current uncharted waters. Each episode tackles major issues that we all face as industry professionals, from leadership challenges to mental health and the important topic of inclusion.

The question ‘What does the future of exchange look like?’ is a difficult one to answer. However, it is the goal of ICS Connects to find the answer in the same way that the MICE industry always has – together.

Listen in weekly! ICS Connects is available on YouTube and your preferred podcast platform. Follow #ICSConnects on your favourite social media platform.

AIM COMMUNICATION, THE OPEN INNOVATION NETWORK
IAPCO Member: AIM Group International, Italy

AIM Group International has established AIM Communication, an open innovation network dedicated to communication, brand activation and digital technology.

AIM Communication’s purpose is to define, implement and execute communication strategies and tools that are relevant to the changing market in a predominantly digital world. The company’s mission explains it all: ‘We craft experiences for your business growth’.

AIM Communication will support companies and associations to grow by enabling them to create and design the best possible experiences for their businesses, making use of disruptive technologies. The suite of strategy, marketing, technology and digital services covers four core areas:

- Research and Design
- Define and Develop
- Deliver and Reach
- Measure and Optimise

CPI ONLINE GATHERS GLOBAL COMMUNITIES
IAPCO Member: Conference Partners International, Ireland

At a time of crisis, it is always wise to go back to your purpose. CPI’s purpose is to gather global communities in an inspiring environment to share knowledge. Although we cannot meet physically, we can still connect people virtually. It may not be as inspiring but it does allow us to deliver on our purpose. Now more than ever, associations need to meet to gain insights from one another and share their experiences and learnings, particularly in the medical field.

The best of ideas can often come at a time of crisis. We become solution-driven, creative and highly effective in the conception of new thoughts. The birth of CPI Online came just two weeks after we closed our offices in March. Five months later, we have delivered three virtual conferences and ten more are in progress.

F.A.S.T.© BY MCI LAUNCHES VIRTUAL CONSULTING
IAPCO Member: MCI Group, Switzerland

MCI have launched their new virtual consulting product to future-proof associations through strategic transformation – F.A.S.T.© by MCI (Future-proof Association Strategic Transformation).

This revolutionary 12-week consulting programme is virtual strategic planning at a distance, enabling association leaders to receive structured advisory consulting on how to rethink and refine their approach in order to remain relevant in the digital age, as well as enhancing their member and community value.

Association leaders are invited to take the Future-Readiness Assessment to help them understand how ready their organisation is to deliver value and thrive in the new normal.

The outcome of the consulting programme is a detailed transformation roadmap with must-win battles and short-term actions that are essential in order for the association to thrive.
GETTING TO KNOW...
JAPAN CONVENTION SERVICES, INC.

The Origin
Before the 1964 Tokyo Olympics began, internationalisation in Japan was proceeding rapidly. International visitors were coming to Japan for business in ever-increasing numbers, and the demand for interpreting and translation services was increasing. Against this background, one man saw a new business opportunity. It all started from there.

That one man was the late Mr Hiroshi Chikanami, who established Japan Convention Services, Inc. on 7 December 1967. His son is now President of JCS.

How has JCS expanded since it was founded?
JCS, after managing part of the Osaka Expo in 1970, developed a reputation as an organiser of high-quality international conferences, and subsequently blossomed into managing medical congresses and other events.

Where are your offices based and how many staff do you employ?
JCS, with our head office in Tokyo and seven regional offices, is capable of supporting conferences throughout Japan. Number of employees: 319 (as of March 2019).

Have you seen a change in the meetings industry?
Yes, not surprisingly in the current pandemic. Due to COVID-19, we have shifted our meeting style from face to face to virtual or hybrid. Staying safe and healthy has become our top priority.

What are your current challenges?
Regardless of the challenges caused by COVID-19, we still have to ensure that our events are mesmerising.

What is the most unusual (and possibly challenging) event with which you have been involved?
With the G20 Tourism Ministers’ Meeting in Kutchan Town, Hokkaido, we had very limited time to prepare for the event as the venue was still under construction. Despite that, we were able to arrange and manage the venue whilst introducing the Ainu, an indigenous people in Hokkaido.

Have you had successful partnerships with other IAPCO members?
In October 2008, we established MCI-JCS Japan. To better meet our clients’ needs, we have continued to improve our service, our overseas network, our human resources and our compliance systems.

Why do you value being an IAPCO member?
It always gives us new “surprises” and we continually learn through our connection with other members. We can overcome difficulties together.
IAPCO is delighted to welcome a new Member Office to their membership. Downtown Europe is a 100% subsidiary of the Europa Group and became an IAPCO member in June this year. Marianne Rygaerts, Managing Director, created the company in 1991. This year it became part of Europa Group, itself created in 1987.

The statistics for 2019 have just been published. These take into account all meetings managed by IAPCO members during the year, and calculate the economic impact that our members’ meetings have on the world stage.

No doubt 2020 statistics will produce an entirely different picture as the meetings industry battles with the pandemic effect. It is anticipated that both half-year and year-end statistics will be available in early Q2 2021.

DOWNTOWN EUROPE – EUROPA GROUP

Marianne Rygaerts, MD

IAPCO is delighted to welcome a new Member Office to their membership. Downtown Europe is a 100% subsidiary of the Europa Group and became an IAPCO member in June this year. Marianne Rygaerts, Managing Director, created the company in 1991. This year it became part of Europa Group, itself created in 1987.

DOWNTOWN EUROPE – EUROPA GROUP
Brussels, Belgium
www.downtowneurope.be
The Georgia Motor Trucking Association (GMTA) rolled into Florida and accomplished what most associations have been unable to do since the beginning of this year: it held a 300-attendee, in-person meeting – safely – from 21 to 23 June at the Ritz Carlton on Amelia Island. GMTA’s Annual Convention usually attracts twice that number of attendees. Ed Crowell, the association’s President and CEO, attributed the lower attendance rate less to concerns of attendees and sponsors for their health and safety than to their companies’ policies prohibiting corporate travel at this time. This was confirmed by responses to pre- and post-event surveys.

At a time when most associations have cancelled, postponed or moved their 2020 events online in the wake of COVID-19, Crowell went in another direction. It is not that the association was averse to digital platforms but, he said, for this event, ‘it was almost always a go/no-go decision for us – a decision of whether we could do it for “real” – as in face to face – as
opposed to any other option. At the end of the day, going forward with it seemed like the most practical option for us to take’.

Crowell and his team worked closely with the Ritz Carlton starting in February to ensure that all health and safety protocols would be in place before the event, and their flexibility made the event feasible. ‘They were willing early on to waive all the minimums, either attrition or F&B charges’, Crowell said. ‘In a practical sense, that’s probably one of the biggest challenges to having an in-person meeting now, through at least to the end of the year’.

Crowell said that one of the opportunities of designing an event during a pandemic was that it forced them ‘to look at everything we do at the event with sort of a blue-sky aspect – with fresh eyes – to revisit everything we do and ask, ‘Is this necessary? Is this the best way to do it?’ We looked at those things that would normally put people in close proximity and either did away with them or changed how we did them’. In addition, holding an event within CDC (COVID-19) guidelines prompted them to think more deeply about what they were really trying to accomplish with the meeting and what tactical changes could be made that would still allow them to meet their strategic goals.

One of the event elements usually held in close quarters was a board meeting, typically scheduled before the convention’s official beginning. For that reason, Crowell and his team decided that the best thing to do was to hold it online before the meeting proper.

At the registration area, stanchions were used to create barriers to keep queueing people separated, and individual hand-sanitiser bottles were made available at the registration tables, as were ‘thousands of masks, which we were providing to people in handfuls’, Crowell said. ‘Some folks did wear them and some folks didn’t. Some of our larger events were outdoors’, he added, ‘which lowered the risk of possible virus transmission’. Although mask-wearing was not made mandatory for participants, the Ritz Carlton staff wore masks and gloves at all times.

Furthermore, the hotel arranged that each attendee sat at their own six-foot table during sessions in the ballroom, and implemented other measures to ensure guest safety. These included putting up plexiglass barriers and installing automatic doors to eliminate the need to touch handles.

In addition, the GMTA ‘moved almost every piece of paper to electronic only, and I think we will continue to do that going forward’, Crowell said.

Whilst sponsorships were down ‘a bit’, in the end the event did ‘produce a margin’, Crowell said. But ‘we gave more value to our attendees and continued to build relationships and value for the organisation and for the industry that I don’t think we ever could have gotten in a digital environment – and we heard that from our attendees as well’, he said.

But the most important metric of success has come in the form of a zero: no COVID-19 cases have been reported back to the GMTA from the June event.

‘This article ran in Convene’
The current raging of the COVID-19 virus across the globe has already had enormous consequences for the meetings industry. It has resulted in not only the cancellation and postponement of congresses and conventions but also of the majority of industry events that we would normally attend throughout the year.

It poses however a whole different challenge for newly appointed young professionals in our industry whether working in CVBs, hotels, venues, PCOs, all over Europe. Indeed, they are currently missing out on being at these central platforms, which are essential for them in terms of being introduced to the industry and which give them critical opportunities to build up a network. As we know, these key industry events also support them in receiving guidance, insights and knowledge to grow both professionally and personally.

Establishing an ECM Mentor Programme in close collaboration with industry partners could be an answer to solving this challenge. It is a way in which the mentees can develop their own professional network, strengthen their industry knowledge and be inspired by other destination business models.

“IAPCO’s mission to raise the standards of service amongst our Members and others in the meetings industry is fundamental to everything we do”, commented Martin Boyle, IAPCO CEO. “Mentoring a relative newcomer provides a great opportunity for experienced meeting professionals to help raise standards by guiding those that are on their way to leading our industry in the not too distant future. IAPCO is pleased to endorse the ECM Mentorship Programme and I encourage everyone to consider how you can contribute. Together, we can achieve great things.”

If you are interested in being a mentor (minimum 5 years industry experience) or a mentee (less than 18 months experience), or require further information, visit https://bit.ly/2EgsVOp

The ECM Mentor Programme is endorsed by leading industry organisations: IAPCO, IBTM World, ICCA, IMEX Group and HQ Association Magazine.

The UIA (Union of International Associations) released its 61st International Meetings Statistics Report, based on 12 472 international association meetings held during 2019. The report included a great deal of comprehensive data, including identifying the top destinations for the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 cities for 2019</th>
<th>Top 10 countries for 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Singapore</td>
<td>1. Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Brussels</td>
<td>2. Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Paris</td>
<td>4. USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vienna</td>
<td>5. Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bangkok</td>
<td>6. France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tokyo</td>
<td>7. Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. London</td>
<td>8. Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lisbon</td>
<td>10. Austria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, contact Joel Fischer statistics@uia.org
As the conference world moves back towards physical gatherings, ensuring the safety of all stakeholders is of paramount importance.

No single measure or safety protocol can make a conference safe. Only a carefully designed participant experience will do, one that is in full compliance with local regulations and which ensures the safety and confidence of participants.

The resilience in our industry has quickly led to multiple initiatives with a common aim, aligned around creating a set of pre-requisites for producing live events including ‘UFI’s Global framework for reopening exhibitions and B2B trade events post the emergence from COVID-19’ and ‘The Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide’. These initiatives provide valuable guidelines and outline the benefits of using currently available technology to accommodate a frictionless delegate experience.

Session time booking, controlled venue access, hygiene and sanitisation protocols, touchless check-in, social distancing monitoring, and session access control are measures that can contribute to safe onsite experiences. Facial recognition technology supports these measures and offers the best opportunity for conference participants to avoid unnecessary physical proximity, be it during the check-in process, when accessing sessions, or in touchless lead retrieval.

As organisers work to integrate adequate technology solutions to support safe conferences, we cannot be sure what future travel restrictions will be in place, or of participants’ levels of reluctance or willingness to travel. Regardless, we are seeing event technology break new ground. Cutting-edge event technology platforms are enabling organisers to reach online audiences through virtual and hybrid approaches, whilst other technological advances support a rethinking of onsite flow management, creating a safe and positive participant experience that can once again support our much-desired face-to-face gatherings.

This Technology Column is brought to you by fielddrive, a Service Provider partner of IAPCO

fielddrive

fielddrive is an innovative award-winning event technology company that offers the most powerful yet flexible and easy-to-use on-site event management solutions available today. The company provides facial recognition-powered check-in for events of any size across the globe through their network of certified fielddrive partners.

www.fielddrive.eu
pascal@fielddrive.eu
Are you organising a conference or event where not all of your speakers can be present, perhaps because of flight restrictions due to COVID-19 or because of agenda/scheduling issues? How do you get the speakers to participate in your programme?

The COVID-19 crisis has proved that the problem of online video recording can be solved easily and without problems. ACS has devised a solution that offers a reliable and cost-effective alternative to existing online solutions: pre-recording presentations, in HD quality, with the assistance of our technical employees.

**Webinar/on demand**

- The speaker can choose a time slot via the ACS online booking tool.
- The speaker sends their presentation in advance via a secure upload link provided by ACS.
- If desired, an ACS technician may contact the speaker in advance to determine if the speaker’s computer or laptop meets the specified requirements.
- The speaker receives a URL to log in to the agreed time slot. This can be done from any location where an internet connection is available, such as at home or in the workplace.
- The speaker enters a virtual lounge where they are received by one of our helpful technicians.
- The technician checks the video and audio connection with the speaker and then directs them to the virtual environment where the presentation will be recorded.
- The virtual environment is a user-friendly web-based page where the speaker can easily record the presentation.
- The technician remains on standby to resolve any technical issues during the recording and to monitor the quality of the recording.
- The presentation will be saved on our server afterwards.
Benefits for the speaker

- The speaker has the freedom to choose a time slot (24/7) via the online booking tool.
- The speaker does not have to travel; recording can be done from any location where an internet connection is available.
- ACS has a leaflet with tips and pointers for the speaker to help them to prepare their presentation in advance.
- In the virtual environment, the speaker has various tools available to give the best possible presentation. These include a green laser pointer and a timer clock so that they can keep an eye on the recording time.
- The virtual environment has a start/stop button that the speaker can use to begin or end their recording. Any additional editing of the presentation is provided by ACS.
- A technician follows the presentation and is on standby to solve any problems immediately.
- In the unlikely event that the speaker makes a mistake, it is possible either to amend the recording afterwards or to restart.

Benefits for the organiser

- It is compatible with the most commonly used web browsers, such as Chrome, Firefox and Safari.
- The image of the speaker is placed next to the presentation and not over it in the page layout, to ensure that the presentation remains fully visible to the viewer.
- The presentation environment can be designed with a layout and branding of your preference. This has the additional advantage of creating uniformity across the presentations.
- The recorded material can be edited.
- Addition of video elements such as an intro and outro are possible.
- The presentations can be uploaded direct to the platform being utilised.
- The recorded presentations may be stored in an ACS library and remain available there for the period agreed with the customer.
- The pre-recorded presentations will be used during the conference, so that no live connections are used.

ACS audiovisual solutions supplies high-end audiovisual and IT solutions for conferences, congresses and business events throughout all of Europe. They have extensive experience with building temporary rooms to transform every location into the ideal conference location, complete with AV equipment, power supply systems and décor. Thanks to IT label Eventresult they can also offer powerful IT services such as presentation management and webcasting.

Thanks to the IT label Eventresult they can also offer powerful IT services like presentation management, streaming services and virtual and hybrid congress solutions.

www.acsaudiovisual.com

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_uFrbCIU7s
If you are holding an event there are considerations beyond booking a venue and speakers and deciding who to invite. You also need to imagine everything that could go wrong.

It is always wise to plan ahead. The best event planners will tell you that they live, breathe and dream about the event for months before it takes place. They are well versed in running through possible scenarios: the main speaker falling ill, the public transport on the day not running, the venue burning down, rioting in the streets, or storm-force winds and rain battering and deluging the delegates.

Consider your contingency plan. It is advisable to carry out early research with travel agents, local transport companies or a trusted local destination management company who could identify alternative means of transporting keynote speakers, delegates and exhibition staff to the venue in the event of a transport strike. Alternative travel arrangements could extend to chartering aircraft and buses or using alternative rail facilities to transport essential people to the event.

Five top tips from Hiscox Event Insurance:

1. Early risk planning is essential. Whether your event is large or small, ask yourself ‘What could go wrong?’ This will help identify risks that can be controlled, whilst others can be covered by the insurer.

2. Event disruption cover. The best time to purchase this is after the venue booking. Insuring early on in the process protects you for longer and ensures the widest cover available at that time.

3. Factor in transport issues. If guests are flying in from overseas, industrial action could seriously impact attendance levels. If you enquire early, you may be able to purchase cover for this.

4. Check the venue contract. It might impose insurance-related requirements, such as a limit of indemnity for public liability, so it is always best to be prepared.

5. Plan for disaster recovery. This is very important for events in locations prone to natural disasters or civil unrest. Consider incorporating different scenarios and action plans to help with your event preparation.

Event planning involves a lot of risk management but it is important to know that if all else fails there is an insurance policy behind you. Hiscox Event Insurance can provide peace of mind before and during your event, leaving you to concentrate on delivering great content and memorable experiences.

Hiscox is a Service Provider partner of IAPCO

If you’re planning an event, whether it’s a global trade conference or village fete, Hiscox can help protect you from the unexpected.

Hiscox provide specialist insurance for all types of events and the risks that come with them. Whether that’s a venue closure, volcanic ash cloud or an injured guest, they can offer the cover to put your mind at rest, so you can focus on planning your event.
NOT EVERYTHING RUNS LIKE CLOCKWORK

www.hiscox.co.uk/events
Why haven’t artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) become the top technologies used to optimise associations’ communication efforts in the recent past? It seemed that many saw these technologies as the future. Now, with everything in our lives pivoting to the virtual, surely we might have expected this prediction to materialise. What happened, and is this still a viable forecast for associations out there?

In their article ‘The Digitalisation of Interconnectedness’ (published November 2019), authors Jelmer van Ast (CEO & Founder, Conference Compass) and Ori Lahav (VP Clients & Events, Kenes Group and IAPCO President) analysed the ways in which associations communicate with their members and what trends lie ahead. The underlying concept of the article was that the future will be highly personalised and supported by AI and AR. I was prompted to examine the authors’ steps in reasoning through the prism of current times, to see whether the same conclusions might be reached and, if not, what stands in the way.

Unforeseen circumstances
No one could have foreseen that one event – a global pandemic – would create a major shift and push us to pivot to the virtual realm in only a couple of months.

With this major shift to digital, the FOMO effect – the fear of missing out – all of a sudden changed its meaning from being there in-person and experiencing the event to attending online and consuming the information first. With an explosion of online content, even with the option to view much of it on demand, a person continues to have only 24 hours in their day, and this is still our biggest challenge.

The original article argued that ‘our new challenge is to ensure that access to information will be immediate and easily accessible from any device. And content should be customised to our users’ needs.’ This has now shifted; ‘our new challenge is to ensure we reach as many people as possible, as swiftly as possible, and offer an engaging experience worth their time’.

What does association communication look like today?
In their 2019 article, Jelmer van Ast and Ori Lahav were keen to solve the question of ‘how an association can possibly cut through [the] noise’ across all platforms, competing with other associations and events. This question is now more pertinent than ever. The noise online has become deafening, as this is the only medium where people can communicate in current times, while social distancing is the norm and public gatherings are very limited. How is it possible for one association to reach its usual audience? Is it feasible to think too of expanding its reach?
The good news is that the prospect of increasing the reach of any society is quite realistic. Everyone is online. All users are better educated and more tech-savvy. They are also looking for new legitimate sources of information. This is an inviting opportunity for many organisations. Their members are turning to them for guidance and to reunite with the communities which they trust, connecting with peers who find themselves swimming against the same current.

With all the loud voices out there, it all comes down to having a crystal-clear marketing strategy, where the message is unique and the channels are very well selected. For those already engaged with the association, personalisation will be important, but only when combined with the right content, delivered through the right medium.

What will association communication look like in the future? If I dare to predict the future (which is certainly not a job that many are attempting today), artificial intelligence will have a future when it comes to marketing and communications. As for augmented reality – let’s wait and see. Most probably the reason why they have not picked up speed in current times, with the whole world turning to virtual technologies, is due to their immaturity on the market and the associated costs of production. Or it may simply be that we have misunderstood their real value.

Technology can certainly help us to communicate more efficiently and to help each individual to access the required education in their preferred shape, time and form. We will continue to turn to tech for the right solutions when it comes to on-demand learning.

I see these current times as a unique moment for associations to strengthen their communities and even to enlarge them, as we live in a borderless online world. However, they need to be strategic and diligent with the content and its timing, as well as ensuring all is done through the right channels.

That is how the future is created.
Why are there so few articles about how associations measure their success even if, according to the American Society of Association Executives™ (ASAE), 89% of association leaders consider performance metrics important to an association’s success? Because measuring for associations is a difficult task. So, what exactly is success for an association and how can they define and implement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?

Although associations never resemble companies that can measure their success in a purely economic way, there are several pragmatic approaches that can be taken to measure defined activities associated with achieving an association’s strategic goals.

It is problematic, but nevertheless quite common, for associations to define their mission and goals only vaguely. Therefore measuring their success in accomplishing their mission can be difficult, and the results of such analyses and surveys can be interpreted incorrectly or, at the very least, ambiguously.

Most associations track their performance based on metrics such as revenue and cost, membership growth and satisfaction, and the number of visitors to their events.

Out of the dozens of potential KPIs for non-profit organisations, a proven selection can be divided into different groups:

1. **Membership:**
   - membership market share (number of members compared to potential or desired number of members in percentage)
   - membership retention (rate), demographics and length of membership
   - membership growth
   - membership satisfaction
   - membership engagement

2. **Education programme:**
   - participation in education programmes/seminars/webinars (i.e. percentage of members, non-members)
   - conference/annual meeting attendance (percentage of members, non-members, how many new members attending due to annual meeting rebate or content)
   - participants’ satisfaction (content, networking)

3. **Finance:**
   - ratio of revenue from membership fees to other income (as conference surplus, sponsorships, partnerships)
   - reserves and liquidity

4. **Marketing and communications activities:**
   - content, communications and marketing effectiveness (i.e. cost per lead, conversion rate, reach to the right audience, email sign-ups)
   - number of mentions in the news media

5. **Staff:**
   - staff effectiveness (management by objectives, team performance, advocacy)
Which, however, are the most important metrics?

As most associations base their revenue on membership fees and surplus of their educational programme, it makes sense to highlight the metrics ‘member engagement and satisfaction’.

Why are there association members who will do anything to be elected to the board whilst others leave the association? Why are some people passionate about membership in associations whilst others do not even bother to open emails? It is all about the commitment of the members: the member engagement.

Highly committed members attach great importance to the association. The seminars, webinars and workshops help them in their continuous education, congresses help them to network and they understand how to benefit from networking.

Low engagement members are the opposite. When it is time to renew their membership, they need to be reminded several times to pay their annual fee. The association newsletter goes directly to the spam folder. They are only interested in educational credits if they are absolutely essential to their personal advancement.

Therefore, the commitment of the members is of the utmost importance. But how do you measure it?

It is clear that engagement levels are strongly related to the expectations of the members. These expectations vary depending on the work of the association, the services provided and the size of the membership base, but also upon the profession of the members and whether members are individuals or companies, universities or hospitals etc. Obviously, loyalty, or retention, is an essential measure of member engagement. If the number of members decreases, the reason must be analysed.

In the ASI (Advanced Solutions International) 2019 Global Benchmark Report, based on responses from nearly 350 association and membership executives across North America, Europe/Middle East/India/Africa (EMEIA) and Asia Pacific, there are interesting results:

In 2015, 54% of all respondents had a greater than 75% retention rate and this jumped significantly to 70% of all respondents in 2019. One third (32%) of respondents reported an excellent (90+% retention rate. On the other hand, the number of association executives who do not know their retention rate has remained constant at 21%. Increasing member engagement is the most important operational goal whilst an inability to measure the engagement is the number one operational challenge.

However, the retention rate does not give the complete picture. To find out more details about a deterioration in the retention rate, demographic data could show that members leave the association due to retirement rather than low engagement. Perhaps the association has a problem attracting younger members?

Membership length is also an interesting KPI: do some new members leave within a year, before their first renewal? This would be a sure sign of a low level of commitment and engagement by these members – they tried the association and found no added value. Or have some members moved on in their careers or moved to another industry? The best way to get a clear picture is to create an exit survey.

KPIs are the tools by which you are able to measure the success of your association.
ONLINE V. OFFLINE

Why Associations will always get the balance right

IAPCO Member: Worldspan, UK
Blogger: Jenny Jenkins, Director

There are many who now pretend to be expert in hybrid and virtual conferencing. No doubt some are more expert than others. And we will all become completely expert with time. It is our new normal and we are embracing it.

But let’s be honest. Associations have been sharing information online since, well, online became a thing! All professional associations exist, at their most basic level, to share what is new, different and emergent. The mechanisms for this sharing are, and will continue to be, changeable (in a good way). The need to innovate collectively and for the common good remains the key driver – associations are altruistic.

Yet whilst an association and its members meet to benefit the collective, they also meet to benefit the individual. For years, individuals have attended association meetings to benefit themselves and to progress their own professional goals – members are self-serving.

Whilst the sharing of content can be done well online, the pursuit of the next step up the career ladder will almost always be done offline. This is because the ability to develop your career is driven by human reach and human connection. Once that human connection is made, other conversations and opportunities follow. We all know by now that you cannot spot like-minded people in a Zoom Room and that similarity, likeability, mutuality and trust cannot be demonstrated or cultivated online.

For associations, we all know that what happens offline will always happen offline. Associations are communities. Communities cannot be created, convened, connected or consolidated online. And association professionals – particularly those in charge of the conference and events calendar – know this. As Paddy Cosgrave, the charismatic CEO of Web Summit and the person largely credited with re-modelling the traditional ‘from the lectern’ conference format, recently said: ‘Speakers are the alibi for attending conferences, networking is the actual reason’.

“Speakers are the alibi for attending conferences, networking is the actual reason”

In this period of transition to online conferencing, much of what makes an association conference a ‘must-attend’ remains the inherent value for the individual’s professional (read: career) development.

The challenge for associations will always be to bring online and offline together to varying degrees. In our new normal, one will not eclipse the other. They will remain comfortably co-dependent in the association communications mix.
THE ROLE OF DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

IAPCO Member: Congrex Switzerland

Across all sectors, the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted organisational shortcomings and entered leaders into a race to adapt to a changing situation. Amidst the health crisis, calls for inclusiveness and recognition of the value of diversity are also changing the global landscape.

Although leaders may think that there are more pressing matters to solve right now, tackling the lack of diversity is not optional. It is in fact a foundation from which associations can emerge stronger in times of crisis.

Leaders who value diversity and inclusiveness challenge the belief that bringing in diverse perspectives weakens their position, as they know that there is strength in diversity. What is more, opening up the processes of problem solving and decision making can bring innovative solutions to complex problems.

True diversity is not limited to recruiting practices – it is also evident in everyday operations. To make this happen, leaders must develop an awareness of any barriers to full participation that may exist. Remember that it is not always obvious who is being left out, and that those who are at a disadvantage may be less inclined to speak up. This should be addressed by inclusive bottom-up leadership policy and practices. Here are three suggestions on how to transform leadership and shape your association with proper consideration of diversity.

1. Employee resource groups
Employee resource groups are volunteer groups that come together around shared identities. They are action-based and have a direct line of communication with the leadership team. These groups can further the association’s goals towards diversity and generate a shared vision, a sense of direction, ownership and belonging, which ultimately are the foundations of optimal engagement, especially in times of crisis.

2. Equal access to technology
As remote work becomes the norm, leaders should ensure every employee has equal access to technology and can reap its benefits equally. Facilitating equal access to technology also means offering practical support so that staff know how to work productively and are supported to prevent them from suffering burnout or a sense of inadequacy. This will set the basis for a collaborative culture where nobody is left out.

Ensure everyone is on board with how to use technology for communication when working from home, and design a virtual open-door policy at all management levels.

3. Protect your employees’ mental health
The COVID-19 crisis and the changes that come with it can have a ripple effect on mental health. Those who are vulnerable or who do not feel like a part of the team are more at risk, so now is the time for leaders to prioritise wellness and resilience.

Leaders should be receptive to pressing issues that could harm the mental well-being of their staff in these difficult times, such as financial pressures and family commitments. These barriers must be removed if you want your association to run smoothly in times of crisis.

Diversity and inclusiveness are fundamental values in 21st-century associations. A commitment to these values in association leadership can improve operational efficiency and ensure that your association’s objectives are met in times of crisis. Diversity can also bridge the gap between board members, the association’s management team and employees.
When we think about ‘leadership’ and what this term means, I am sure that many of us automatically conjure up in our mind images of great leaders of the past who courageously inspired the masses and showed them the way forward in times of crisis and turmoil. We tend to remember famous presidents and prime ministers, bold men and women who knew how to move forward, conveying direction and vision to those around them, both showing and leading the way.

Psychologists have, over the years, theorised a great deal over the traits and qualities of leaders. Some were convinced that you do not become a great leader but that you are born a great leader, whereas more recent theories propose that experience and situational variables also play a fundamental role.

We look to leaders in times of crisis and uncertainty, such as during the last few months in which the world at large has been overrun by the invisible enemy COVID-19. Nations, conglomerates, multinationals, companies, families: each and every one of us in our own way has been looking for answers, direction and guidance from leaders.

The WHO’s Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom announced on 11 March 2020 that COVID-19 could be characterised as a pandemic. Italy was already in lockdown as of 9 March, a move announced by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in his address to the nation:

“Our habits and ways of life will change; we all will be renouncing something for the ‘good of Italy’. We are adopting strong lockdown measures to safeguard our health and the health of others, as we see the numbers of cases increase. I will be signing a decree that can be summed up as follows: #io resto a casa (#I stay at home).”

Funnelling down from national leadership to company leadership, OIC Group, like many PCOs across the globe, has had its doors pretty much closed since early March. Looking back and pinpointing how OIC Group’s leadership navigated these difficult months, we can see how a special task force was set up to collect data and information externally, and how the CEO and the HR office regularly disseminated key information internally to all members of staff. The company’s internal communication played a pivotal role in conveying important information and facts regarding how the pandemic was unfolding at a national and regional level, and the impact that this data would have on the company and employees, especially in regards to contractual agreements.

The entire workforce diverted to smart-working from home and began moving the business forward on digital platforms, taking elements from face-to-face events, so dearly missed, and transforming them in the best possible way to fit into the new digital dimension.

This is a whole new world, a world that we knew existed but into which we were catapulted overnight. In the shortest time-span possible, OIC Group switched to digital, the staff converted to smart-working, and each and every individual followed up with their clients. The result was that as a company we connected more than ever.

The power of employees coming together was, and is, a real driving force. Group work and team spirit have naturally made their way into Zoom calls, GoToMeeting and Teams, where innovative ideas and creativity have flourished even in this new digital reality.

Over the months this scenario has been fostered and nurtured by an involved leadership style; a leadership that clearly communicated to its employees, providing the guidance and answers they needed.

It made a real difference.
Taking into account their different histories and education systems, we recognise that the cultures of social inclusion between Asian and Western countries are not quite the same. Studies have shown how Asian cultures have excluded and discriminated against those of different origins or social levels. Asian governments are now applying new infrastructure and innovation to improve social inclusion and acceptance. Some examples include applying Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Robot Technology to our everyday lives, in order to enable those from different groups to participate in all kinds of social events and increasing job opportunities.

One of the main differences between Asian and Western cultures is how we solve social issues. Generally, in Asia, it is relatively simple to educate the younger generation into changing their mindsets. This group of people is usually more open to being educated and more accepting of change. For the older generation, it can be a longer process, with a low likelihood of altering their decision-making processes, especially on topics which involve diversity and social inclusion.

From a Taiwanese point of view, it is safe to say the country is comparatively open to accepting diversity. It was the first Asian country to legalise same-sex marriage, which was a huge step given the country’s culture and history. The transgender community has the freedom to choose whether or not to show their gender on personal identity documents. Public spaces include nursing rooms and wheelchair ramps and sign language translation is provided for public messages.

Diversity and inclusion play significant roles in business events, which consistently take the meeting experience of each delegate into the highest consideration. Simple arrangements include satisfying all dietary needs for different religions and cultures. Programmes are enhanced by inviting speakers from diverse backgrounds to share their unique points of view, with the business event acting as an open platform for other speakers and all delegates to exchange ideas and perspectives.

We are proud to say that gender equality is already part of Taiwanese culture. However, it is very interesting when we look at how social exclusion is performed. Sometimes we differentiate ourselves from new immigrants and indigenous peoples, likely based on a lack of knowledge. When we do not have a full understanding of another group of people, bias often results. Respecting human rights, as well as starting to learn about each other, is vital as it may change our perspective on the value of diversity. We must also emphasise again how the government should take the first steps to change our daily lives to enhance diversity and inclusion.
Strong Promotion and Funding Support Heralds Recovery of Hong Kong’s MICE Industry

The global events industry is facing tough times due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has developed a multi-pronged recovery plan for the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry to energise the trade with comprehensive support under the new normal of post-pandemic travel, and stands ready to roll out recovery programmes as soon as the time is right.

Business Recovery

More than 80 hotels have joined the ‘MeetON@HongKong’ campaign to offer complimentary meeting and dining packages to attract MICE visitors. A new MICE Ambassador Programme is designed to rally the leaders of professional and trade associations, and local business communities to drive business events to the city. In parallel, the board is also proactively working to retain events, acquire quick wins and to bid for long-term major MICE events.

Trade Support & Free Rental Subsidy Shows Government’s Strong Commitment

Apart from HKTB’s trade relief measures, the HKSAR Government has allocated HK$1.02 billion from the Anti-epidemic Fund to offer a rental subsidy for the exhibition and convention industry to support a quick rebound. Organisers of exhibitions, and international conventions and conferences that attract at least 400 participants, with more than half of the participants from overseas, can have the cost of renting the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre or AsiaWorld-Expo fully subsidised. Companies taking part in Hong Kong Trade Development Council’s exhibitions can also have 50 per cent of their participation fees subsidised.

Image Rebuilding

By publicising testimonials and success stories, strengthening Hong Kong’s profile at industry events, bidding and winning the hosting rights of major MICE events and attracting more events with A-list speakers to Hong Kong, HKTB is also stepping up efforts to rebuild Hong Kong’s image as a business and travel destination. New communications materials will also be produced to showcase Hong Kong’s core strengths and unique travel experiences, emphasising Hong Kong’s status as ‘the World’s Meeting Place’, and refresh visitors’ impressions of the city.

With such a well-thought-out recovery plan and timely funding support, Hong Kong stands ready for the resumption of business events in the post-pandemic era.

www.mehongkong.com
Dubai has hosted its first major business event since the COVID-19 pandemic – the Ai Everything x Restart Dubai Summer Conference – demonstrating how planners can put on impactful events whilst meeting the highest health and safety standards.

Taking place at Dubai World Trade Centre on 16 July, the event attracted approximately 600 delegates and showcased the profound effect of artificial intelligence on the UAE’s pandemic recovery. It also exemplified how participating entities, technologies and prototypes can revolutionise the country’s private sector and its growth prospects in the coming years.

The host venue implemented comprehensive regulatory protective measures to safeguard delegates, speakers, exhibitors and all staff including:

- Mandatory masks for all participants
- Temperature checks upon entry into the venue
- Contactless registration and delegate pass collection
- Pre-sanitised delegate packs
- Pre-sanitised F&B packs
- Regular sanitisation and cleaning around the venue including chairs, microphones etc.
- Social distancing around the venue including plenary and on-stage seating

Watch a video of the event and its safety measures here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9B-o__6ZLc

Similarly, robust measures are also in place across the business events and tourism ecosystem – from Dubai’s airlines and airports to hotels, malls and restaurants – giving confidence to planners as they look to resume meetings over the coming months.

Underlining this, Dubai has received the Safe Travels stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council and has also implemented its own Dubai Assured Stamp to demonstrate that establishments are following public health protocols.

www.dubaibusinessevents.com
This is the start of a new chapter in our role within our community. As Toronto has evolved and grown over recent years, so have we as an organisation, and it’s time to reflect that in our name. Whilst our community and the visitor economy are facing great challenges, we know the future is bright for the city that we love to share with the world.

We’re pleased to introduce you to our new name ‘Destination Toronto’ which was announced during our virtual Annual General Meeting on 11 June.

This shift towards a new name is about amplifying the many voices within our organisation and industry and drawing them together into one compelling narrative. The project began months ago – well before the global pandemic – and now seems more relevant than ever.

Toronto’s visitor economy finished 2019 with tremendous momentum. We believe that that momentum, especially now, is best maximised when multiple voices come together to share one message. We’re thrilled that that message is now encompassed under this new name.

One Vision. One Destination.
Endless Stories. Destination Toronto.

www.DestinationToronto.com
MCEC UNVEILS VENUESAFE PLAN

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) launched its VenueSafe Plan on 23 July, ensuring the venue is ready to go when it is safe to reopen.

“We’ve been working hard to ensure we have the right health measures in place to give our customers, visitors and people the confidence they need when our doors reopen”, said Peter King, Chief Executive, MCEC. “It’s safe to say that things may look a little different, however, we’re confident that with new measures in place as part of our VenueSafe Plan, customers can continue to enjoy Melbourne’s leading destination for big ideas and inspirational events, when it is safe to return to our venue.”

The MCEC VenueSafe Plan includes a range of public health, hygiene and physical distancing practices including:

**Changes to venue access:**
- When it is safe to reopen, MCEC will only be open to events and visitors in attendance – it will not be possible to use MCEC as a public thoroughfare to the surrounding precinct.

**Introducing health check stations, increased cleaning and sanitisation:**
- Entry screening points will be located at all MCEC entry and exit points; this includes hand sanitising and temperature checks prior to entry.
- Sanitisation stations containing at least 60 per cent alcohol sanitiser have been distributed across MCEC at key entry points, customer service desks and other high traffic areas.
- Frequency of routine cleaning has increased across the venue and the sanitisation of high frequency touch point areas is a priority.

**Additional resources and support:**
- MCEC’s safety and security team have been established as dedicated VenueSafe Advisors within the business. They will work alongside employees, customers and contractors to ensure that MCEC and Victorian Government health measures are followed.
- A detailed MCEC VenueSafe Plan has been developed and is available to download.
- All employees will be trained on coronavirus (COVID-19) safety and sanitisation protocols.

With the Victorian Government’s current coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, MCEC made the difficult decision in July to extend the venue closure until midnight 31 August 2020.

For more detail on MCEC’s VenueSafe Plan, visit mcec.com.au/venuesafe
CORONA CAPACITY CALCULATION

New search tool helps planners create safe & socially-distanced events

Hamburg paves the way for event planners

The Hamburg Convention Bureau has launched a free tool that calculates the room size required for any number of participants in order to comply with the new COVID-19 regulations. It helps PCOs, event planners and service providers to discover the most suitable venues in Hamburg to ensure a safe and socially distanced event.

The bureau has worked with MICECLOUD Solutions to add a new 'coronavirus criteria' function to their venue search website, Micebooking.com. When searching for an event space, visitors to the site can click to apply the corona capacity calculation; this filters the venue options in line with current social distancing regulations, providing planners with a definitive list of spaces that will comfortably – and safely – host their chosen number of participants. This new tool on Micebooking.com gives planners the peace of mind that their chosen venue is the best fit – and safest option – for their meeting or event.

Meeting & event restrictions have just been eased in Hamburg. It’s a clear sign to the rest of the business world that carefully planned and managed business events can be successfully and safely carried out. The CVB works closely with their partners – venues, hotels and agencies across the city – to ensure that these regulations are correctly implemented and communicated to event planners.

READ MORE: hamburg-convention.com/en/corona
THE FUTURE IS HYBRID

IAPCO Member: MCI Group
Author: Barbara Calderwood,
Divisional Director Associations, MCI UK

Fully virtual congresses may be the engagement technique that associations must embrace right now for their business resilience, but hybrid will surely be the blended congress solution of choice for their robust recovery and growth beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19.
Never has there been a more important moment in time for PCOs to demonstrate to associations the full force of their value proposition. We are key in supporting associations with the redesign of their congresses to fit the digital space and in driving engagement with their customers for effective business resilience and growth. We do everything from redesigning the blend of virtual and physical components that form the hybrid congress to selecting a digital platform; from space management around physical distancing measures to devising a financial strategy that embraces on and offline participation… Then there’s programme redesign, anytime on-demand content access, sponsorship acquisition strategy and digital marketing, alongside our 360-degree core project management experience. These are just a few of the skillsets we bring to the table that demonstrate the true worth of a PCO.

Digital transformation, both virtual and hybrid, is empowering associations to revolutionise their ability to engage their audiences through their congress. PCOs provide the turn-key capacity to build all the solutions needed for a hybrid congress, selecting on behalf of associations the best digital engagement tools, destinations, venues and production to achieve optimum results for their association customers.

PCOs have a long and established understanding of the importance of a congress in achieving the core objectives of an association: how the congress needs to align with the association’s overall strategy and fulfil its goals. As global restrictions start to lift and physical distancing measures become a significant consideration at congress venues, PCOs are working with associations to build hybrid solutions for their congresses. With this in mind, PCOs are selecting the venues that best align with the PCO’s hybrid redesign, configured to meet the overarching objectives of their association customers.

Marie-Claire Caldwell, Head of Sales & Marketing at ICC Belfast, explains: “The venue team act as an extension of the PCO. The ICC Belfast takes a partnership approach when working with the PCO to successfully deliver hybrid events. The specialist, in-house, team will advise, based on experience with past clients, on what works particularly well and how to take any event to the next level. Their intricate knowledge of the space, hardware and software available at ICC Belfast also means that from conception to close, the event experience is operationally seamless.”

For hybrid events, having onsite technology enhancements such as high bandwidth for live streaming, customisable studios and broadcasting capabilities as part of the venue infrastructure, all support the PCO in delivering the best hybrid solution for the association.

The venue teams’ knowledge of production capabilities and the logistics in situ are important in their collaboration with PCOs in the delivery of the in-person hybrid elements.

Never has there been a more important moment in time for PCOs to demonstrate to associations the full force of their value proposition.

Jill Spink, Marketing & PR Manager at Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) comments, ‘Within our venue we can facilitate the team and the technology infrastructure to deliver an effective and enjoyable event, with the required health, safety, and social distancing procedures for those involved on site’.  

The benefit of hybrid is the pairing of localised live experiences with digital engagement that allows the experience to transcend borders and lets on-demand interactions and online association communities thrive.

PCOs are at the forefront of digital solutions for their association customers. Their understanding of core association objectives coupled with the depth and breadth of their congress management experience is key to ensuring the effective hybrid transformation of congresses. They work hand-in-hand with venues to ensure the best experience for their association customers.
There is no questioning the intense and immediate impact that the current pandemic has had on the events industry worldwide. Our time has been hijacked by cancellations and postponements and, whilst recessions have come before, the consequences of lockdown, social distancing and border closures have created a brand-new set of obstacles for event organisers to manage.

Working on reduced time and under heightened pressure is the new norm. Conference venues and hotels have paused their operations. Exhibitor and sponsor money is tighter than ever. Hospitality and entertainment suppliers have restructured their offering or simply closed for good.

To put it lightly, it is an overwhelming experience.

Recovery and survival for the events world has become dependent upon reinvention. Many PCOs have already adopted hybrid ways of thinking into their practice, but the pandemic has accelerated the importance of technology for the future of the industry. Webinar presentations, video streaming and online group chat rooms prove that moving digitally is not just a trend, but rather a much-needed improvement upon event design and production.

Whilst just about anyone with a stable internet connection can Zoom or hang out on Microsoft Teams, translating this exercise for hundreds and even thousands of delegates is not simple. Now, more than ever, PCOs are required to successfully stage a virtual event.

It is obvious that meeting online is not the same as doing so face to face, but many of the logistics involved behind the scenes are comparable. Considerations about content, pricing, timing and promotion all need to be carefully managed in a congested virtual marketplace.

Maintaining the balance between engaging and informing delegates whilst also keeping their attention is critical and not easily achievable. Mimicking a traditional conference format is not viable in the fast-paced internet world, so it becomes key to include a diverse range of session types and lengths from TED-style talks to Q&A panels. Incorporating features including online exhibition halls, timed networking sessions and high-profile international speakers is best achieved through expert guidance and specialised event software.

These same principles apply to the costs of online meetings, as sound financial management is foundational to the success of an event. Whilst some fees are eliminated by transitioning to the virtual realm, including catering and accommodation, the overall budget can still equate to the turnover of a small business. Proceeding without the connections and resources of a PCO is risky, particularly as the pandemic has already hit many organisations hard.

What becomes clear is that the value of, and need for, PCOs is vital. Whilst some of the tools required for a hybrid or virtual event can be staged by clients, the input of a PCO is key in making it informative, innovative and financially viable.

It is essential to remain supportive and collaborative as the events industry recovers and transforms during the pandemic. Regardless of the delivery method, sustaining a positive relationship with a PCO will guarantee the best position possible for event success.
Virtual Educa Connect, a three-day virtual event led by the Kenes Spain team and supported by the IT talents in Tel Aviv, gathered over 84K participants, from 55 countries, who enjoyed more than 200 hours of content. The Madrid team was glad to be back in their new office, as they moved in right before the lockdown.

Into the Digital World: The 3-day event ‘TIP Virtual 2020’ marked the entrance of GISE (Italian Society of Interventional Cardiology) into the world of fully digital events. The event involved more than 60 national and international faculty members, presenting 16 cath lab videos of highly technical clinical cases and building a well-functioning virtual exhibition with great interactivity from home. At its peak, 1900 people accessed the event!
Over the last few months the events industry has been turned upside down. Event design as we knew it until this year is, at least for the moment, invalid. Bringing people together and the exchange of knowledge remain our main goals – but how to do this has changed 100%. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in mid-February the entire industry was forced to go digital. The only options in the beginning seemed to be cancellation or postponement. Then the virtual meeting came along.

Whilst a full-blown virtual meeting was never an alternative to a live event due to lacking the element of social interaction, it was suddenly the only cure for an industry that had come to a sudden halt.

Event design to me has a lot to do with empathy and interpersonal relations, something that is very tough to replicate in a virtual environment. Whilst many are discovering videoconferencing for the first time and exploring the possibilities that are available from the various providers, this is certainly not the only way to transfer a conference into a virtual meeting.

Let us take a brief look at a couple of options that an organiser has:

Virtual-only interactions start and stop with logging in and logging out, so the focus of the event design should be mainly upon the customer journey across the virtual platform – a mostly technical element.

Never forget to communicate with your audience. Email, push notifications, a simple ticker. As always, communication is key – keep everyone informed on what is happening on the platform, when the session will start, or when it is late or postponed. It will be greatly appreciated.

Try adding simple ‘human’ interactions such as, for example, online exercises during breaks. This will bring relief to the audience, who will need a break after sitting for a long time watching a live stream. Employ a networking software, either text-based or with one-to-one videoconferencing.

Integrating other meeting formats into a virtual meeting can be quite challenging, depending not only upon the technical implementation but upon the moderation by the
accompanying chair. Even more than during face-to-face meetings, the moderator of a meeting has to engage with the online participants. Only if explained well and encouraged by a chair, can interaction take place – through polling, Q&A and, if available, live exchange via video calls. Interactivity must be an integral part of any virtual meeting.

Another big challenge is the question of how to get the participants to interact with sponsors, partners and industry representatives, as they mainly visit the virtual event because of its (scientific) content. At a face-to-face event there are ‘coffee and pretzels’; online there are no obvious enticements to persuade a guest to visit the exhibition. This can be remedied by skilful presentation and by linking the exhibition to the rest of the platform. Gamification may be another possibility – but keep your participant in mind! The more options that are available to move around the platform, the more likely it is that the participant will be overloaded with gimmicks and will end up not knowing how to use the platform to its full extent. At worst he will leave with a bad experience. The first results from virtual exhibitions show that the contacts between exhibitors and participants are much more intensive virtually because there is a deliberate, direct approach – rather than at a live exhibition stand, where random contacts are more frequent.

Whilst we are in the midst of a virtual congress peak, and probably all experiencing a steep learning curve, we must start thinking about what is next. Hybrid conferences will open up possibilities once more for event design as it used to be.

Hybrid events will help to transport more of the onsite feeling into the virtual part. The new framework conditions must be part of every concept – virtual and hybrid events will accompany us into the future. Considerations will range from creating the right customer journey on a virtual platform, to planning onsite hygiene, to conceiving of a reduced exhibitor stand that extends into a virtual space.

Exciting times are ahead. Be prepared.
The transition to digital and hybrid events has been caused and accelerated by the recent social distancing recommendations and travel restrictions.

Most stakeholders have decided to embrace new experiences and have embarked on the path to virtual e-meetings. The positive feedback from all those involved in these first virtual projects has been able to win over even the most ardent sceptics.

Online platforms are today amongst the most popular meeting venues. Companies feel they must be there to be close to their community, their team and their market. Even now, the virtual and hybrid approach is becoming part of the industry’s strategic planning process both in terms of resource allocation and communication considerations.

Virtual meetings add a new string to the bow of the events industry, as a sustainable, efficient and measurable tool that can meet event goals.

Admittedly, the context and the channels have changed and it is therefore necessary to adopt a new approach. Sponsorship professionals are encountering challenges in securing the same investment levels to which they were accustomed. Traditionally, a logo or banner placement on the event programme and other communication materials, sponsorship packages, and a corporate booth in the exhibition area usually satisfied a sponsor’s needs.

Today we must think outside the box and design new opportunities to engage with decision-makers and delegates in a virtual environment. It is important to offer a customised proposal based on the needs of each sponsor, and to provide opportunities to communicate with a large audience that last beyond the period of the conference.

Digital technologies present a wider range of channels and tools for consideration. However, it is human interaction that remains the essential driver of the sponsor. We need to develop new ways to maximise the sponsor-delegate relationship even in a virtual event and to ensure sponsor benefits and lead generation.
Here are the six immediate benefits of being a virtual sponsor:

1. **Cost-saving and budget control:** Virtual meetings allow accurate budget control, with minimum risk of last-minute contingencies. Booth setup, staff accommodation and travel expenses are no longer an issue.

2. **Flexibility and customisation:** The online event will elevate your brand visibility and engage your audience through professionally designed templates or a 100% configurable virtual experience that reflects your brand and image.

3. **Focus and clarity:** A consistent agenda, clearly presenting content and deliverables is a must, whilst visual elements – slide animations, images, font and vector patterns – can reinforce the content of each speaker’s presentation.

4. **Huge opportunity to expand reach and lifespan:** The event becomes accessible from any screen across the world and can be accessible on-demand with no time limits. There is massive scope to reach new audiences, from senior executives (normally time-sensitive and unable to attend multiple-day events), to junior and early-career professionals (cost-sensitive and less keen to travel).

5. **Emotions and creativity:** The digital strategy can be enriched by including on-demand content, gamification, polls, digital campaigns and emotional videos.

6. **Feedback and results measurement:** Interaction and real-time feedback are easy for virtual events and represent an immediate key to measuring the overall success of your meeting, along with the automatic tracking of participants’ journeys that tell you how many attendees followed your symposium, for how long, which content they consulted the most, and which document they downloaded, etc.

A question to ponder: Is it all about sponsorship strategic planning or is it not? Once again, the new frontier of sponsorship requires skill, expertise and market intelligence.
Since March 2020, the world of events has faced, and continues to face, dramatic changes. Sebastian Bernt, CTO of CPO HANSER SERVICE, commented: “It is still uncertain whether we are making the next big step in the events industry or if we need to talk about disruptive changes that leave some of us behind. Disruption has already started, as big tech companies and providers of congress management software enter the market as full-service providers for virtual events, in direct competition with PCOs – some of them are already addressing smaller hybrid events.”

As a PCO and digital solutions provider, the CPO Group has been observing the current changes in the market and technology closely and, having gathered a huge wealth of information, are now in a position to draw our first conclusions.

**Phase 1. Handmade has charm and drives learning, but it is neither professional nor cheap**

A lot of software solutions for registration, abstract and programme management, video conferences and webinars, virtual exhibitions, live-stream and on-demand video are available on the market. Connecting and managing them requires a lot of work – and money.

**Phase 2. Reduce manual work, increase professionalism**

After diving deep into the details of these platforms and solutions it is crucial to agree on favourites. This second phase is mainly characterised by the full integration of all elements and the automation of processes within and between software components, e.g. setting up, starting and stopping live-stream and on-demand video events, as well as webinar sessions, automated through the programme management software or set up as single sign-on solutions.

**Phase 3. Create automated, learning businesses**

Integrated solutions provide tons of gold – the gold of our times: data. Collecting data from all involved sub-systems, connecting it, mapping it and reducing it to meaningful figures will be key for successful, automated and learning businesses. Data gives insight, not only into event participants’ needs and preferences, but also into their behaviour and interests. This allows the creation of successful cross-selling, up-selling and follow-up business models.

As a conclusion, our focus on technology as a business driver is constantly growing and a PCO needs to be willing and experienced to successfully apply and take advantage of the numerous possibilities of modern online technologies.
The current COVID-19 crisis has given rise to a whole new era of technology, however, in many cases it is merely a question of utilising and adapting online practices that PCOs have been using for many years, saving money and bringing efficiency into project and business management.

Take the case of sponsorship and exhibitions. Since 1991 GUARANT International (GI) has been providing services related to congresses, conferences, social events and other meetings, organising around 60 events a year, half of which include sponsorship activities. Every year GI Industry Liaison Officers (ILO) have to deal with around 1500 sponsors and exhibitors interested in various sponsorship opportunities and have to sign hundreds of contracts. Imagine doing it manually!

To facilitate the work of the ILOs, whilst simplifying the choice and buying experience for sponsors, GI, in co-operation with a software company, developed two online systems for sponsors and exhibitors.

These systems enable GI to benefit from the skills and business abilities of proficient managers who are able to deal and up-sell, instead of killing them with paperwork overload. Thanks to the new technology the number of ILOs has not changed even when the targets have doubled. While assisted in their work by technology, the humans remain.

The online exhibition system contains an interactive floorplan with specified exhibition spaces, allowing companies to easily choose and book their preferred booths online. The most attractive spaces are dedicated to significant sponsors and pre-blocked out. The online prospectus serves as a shopping cart for sponsors where they can simply add items or purchase entire partnership packages. Both systems automatically generate orders, send confirmations to sponsors, and notify ILOs and exhibition co-ordinators by email.

The systems are administrated by ILOs and allow a variety of features, settings, limitations, mandatory fields, and other specifications. Reports can be easily downloaded as excel sheets. The systems were developed using the company’s long-term experience, and continuously evolve based on sponsors’ feedback, company requirements and the current climates, be they economic or pandemic.
The global pandemic has forced the events industry to embrace and explore the realm of virtual meetings as never before. But it is not a temporary phenomenon: virtual is here to stay.

During the pandemic many corporate and association clients had their first experience of a fully virtual event, often planned within a very short time frame. Whilst the digital pivot was a necessity in these unprecedented circumstances, the need to become digital can sometimes pave the way for virtual events with little or no strategy or design, suffering from a lack of creativity and professionalism.

AIM Group International decided to redress the situation.

Annalisa Ponchia, Director of Innovation and Customer Experience at AIM Group International, asserts that: “The organisation of a virtual and hybrid event requires a DCO [not a typo!]: this is a Digital Congress Organiser; a team with specific knowledge and competences and the ability to offer strategic guidance on planning events with full or partial digital components.”

Before embarking on a new virtual or hybrid event, it is necessary to follow a strategic map and complete a number of actions comprised of six easy steps:

1. **Content first**: Linking the content with the right communication format and style should come first, adapting tone of voice, session formats and tools.

2. **The digital event team strategic mind-set and tech skills**: From the digital event strategist to the content and resource manager or the digital tools expert, there are several specialist skillsets and profiles that are needed for this kind of event.

3. **Digital platform and the best user experience**: How to choose the most suitable solution? Whether it is a fully virtual event, a hybrid or multi-hub digital event, you must assess your needs first and then choose the right technical equipment and tools.
4. Digital sponsorship opportunities and virtual exhibitions: It is important to consider and find new ways to generate value for sponsors and not simply to replicate the ones used for physical events.

5. The importance of communication: A focused effort on communication is needed to gain attention, reliability and trust from your target audience and to engage users throughout their journey before, during and after the event.

6. Sustainable actions and CSR initiatives for virtual events: Online events can be much more environmentally sustainable than physical events. This should be made into a feature, and opportunities should be sought to add CSR initiatives to leave a legacy for the community.

For detailed analysis of each of the above steps, download the step-by-step guide from AIM Group International. ‘The White Paper: Six Steps to plan successful Virtual and Hybrid Events’ is downloadable for free from the AIM Group website.

‘Organising a digital event can open a wide range of new opportunities because you are not limited by the usual physical barriers, thus, you can very easily expand the audience and, with the correct event duration and timetable, you can even prolong the event lifespan’, explains Annalisa. ‘There is one extra tip that I would suggest, and that is leveraging data and feedback to make sure that the event is fully measurable. If you set clear KPIs at the outset and leverage all the channels from analytics to social media and the event app then you will be in a great position to measure the event impact’.

‘Virtual is here to stay: online and hybrid meetings are expected to become an integral part of corporate and association meeting strategies, even when large in-presence events resume’, adds Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, Vice President of AIM Group International. ‘Planning a virtual or hybrid event is much more complex than you would imagine. Mastering virtual is the first step, but it is also crucial to leverage online event strategies to create memorable and engaging hybrid experiences’.
**LEAN VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

**virtual meeting on patient journey**

*IAPCO Member: AIM Group International*

AIM Group is supporting the organisation of a virtual task force involving ophthalmologists from forty Retina Hospital Centres from different cities in Italy. They will work on defining a new diagnostic and therapeutic journey to ensure the safety of ophthalmological patients in hospitals.

After the lockdown, with the gradual recovery of usual activities, it became indispensable to redesign the patient’s journey within the hospital structures to guarantee both the required therapies and safety.

---

**LIVING WITH THE NEW NORMAL**

*IAPCO Member: Congrès Inc., Japan*

The Japanese government is currently formulating policies toward easing, in stages, restrictions on holding events. The resumption of meetings and events, in compliance with guidelines acting as countermeasures against COVID-19, is acknowledged to be one of the keys to energising the economy. Medical associations in particular utilise meetings to announce new research and breakthroughs that will benefit patients and mankind, to develop new related industries, and to simulate the interactions between people that will lead to more new discoveries.

Onsite, hybrid, virtual? With associations currently having to consider a myriad of options as society adjusts to the ‘new normal’, Congrès Inc. is utilising one of its strengths, IT solutions, to support organisers to convene their meetings in new ways.

The 93rd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Orthopaedic Association, one of the largest medical societies in Japan, was originally planned for May. COVID-19 changed everything, and it was decided to transfer the 4-day physical meeting to a virtual meeting covering an extended period from 11 June to 31 August 2020. Congrès organised various fora for virtual interaction and knowledge-sharing, including real-time streaming, on-demand streaming, a virtual jointly-held 3D exhibition, and a plan for ‘e-sports’. Creative solutions were devised that made the most of the online meeting format, such as producing a version of the organiser’s welcome that utilised virtual reality (VR) and introducing a mechanism through which participants can experience a greater sense of immersion and engagement through listening via a head mounted display (HMD).

Congrès Inc., along with all other PCOs, is adapting to the ‘new normal’.
At the beginning of March everything was ready for the 34th International Hellenic Society of Intraocular Implant and Refractive Surgery (HSIOIRS) Congress, scheduled for 18-22 March at The Megaron Athens ICC. With more than 1500 confirmed participants, a number of Greek and international speakers, more than 35 confirmed sponsors and exhibitors, and a social programme designed to create a warm atmosphere for all participants, we were all looking forward to our first big event of 2020. Of course, we were closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation, but felt quite safe since, as of 4 March, only nine cases had been reported in Greece. One could say that we were too optimistic, but who could have foreseen that, only ten days later, we would all be in our homes working in our PJs?

The congress could not take place as planned and we had to make a decision: Would we postpone the meeting to 2021 or would we make it a virtual one? We had already organised many smaller hybrid events – but a totally virtual congress, and of that size?

The HSIOIRS Board not only trusted ERA enough to proceed with what we proposed, but were flexible enough to quickly adjust to the new reality. Together we took the bold step of organising the 1st Virtual-34th HSIOIRS Congress.

At the same time, in close co-operation with our outsourced associates, we started training our staff and working on all kinds of necessary development in order to have a fully functional online platform that could host such a meeting.

After many hours of online meetings, training courses, brainstorming and, of course, stress (a little bit more than usual maybe), on 7 July we were ready.

- 4 studios in Athens & in Thessaloniki
- 4 days of transmission
- 75 Greek & international speakers
- 9 satellite symposia
- 1300 participants
- 22 sponsors & exhibitors

Even though we are really looking forward to getting back to face-to-face meetings, the feedback we received from our clients, participants and pharmaceutical companies was so positive and rewarding that it only confirmed what we already believed: That every challenge is an opportunity for innovation!

---

**EVERY CHALLENGE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INNOVATION**

*IAPCO Member: ERA, Greece*

---

**OIC CREATES THE SICGe DIGITAL ROADMAP**

*IAPCO Member: OIC Group, Italy*

Working with SICGe, the Italian Society of Geriatric Cardiology, OIC Group completely restructured the annual residential congress into a format that pushes digital potential to the maximum, guaranteeing that participants are able to take part in professional training.

They created the ‘SICGe Digital Roadmap – a Meeting between Cardiology specialties and Geriatrics’ as a three-month journey with four online meetings.
The final dinner at Kreston International World Conference was a memorable and colourful affair with a wedding theme, showcasing an Indian wedding to international participants.
Digital is taking over the world. Our ways of working and the skills required in the workplace keep changing. Lifelong and agile learning have thus become essential. To keep up with constantly changing and growing expectations, from those of external partners and clients to those of employers and employees, organisations need to ensure that they meet the new requirements for learning and talent management. They need to make sure the right people have the right knowledge, skills and attitudes at the right time.

This is why ICOM Group have created a digitalised medical platform to make sure that knowledge-seekers and young doctors can have 24/7 access to online medical content and resources. With access when, where and how they want it, it’s an easy way to learn and gain knowledge.

ICOM’s medical library is filled with valuable courses, videos and sessions – ‘1500 webcasts’ features top experts in the field hoping to enable users to have a great learning experience.

AFEKA TEAM RECEIVES CERTIFICATION FOR COVID-19 PROTECTION

AFEKA team members have received certification for COVID-19 Protection and Preventive Measures for Tourist Services, by the Centre of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning of the University of Crete, the School of Medicine of the University of Crete, and the Region of Crete.

The certification was received via distance learning training with a total duration of 10 hours. The AFEKA team is always in search of educational and training opportunities, especially in these challenging times. https://www.crete.gov.gr/en/

A little peek behind-the-scenes from the Tel Aviv office. In July, from the office, we organised five virtual congresses with a total of about 100K participants, all whilst following local safety measures. It is different, but we are all happy to be doing what we do best – empowering people to gain and share knowledge.
CASE STUDY – HYBRID CONFERENCE REACHES 4000+ VIEWERS

The challenge:
The international conference in the professional education field was intended to be a 2-day physical conference with 500 delegates coming together to discuss vocational training and skills development trends in the workplace. However, due to the global pandemic, many overseas speakers and delegates were unable to join the event in Hong Kong. As a result, the client, who had been working on the conference for several months, had to quickly pivot their conference design strategy to respond to the changing circumstances.

The solution:
The decision was to convert the event into a hybrid conference, featuring both live guests and online streaming for a worldwide audience. The client worked alongside our Hong Kong team to convert the content drafted for a face-to-face conference into content suitable for an online broadcasting experience.

Every minute of content was planned to keep engagement levels high among the online audience as well as the live one. To this end, moderators and speakers were trained to adapt their presentations into sessions that would provide value to the delegate experience. From space design to the filming venue and stage management, everything had to be designed and built to meet the requirements of a hybrid conference. The communication around the conference and the event app also had to be adjusted to align with the new format, with short teaser videos and email campaigns promoting the new online component of the conference.
MCI EMPLOYEES DEDICATE 43800 HOURS TO COMMUNITY PROJECTS

IAPCO Member: MCI Group

On 13 July MCI presented their 2019 Digital Sustainability Report, closing the decade of sustainability.

The MCI focus is to use sustainability as a lens to help drive economic, social and environmental performance. With sustainability embedded into the company’s culture, operations and services, MCI is committed to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the three pillars at the core of the company: People, Planet and Profit.

The report showcases the MCI approach, numerous stories of sustainability, performance numbers and commitments:

- To an ethical business culture
- To technology as a driver of sustainability
- To sustainable working environments
- To the wellbeing of each individual
- To strong industry collaborations
- To giving back to MCI communities
- To more sustainable events for our clients

Looking towards the future, MCI will continue to actively champion sustainability, help clients to impact society in a responsible and socially acceptable way, and collaborate with partners, suppliers and the events industry to accelerate best sustainability practices across the globe.

In the last ten years, MCI has:

- Organised close to 1000 events around sustainable topics or with integrated sustainable processes
- Received 24 industry awards for sustainability
- Dedicated 43 800 hours by MCI employees to community projects
- Raised close to €15M for 626 community projects (charity or non-governmental) around the world
**INTERPLAN CHOIR CELEBRATE BRUNO’S THREE DECADES**

*IAPCO Member: INTERPLAN AG, Germany*

Board member Bruno Lichtinger recently celebrated three decades of Interplan: thirty years filled with commitment, passion and enthusiasm for the organisation of congresses. In 1990, Bruno started as one of eight employees in project management at what was then still known as Interplan-Kongress-und-Besucherdienst Anton Kössl. Since 2001, Bruno has headed Interplan AG, sharing his incredible wealth of experience and know-how with his entire team and clients.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures! The anniversary celebration took place with a small number of the Munich team present onsite – with correct social distancing and face masks, of course – and was broadcast to all other colleagues in their home offices and the various branches of Interplan via video conference. The Interplan company choir recorded a special anniversary song online and presented it to Bruno. The surprise was a great success! You can listen to the Interplan choir here: [https://bit.ly/3j62VEu](https://bit.ly/3j62VEu)

**ARINEX STAFF IN THE SHOES OF THEIR CLIENTS**

*IAPCO Member: Arinex Pty, Australia*

Investing in your staff during a major crisis is easy to say, but not so easy to put into place.

Arinex staff created an exclusive conference, ‘Arinex Co-Lab’, for their whole team to learn first-hand and to experience what they provide to their clients. The event was an initiative generated by the staff themselves and incorporated feedback presentations by clients and industry partners, break out discussion groups, concurrent sessions on selected topics, and more. The three-day event was delivered nationwide in late June.

The virtual conference used the latest virtual technology platforms and focused on four strategic areas: partnerships, technology, leadership and sustainability. This provided ‘hands on’ experience in coming up with effective solutions for virtual and hybrid events.

Tourism Australia provided a deep dive into current initiatives outlining the support available for the business events industry. The focus remains on partnerships and collaboration to put Australia front and centre globally.

The owner and founder of Arinex, Roslyn McLeod OAM, who participated in the virtual conference sessions remarked, ‘I would hold this event every few months. It provided a platform for staff innovation and brought the whole company together in a spirit of conviviality, partnership and purpose’.
AFEA ACTIVE IN EDUCATIONAL AND NETWORKING EVENTS

*IAPCO Member: AFEA SA Travel and Congress Services, Greece*

AFEA has always been active in satellite activities, generously sharing their knowledge and expertise with the aim of supporting the industry. In times of crisis, such as the one we are currently experiencing, AFEA decided to be more active in educational activities for the national as well as the international meetings industry, sharing experiences and views on how to help our business survive, recover and thrive in the post-COVID-19 era.

AFEA, represented by its CEO, Sissi Lygnou, has been part of various panels, webinars and activities including:

- **ECM (European Cities Marketing) webinar on ‘The complex world of clients’**: Sissi, representing IAPCO, presented the impact of COVID-19 on the international meetings industry and how IAPCO members, PCOs, quickly react, adapt and collectively plan.

- **Metropolitan College webinar on ‘Hospitality Responds’**: Sissi spoke on the current situation and how PCOs are managing the consequences of the pandemic, covering expectations of the immediate future and motivating the students and the younger generation.

- **Participating in dialogues, the organisation of webinars and further activities, sustaining a strong media presence and collaborating with government and country stakeholders via HAPCO (Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers), where AFEA (represented by Sissi Lygnou) is the General Secretary of the Board, as has been the case for the last 12 years.**

HAPCO reacted very quickly in collaborating with the authorities to promote and empower the value of meetings in the recovery process of national economies. HAPCO also participated in the Global Task Force initiated by IAPCO, with the same goal.

CLAUDIA GOLINELLI ELECTED TO BOARD OF ROMA & LAZIO CVB

*IAPCO Member: Ega worldwide congresses & events, Italy*

At the General Assembly of the Roma & Lazio Convention Bureau held at the Fiera di Roma on 7 July 2020, Claudia Golinelli, Vice-President and Partner of Ega worldwide congresses & events, was elected to the Board of Directors of the CVB as fiduciary, in charge of Federcongressi & Eventi, the Italian Federation of the Meeting Industry. Claudia responded to her appointment, saying:

I am very happy to have been elected to the Board of Directors. Our family company, founded more than 55 years ago by my mother Emma Golinelli Aru, is strongly connected and committed to Rome and I thank the members of the Convention Bureau and Federcongressi & Eventi for the trust I have been given to represent the meetings industry.
MEMBERS’ EVENTS AND NEWS

ICOM TRAINING CHALLENGE

IAPCO Member: ICOM Group, Egypt

At ICOM, for the past 20 years, crisis management has always been our ‘thing’. ICOM staff live with the goal of defeating the fears and confronting the obstacles that arise from any distress situation.

As of March 2020, being quarantined and working from home became a communication challenge. We had 100+ employees across five branches in four countries, with the challenge of keeping all staff positive and engaged. On the bright side, we were blessed with ‘the gift of time’: time to slow down, to contemplate, to re-evaluate and to finally realise that it was the best time to ‘develop’.

And so, the ICOM Training Academy – Learning Challenge Program 2020 was launched. The programme was able to develop the skills of 70 employees over 84 days, consisting of:

- 9 orientation trainings for 24 employees for 15 hours
- Basic and advanced training on EventsAir Software Meeting Planner Certification Course for 18 employees, gaining 28 certificates
- 15 technical digitalisation training for 22 employees for 30 hours
- 14 Congress Project Management courses (webEDGE) by IAPCO for 15.5 hours for 15 employees
- 25 essential soft and business trainings for 32 employees

ICOM employees successfully completed their ‘Learning Challenge Program’ on 14 July, having both challenged themselves and uplifted their skills for their own career growth.

ON CONGREX SWITZERLAND

The Congrex team having fun organising online conferences, virtual exhibitions and webinars. New virtual meeting formats are an exciting opportunity to innovate and grow in new ways.

ON HAPPY SOCKS

A gift that keeps on giving... Hamburg’s happy socks brought a smile (and warm feet) in these turbulent times. I love my socks – thanks Hamburg!

...wear our amazing happy SOCKS!

#HappySocksHamburg

Share your HappySocks moment using the #HappySocksHamburg on LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram or email it to HappySocks@hamburg-commission.com. The best picture will win a Hamburg surprise package.
DESTINATION PARTNERS

Long-term partners of IAPCO, each representing specific regions of the world.

HOSTS, SERVICE PROVIDERS & CONVENTION CENTRES

Recognising convention centres and suppliers to the meetings industry who provide an insight into current trends, latest innovations, advice and tips and quality service. And thanks to the hosts of our Council Meetings throughout the year.

webEDGE

Supporters of web-EDGE educational programme - KLCC and MyCEB