

A Solution for Long Term Strategy

Thanks to **Yukari Ikeda**, senior producer at the Conference Management Department of Japan Convention Services (JCS), a glance at the world of physicians. And a precious lesson.

Do you know how many associations currently exist in Japan?

According to 2018 records, the total number of associations registered in Japan is 2,022, out of which 1,027 are medical, dental and pharmacological related. A large number of medical academic societies and associations in Japan were first established in the early 20th century during a time when university hospitals began playing a significant role in the country's medical and academic history. Records show that many of the leading associations that are currently active were initially founded in the offices of university hospitals. It appears that clerical procedures were often handled concurrently by the secretaries of such places.

Meanwhile, research groups were formed under the sponsorship of pharmaceutical companies that manufactured relevant medicines and, following increased membership, they eventually became independent by constituting themselves as incorporated associations. As a result, medium- to large-scale associations were able to obtain corporate status. While many of them set-up offices in Tokyo for the convenience of location, incredibly high real estate prices in the city forced them to opt for small offices. This resulted in invariably limiting the number of people who could work there. Only some smaller associations managed to remain within the university hospital grounds. Regardless of the size or location of each association, the common denominator among them was the absence of a culture of outsourcing work. However, it can

sometimes be a precious solution for a long-term strategy.

As an example, JCS was contracted as the Association Management Company (AMC) of a certain surgical association in 2011. At that time, the membership of the AMC was multiplying and the organisation wanted to become independent in order to be more dynamically active. Because the initial costs of establishing an office in Tokyo were too high, they decided to set-up a secretariat within an outsourced office instead. An interesting aspect of this arrangement was that, regardless of the AMC contract, the congress president had the freedom to select their preferred PCO for their annual academic conferences, thus retaining their options. As the result of hiring skilled staff, who possessed a deep understanding of academic conferences, the AMC was released from a lot of day-to-day work that they now did not have to do. They could concentrate on what they have to do, such as safe surgery.

Despite general advancements in surgery, skills vary with each physician. In light of this, the AMC conducts a technical assessment of individual surgical skills and grants a licence only to those who pass the test. The survival rate of surgeries performed by licenced physicians is high and licences need to be renewed every five years. This is in line with the concept of continuing medical education, for which physicians are required to commit to life-long education and to continuously develop professional performance for as long as they are practising. In order to pass such a stringent assessment,

the training is also crucial. In this context, JCS devised a training programme giving young doctors an opportunity to view surgeries conducted by veteran physicians with the cooperation of leading medical device companies. Such programmes can be used to assist a number of associations under AMC contracts.

Japan faces the pressing issue of a declining population due to a falling birth rate, so a shortage of physicians is projected for the future. Amidst anticipated future decrease in membership, offering sustainable services as an AMC should lead to stable management of associations and provision of better medical services to society. Outsourcing can be a very viable option for a long-term strategy.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. The author is Yukari Ikeda, senior producer at the Conference Management Department of Japan Convention Services (JCS). Founded in 1967, JCS is one of the nation's largest and leading PCOs. It provides total planning and services for official summit conferences, expositions and other programmes sponsored by governments and public agencies.

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