

INDUSTRY VIEWS

AIPC on the role of conference centres

The DNA of convention centres

Centres that consider themselves 'international' diversify their business potential and respond to new trends, writes **Aloysius Arlando**.



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IN ORDER TO BE considered an 'international' convention centre, the following three things need to happen:

First, it means recognising and addressing the standards and expectations of groups that rotate worldwide and who are looking for some level of consistency in terms of spaces and services. While most events that rotate do so in response to the distribution of their membership (or the pursuit of potential members), their programmes generally have certain requirements attached that are largely the same wherever they may go. That means a centre must be able to supply these in order to be considered, and the easiest way to do that is to identify and observe the most relevant standards for such events and to make the effort to identify and understand what specific groups need.

Second, a non-domestic organisation will likely have formal requirements that are more complex. Things like legal and accountability requirements, contractual arrangements and technology expectations will inevitably be a lot more complicated with a range of international clients than purely domestic ones and, again, a centre pursuing this business must have the capability and flexibility to respond.

Third, it needs to be understood that this is not simply a centre-specific exercise. The centre itself is only one part of the overall destination experience; an 'international' designated centre also has a role to play in ensuring that partners such as hotels, bureaus, suppliers and satellite venues are capable of meeting the broader and potentially more diverse range of client expectations. Without this, even the most internationally oriented facility can fail to deliver the overall quality that will be expected by more demanding international clients.

DELIVERING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

In the end, it's a balance; to be truly 'international' and enjoy all the business benefits that designation implies, a centre needs to be prepared to address the full range of expectations that accompany such events, and to do so in a recognisable way. At the same time, they need to take on some responsibility for delivering the kind of unique experience and qualities that make their destination distinctive. AIPC offers its members a range of tools and insights to support that kind of role – but the primary responsibility remains with the centre itself. **■**