



Convention centres must be flexible in order to flourish

The need for adaptability is vital when it comes to remaining relevant in an increasingly intense marketplace

by Aloysius Arlando

While 2017 was a very good year in performance terms for members of AIPC it was also a time of many challenges as members worked hard to address the constantly changing expectations of organisers and delegates. Of course the very nature of events is that there is a fundamental evolution that demands constant innovation and adaptation, so there is always a need to change with the times.

In this industry there is always a new challenge to be addressed and this year will be no different as there are a host of issues that will make a significant impact in 2018. One of which is the need to generate increasing levels of flexibility in all areas, from spaces and technologies to services and event management. This will continue to dominate our environment as will the need to further enhance and diversify revenues to satisfy owner expectations and support much-needed new investment in our facilities.

We also face new challenges in responding to the increasing importance of digitalisation in the global economy in order to be seen as relevant to marketers as well as to organisers. This is vitally important because they now have many other options from which to choose from when it comes to engaging with their members as well as their customers.

At the same time, we are also increasingly challenged to compete with other sectors for the human resources we need to deliver service excellence. This is a particular challenge that needs to be met with increased training and retention measures as well as an effort to position ours as a desirable career path relative to others competing for the same talent.

However, perhaps the most important issue is the need to further drive the proposition that convention centres are broadly impactful economic engines. More than anything the real function of these centres is to support overall economic and community development agendas in their respective cities and countries.

It is only with this kind of recognition that we will get the kind of support we need to prevail in an increasingly intense marketplace. There is little doubt that this latter requirement will be demanding for many; however, it is a far more realistic picture of our true role and we need to be more active in promoting it.

Fortunately, AIPC is constantly researching industry needs and conditions in order to create corresponding programming. This is the only way for an organisation to remain relevant in a fast-changing environment. However, our greatest strength, and the one that has shown its value over our entire history, is the combined knowledge, insights and experience of our members.

We have been in existence for 60 years now so the ability to act as efficient vehicles for facilitating information exchange and collective problem solving is a big factor as to how we stay relevant. And as I mentioned previously 2017 was a particular good year for our members, with a continuation of growth that has even exceeded growth in global GDP.

Another of the AIPC's greatest assets has always been its exclusive devotion to the issues and opportunities associated with international convention centres, and we will certainly maintain this focus going forward in order to ensure that there is clarity of purpose.

We also believe that the industry in the years ahead will require an even greater level of partnership between centres and their clients than what we have seen previously. This is in order to optimise the delegate experience.

This means that we will need to know in more detail our client's needs and opportunities, this will then give us the ability to actively and creatively support them in addressing all of their concerns.

That of course will in turn require much greater investment in joint activities and programming with the broader meetings and events community. But this is far from a negative and instead we see this as being a vitally important issue. Therefore we will be moving forward on these issues on behalf of all of our members. ◦

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In addition to his role as AIPC President, Aloysius Arlando is the Chief Executive Officer of SingEx Holdings, which comprises several entities focusing on the MICE business; including the management of the Singapore EXPO Convention and Exhibition Centre.



AIPC represents a global network of more than 185 leading centres in 59 countries, with the active involvement of more than 900 management-level professionals worldwide. It is committed to encouraging and recognising excellence in convention centre management, based on the diverse experience and expertise of its international representation, and maintains a variety of educational, research, networking and standards programs to achieve this. AIPC also celebrates and promotes the essential role of the international meetings industry in supporting economic, academic and professional development, and enhancing global relations among highly diverse business and cultural interests.

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