

INDUSTRY  
VIEWSConvention  
centre  
contributions

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## Dear valued member

How can convention centres contribute to member value within associations, asks **Julianne Jammers**.

**A**t the heart of associations' value proposition is networking and professional development. It is the benefits of these two aspects that are often the strength of its membership. Meetings have long been the delivery method for these interactions. To some extent, the internet has disrupted this by providing an alternative method of accessing these features through webinars, open online courses and networking platforms. Arguably, it has also provided a solution to address some environmental concerns, and the cost and hassle of travel. But no matter how good technology is or gets, physical meetings still matter.

While conferences remain a pillar of the association business, the reality is that they need new and innovative ways to deliver bottom-line value in their meetings, and they have to be more creative than ever before in how they do that.

At the SwissTech Convention Center, we offer a creative approach in acting as a partner in the growth and development of associations – not just as a venue. We collaborate closely with associations to provide an educational environment, develop new contacts and deliver an overall unique member experience.

### UNIQUE VALUE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

Many would argue that the role of a convention centre is to provide excellence in facility and conference management, and to ensure that their destination is top of mind. At the university-based SwissTech Convention Center, on the banks of Lake Geneva in Switzerland, we have developed our unique sales proposition beyond just these arguably critical elements.

We play an active role in providing access to knowledge and talent to associations in relevant fields. With over 350 laboratories and research groups on campus, the EPFL (École polytechnique

fédérale de Lausanne) is one of the world's most innovative and productive scientific institutions. Dozens of start-ups and multinationals on campus and in the area complement the university environment and the convention centre is an exceptional place to meet and exchange ideas.

On the one hand, we actively identify relevant associations that can benefit from closer cooperation with the experts located on our campus in the development of their programmes. Complementing this is our active outreach to our professors, who are members of numerous associations, which allows us to help make likely matches with the aim of creating meetings that have unique and lasting value.

Integrating students of all levels, from bachelor to doctoral programmes, into the meetings, both as a resource for delivery but also as participants, provides associations with access to their future members.

Alliances that support convention centres can make a difference for associations in their quest to identify appropriate venues that can offer additional value. The SwissTech recently became a member of the Energy Cities Alliance – a select group of destinations with significant energy economies, with the intent to attract energy-related association meetings. While our destination is not considered an energy city, thanks to our location on the EPFL campus, we are a knowledge and research partner and can offer associations access to the expertise in both traditional energy solutions and sustainable energy, which is a strong offering on the EPFL campus.

Convention centres can play an important role in bringing more value to associations by looking at what they and their communities can offer beyond majestic locations, creating a win-win for all of their stakeholders. **M**