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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Membership Matters- Particularly Now!

**People join associations for a lot of reasons. Sometimes, it's a way of connecting with colleagues at a professional level. Other times, it's about being able to access programs and activities that are not available to non-members. And sometimes, it can be as simple as wanting to be able to interact with people who have many of the same concerns, issues and challenges as you do.**

The latter reason is particularly important to convention centre managers. Unlike other industries, we don't typically have a lot of colleagues in our immediate environment; we're not, for example, like hotel managers who may have dozens of counterparts within the same city. So the ability to reach out via an organization whose goal is to help members share experiences, expertise and perspectives is much more important than it might otherwise be to people who can interact with their immediate counterparts anytime they choose.

But membership can also be a fragile thing; taken for granted when times are good and seen as a luxury when financial challenges appear. The irony is that challenging times are exactly when the ability to address industry issues collectively and share ideas on how to respond and where to look for help are most valued.

To be meaningful, membership needs to represent a long term commitment; a willingness to stay the course and work through the tough times with the same level of participation as when life is a bit easier. As with so many things, what you get out is largely a factor of what you put in, and the times when conditions demand a greater level of participation is also when we all get the most in return.

At AIPC we have been fortunate to have not experienced the kinds of pressure on



membership that have hit many other organizations since the global financial crisis struck. In fact, our member strength has been very stable and we continue to get new requests from those who want to join us. This is a very good thing, and not just because it's a signal that members value their membership; it's also a sign that members are prepared to work together on solutions, and see the advantages of collaborating instead of withdrawing from participation. This is a huge strength for any organization, but even more important in one like ours where the engagement of members from all over the world can provide us all not only with the widest possible view of what's going on globally but also what different facilities are doing in response.

This advantage will be seen in action at our Annual Conference in A Coruña. This year's program has been specifically designed to make sure we have every possible opportunity to hear what outside observers can tell us about the overall economy and the ways this relates to our interests as convention centres. However, at the same time we will be hearing what colleagues are experiencing in their own businesses in other regions and countries. This is the best possible form of education for all of us, because what is happening today in North America may be a taste of what we can expect to see in Europe or Asia tomorrow, and by getting the latest information and insights first hand, we'll all be better prepared.

But while the Annual Conference is a particular occasion to take advantage of our collective expertise, but it's not the only one. AIPC now has a full, year round program of professional development, industry relations, research and education at many levels, and the benefits are available to anyone that chooses to get engaged. In that regard I must take this opportunity to thank the many members who have and continue to work hard on advancing AIPC's growing program. From those of you who teach, write or present on our behalf to those who serve on advisory committees or as a board member and even those who simply take the time to help gather data by responding to our periodic surveys, all are helping make AIPC more a more valuable organization for everyone.

So whatever your reasons for joining AIPC, I think I can safely say you will get the best value you've ever had in the next couple of years. While none of us know exactly how events will unfold in the global economy, the one thing we know for sure is that we will all have better prospects if we have access to the collective knowledge and experience of our colleagues to help see us through.

Edgar Hirt, AIPC President

# AIPC Academy 2010 Now Scheduled



From its first session only a little over three years ago, the AIPC Academy has already become the pre-eminent professional development experience for international convention centre management training, with a full curriculum designed to provide a comprehensive industry overview and update in all key areas of centre management, operations, finances and marketing. Graduates have consistently rated the learning experience highly and with each successive year the program has become even more refined and targeted.



Now, the 2010 edition has been booked and AIPC is accepting registrations for what will once again be a restricted number of places available in the program. As in the previous session, the overall program will consist of a full five day curriculum ranging over all key topics as well as a series of guest presenters who will represent the interface of our industry with key suppliers and clients. Subject areas will include facility operations, sales and marketing, industry economics, human resources, event management, and community relations along with areas of special interest such as facility design and development, sustainability and security. Delegates will also have the opportunity to distinguish themselves through the design of facility programs in the 2010 Academy Challenge, a team-based exercise set as part of the curriculum.

**"It's hard to believe we could have come so far so quickly in establishing this program"** says AIPC President Edgar Hirt. **"While professional development is a critical part of our industry, we have never had such a directly relevant and highly detailed program to deliver on this. That we now do is a tribute to the many members and industry associates that have contributed so much time and expertise to its development."**

The 2010 AIPC Academy will once again take place at the Dolce la Hulpe, a dedicated training facility near Brussels that provides a perfect learning environment with full technical facilities along with sophisticated accommodation and services. This year's program will also include a day session in the recently completed Square Brussels Meeting Centre, a new facility with many features that are directly relevant to many subject areas in the Academy curriculum.

This year, AIPC is making a special effort to address the pressures some members may be feeling under current economic conditions. Along with the Academy scholarship program (details below) the two actions are:

**FIRST, to create an early registration fee that is a 200 Euro reduction over the regular fee (which is maintained at 2008 levels) and the**

**SECOND is to look at a special fee reduction for long-haul registrants in recognition of the incremental costs associated with long distance travel.**

Details of the latter are being addressed by the APC Board and will be communicated as soon as they are finalized. In the meantime, any questions on this or

any other aspects of the Academy program should be addressed to the AIPC Secretariat.

As noted above, two positions will be again be designated for the AIPC Academy scholarship, where competitors nominated by their respective facilities can compete for a full tuition award.

**"The AIPC Academy represents great value for any member centre who wishes to prepare staff for new responsibilities in the organization or simply give them a better appreciation of how the overall industry functions",** says Hirt. **"We offer what is basically amongst the highest level of expertise available anywhere, as a function of the involvement of industry leaders with many years of experience who act as our faculty. I sincerely believe that the leaders of tomorrow are those who are passing through the Academy, both because of the investment their sponsoring centres are choosing to make in them and as a result of the effort they are themselves making as participants"**



**DATES | Sunday February 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday February 12<sup>th</sup> 2010**

**LOCATION | Dulce La Hulpe training centre, Brussels**

**REGISTRATION | € 2.495 for the five day program (early registration up to November 30, 2009) and € 2.695 for registration on/after December 1, 2009 onwards. The fee for the program includes all course activities, materials, accommodation and meals.**

# Palexco in A Coruña: Competing with the Giants!

Spain holds an enviable position in the international convention and exhibition business as the number three destination world wide in terms of numbers of events. Two cities - Madrid and Barcelona - are in the top ten category, and contribute significantly to this overall status. But how can medium sized cities and congress centres contribute to Spain's position, particularly when it means competing against the huge centres with all their technical, human and economic means? Our experiences at the A Coruña centre provide some answers.

From its inception in 1989, the A Coruña centre combined business and cultural activities. With an extraordinary increase in activity in both sectors, we looked at the possibility of opening a second congress centre, thus separating the uses and activities of each building. As a result, in 2005 PALEXCO was born (the name comes from the Spanish initials for Congress and Exhibition Centre).

The second centre was designed and built with all the experience gained in fifteen years' managing the first one. From the start, we focused our commercial strategy mainly at the domestic market with a maximum of 2,000 delegates. Not being subsidised by any public entity, we realised that we could not enter into a suicidal struggle with the larger centres - Congress Centres which are often backed by powerful Convention Bureaux and service networks which support large-scale meetings - but competed at a slow but sure pace until the centre became known and appreciated. At that stage we began a gradual expansion - from local and provincial events to regional, national and finally even international events.

The congress centre business in Spain has grown quickly in a short time, in some case



with political interests driving Congress Centre development regardless of whether or not the city had the minimum necessary services and infrastructure. For this reason, the vast majority of Centres in Spain depend in one way or another on Public Authorities, justified by the enormous social and economic returns resulting from their investment.

However, PALEXCO competes with clear goals of economic profitability just like any other private company. We do not take on any centre management project which does not complement other types of business linked to the Congress Centre itself (car park, hotel, casino, shopping centres) since although we could obtain a significant cash flow from other activities it would be practically impossible to pay off the high construction costs of the building.

In the broader market, we have learnt the enormous importance of the destination compared to a certain ignorance of the centre. The city, its services, its communications, the landscape and cuisine are some of the decisive aspects when an event goes to one city or another. There is a clear emotional component beyond a cold calculating decision; I think part of our success lies in knowing how to play this factor correctly.

There is a certain routine and weariness with the larger destinations, where meetings are more impersonal and more diffuse, providing a lower possibility of personal contact. Hotels and buildings are further apart, which makes it impossible to walk and to meet companions in a casual atmosphere. A Coruña breathes design and avant-garde, pleasantness and closeness. This kind of city blends very well with a good congress centre: PALEXCO, a modern, versatile and very functional centre, lying in the nerve centre of the city, with extraordinary views of the sea and within easy walking distance from any hotel. We have found - and we promote the fact - that meetings run more smoothly in medium sized cities.

However, in addition to marketing internationally, we work very hard in the local market: the university, companies and hospitals are our closest sources of income. We realized years ago that a large part of the business is in our own city - it is just a question of working it.

Our experience shows that medium sized centres and cities can, in fact, compete effectively, by exploiting our particular strengths - and this has been demonstrated by the fact that over the years we have frequently been offered the opportunity to invest in and operate other congress centre projects both in Spain and abroad!

Enrique Pena Gonzalez, Director, PALEXCO Palacio de Exposiciones y Congresos A Coruña

## This is a Year for Innovation!

There's no better time for centres to be looking at innovations, and this year's Annual Conference program in A Coruña will be overflowing with new ideas and approaches.

The 2009 edition of the AIPC Innovation Award has attracted a wide variety of management, operating and marketing innovations that will be featured at the conference with the final winner selected for announcement at the Awards Dinner along with the "People's Choice" selection made by delegates. Submissions from 11 centres from all over the world cover a wide range of environmental, marketing, management and sustainability initiatives. All entries will be presented through a "poster session" which will allow delegates to view each project and interact with representatives of the submitting centre.

To help in the process, a special session has also been organized that will address the practical realities and techniques associated with developing and implementing innovations.



# 2009 AIPC Annual Conference

## A Coruña

This year's Annual Conference has been an interesting exercise as we have worked hard to respond to a continually evolving situation with highly relevant presenters that will be able to offer delegates solid, practical information and strategies. Our full and final program is outlined below – along with details on the complement of speakers who, together with

AIPC program and members discussions, will give you the best and most comprehensive perspective possible on what's happening; how centres are being challenged and how they're responding.

With concerns about the impacts of the current global economic crisis foremost on everyone's mind, we've put together a series of presenters that will help delegates not only in getting an overview of the issues facing the economy but of how it is specifically affecting centres and most importantly, how we can respond effectively and continue to maintain and grow business during the recovery.



**DR. LINDA YUEH**

will address the underlying issues and recovery prospects for the economy, with particular reference to how recovery will likely unfold and which sectors will be impacted in ways that determine their meetings potential.

She is an economist and commentator with broad expertise is in economic and business issues, particularly the macroeconomy. Her work and recent book, *Macroeconomics*, focuses on the UK, U.S., EU, China and global economy, and her research examines economic growth and the changing global economic structure -- including the financial crisis, emerging markets, globalization, international economic law, economic growth and development. She is a fellow in economics at the University of Oxford and a visiting professor at the London Business School as well as an Associate of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She is a frequent commentator for the BBC, CNBC, CNN, ITN, Sky News, and the *Financial Times*, among others.



**FREDERIK VAN OENE**

will be presenting and leading a workshop on developing and implementing innovations.

A veteran of the Silicon Valley evolution in the 1980's, he has dedicated his professional career to assisting large and small companies, governments and leading research institutes to create more value in new ways. He works for Arthur D. Little, a management consulting company, well-known for their work in Innovation and Strategy, teaches Innovation Management at several universities and business schools, and has written several well-known books about the subject, including "Third Generation R&D Management" published by Harvard Business School Press and "The Innovation Premium" published by Perseus Books. His session will respond to changes in the world of Conference Centres and Fairs, and how innovation can help centres find their way through structural changes and the downturn.



**JESUS ECHEVARRIA**

will deliver a case study of "glocalization" in action - how Inditex became one of the world's largest fashion distributors, with over one hundred companies associated with the business of textile design, manufacturing and distribution and eight sales formats - Zara, Pull and Bear, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho, Zara Home and Uterqüe - boasting 4.264 stores in 73 countries.

The first Zara shop opened its doors in 1975 in A Coruña (Spain), the city that saw the Group's early beginnings and which is now home to its central offices. Mr. Echevarria is Chief Communications Officer of INDITEX. He was born in Barcelona in 1962, holds a degree in Media Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid and a degree in Philosophy from the Autonoma University of Madrid, and joined INDITEX in September 2005.



**SIMON ANHOLT**

One of the highest rated speakers we've ever had, Simon Anholt returns to our Annual Conference with new advice on how to use recessionary conditions to advantage in positioning centres and destinations.

He is an independent policy advisor, author and researcher who originated the concepts of Nation Branding and Place Branding; a leading specialist in the identity and reputation of places, and the creator of the concepts of nation branding and place branding and is today regarded as the leading authority on public diplomacy and identity strategy for countries, cities and regions. He is a member of the UK Foreign Office's Public Diplomacy Board, and has advised countless governments, cities and regions. As a leading figure in the measurement of national reputation, he is the founder and publisher of the annual Anholt Nation Brands Index, Anholt City Brands Index and Anholt State Brands Index.

**AIPC CORPORATE PARTNERS**



MONDAY   JULY 6th		
<b>Global Economic Status and Outlook   The World Today and Tomorrow</b>	<b>Keynote Speaker   Dr. Linda Yueh</b> Fellow in Economics, St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford Visiting Professor, London Business School Associate, Centre for Economic Performance, LSE	Convention Centres are directly impacted by the state of the overall economy, which makes today's global financial crisis of particular interest to centre managers. Dr. Yueh will address the underlying issues and recovery prospects for the economy, with particular reference to how recovery will likely unfold and which sectors will be impacted in ways that determine their meetings potential.
<b>How We've Been Impacted; How We're Coping</b>	Case presentations	Panel of AIPC member facilities from different regions of the world will compare notes on how they have been impacted by current global economic conditions, what they have been doing to address these impacts and how they see events unfolding over the months and years ahead. Their presentations will be followed by an open discussion amongst delegates on this topic.
<b>Innovation Management</b>	<b>Keynote Speaker   Frederik van Oene</b>   Director, Arthur D. Little  Presentation and Roundtable discussions	The key to adaptive recovery is in identifying appropriate strategies and having the ability to implement them successfully. A combination of presentation and workshop, this session will examine and apply the role of innovation in the convention centre development process, using examples drawn from an advance survey of AIPC members.
<b>Innovation Poster Market Place</b>		Delegates will participate in a poster session with brief presentations from the finalists in this year's AIPC Innovation Award. Delegates will then have the opportunity to cast their vote for the "People's Choice Award" that will accompany the selection by the Innovation Award jury.
TUESDAY   JULY 7th		
<b>Local Power   How a Small Destination Can Compete in a Global Market</b>	<b>Keynote Speaker   Jesús Echevarría</b>   Chief Communications Officer, INDITEX	As one of the world's largest fashion distributors, with over 100 companies and 4264 outlets in 73 counties, INDITEX, which is based in A Coruña is a fascinating case study in how a major global business can be developed and carried on far from the traditional business "power bases" as well as the implications this may have for centres in smaller destinations.
<b>The Client Perspective   What Our World Looks Like Today</b>	<b>Deborah Sexton</b>   President and CEO PCMA (the Professional Convention Management Association)  <b>Luca Favetta</b>   Senior Director Global Events EMEA, SAP SA	Never has it been more important for centres and their clients to work together on resolving the challenges now facing the industry, and a key step in this process is understanding their current concerns and challenges. A leading association executive and a senior corporate client share their perspectives on their current priorities and the ways in which they feel centres can support meetings to mutual advantage.
<b>Designing for Success   Architects Look to the Future</b>	<b>David Greuzel</b>   Principal, POPULOUS  <b>Chris Eseman</b>   Partner, LMN Architects	Facility design isn't just something to be addressed in a new or expanded centre – there are design implications for management and operations that can be implemented in any centre, either planned or existing. Two leading architectural companies take a practical look at how good design can help address some of today's most urgent priorities in convention centres.
<b>Sustainable Meetings   a UN Perspective</b>	<b>Isabella Marras</b>   Program Officer Green Meetings, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	As a major player in the whole area of international interactions, the UN has been revisiting its approach to ensuring sustainable meetings. The results are important to our industry as they will impact many areas and enable centres to align themselves with what are likely to become future industry standards.
<b>AIPC Member Outlook   Results of the Annual Global Issues Survey</b>	<b>Rod Cameron</b>   AIPC	This past year has seen a huge transition in the global economy from robust growth to virtual paralysis in many key sectors. The question is, how has this impacted convention centres and their business prospects? This session will unveil the trends and attitude shifts over the past year along with a look into the future.
<b>Positioning in a Recession   What are the New Opportunities</b>	<b>Keynote speaker   Simon Anholt</b>	A recession may just be the ideal time to revisit market image and positioning – and an opportunity to take advantage of changing conditions to gain market share. The originator of the destination brand concept will build upon strategies outlined at our annual conference two years ago to show delegates how they can best use today's challenging conditions to benefit their long term future.
<b>Simon Anholt "Clinic"</b>		A follow up to the destination branding session, this is your opportunity to address destination-specific challenges and opportunities in a workshop format.
WEDNESDAY   JULY 8th		
<b>How We Can Pull Together as an Association to Deliver Success</b>	<b>Edgar Hirt</b>   President, AIPC	AIPC President will outline the ways in which AIPC is addressing the current challenges and how members can both avail themselves of the opportunities and contribute to the overall strengthening of the industry.
<b>AIPC Program Update</b>		As a prelude to the General Assembly, staff and Board members will review the progress of key AIPC's program offerings on a number of major fronts.
<b>AIPC 51st General Assembly</b>	<b>Edgar Hirt</b>   President, AIPC	

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# Action-Packed IMEX Creates Important Opportunities

The 2009 edition of IMEX coincided with an industry that was finally feeling the full impacts of the global economic crisis, and created a opportunity for a healthy exchange of information on many key questions. As always, AIPC was out in force with a whole host of engagement with both members and other industry organizations. Amongst our activities this year;



• Our fourth **International Sales and Marketing Summit** brought AIPC sales executives from around the world together with industry experts, clients and facilitators to ensure the best possible strategic discussions. Agenda items included a facilitated exchange of impacts and strategies being experienced by member centres; a client perspective on how centres can best help address their needs in facing their own challenges; a look at the changing “image

landscape” for centres and a panel on the role social networking is playing in the market process.

• Our annual **AIPC Industry Issues Seminar** brought together the President of the Professional Convention Management Association, the International Vice President of Meetings Professionals International and an AIPC Executive to compare notes on current industry conditions and prospects. AIPC was also represented in a second panel “North American Outbound Meetings: Creating Shared Value”

which featured two AIPC representatives along with international colleagues in a discussion of how centres and clients could better bridge the understanding gap between North America and Europe.

• AIPC was also heavily involved in activities designed to reach out to a broader audience, including communities and governments, many of which are heavily invested in the industry as owners of convention centres around the world. We were particularly involved with the

organization of the Politician’s Forum, which attracts many delegates of particular importance as owners of AIPC member facilities.

• Our involvement with IMEX also created a number of opportunities to reconnect with key clients, whether on the show floor, at the AIPC reception or via other scheduled IMEX events.

**A demanding schedule – but by all reports, worth every minute of the time invested!**



## Operations Summit 2009 Scheduled for EIBTM Barcelona

Plans are now underway for the second AIPC Facility Operations Summit which will be held in partnership with EIBTM in Barcelona this November. The Summit will follow on the highly successful inaugural session held in 2008 where more than 40 AIPC members came together to identify and address key operational and event coordination issues.

“The Facility Operations Summit is comprised of a group that are absolutely critical to the successful operation of our member facilities but who don’t typically get to interact as regularly as other groups such as those engaged in sales and marketing” says AIPC President Edgar Hirt. “Consequently, the discussions we experienced in Barcelona were very intense and fruitful, with a lot of good exchanges, a lot of information sharing and, perhaps most importantly, a lot of



**networking amongst people who will be able to use their new-found contacts to advantage for some time to come”.**

The 2009 Facility Operation Summit will pick upon the themes and topics that were identified as priorities in the 2008 session, with many of the areas identified in the initial session will be scheduled for more in-depth treatment based on the interest demonstrated as delegates worked through the wide range of topics of interest to successful operations and event management. An advisory group is now reviewing the 2008 results and will be looking as well for input from potential



participants in order to determine the key areas to be addressed in the session.

“I’d advise member centres to look closely at this opportunity as they review their participation plans for the balance of the year” said Hirt. “This is an area where the collective knowledge participants bring is particularly important to efficient operations, yet often not as readily shared as it should be simply because there are few sessions like this where operations managers can get together”.

**The 2009 Facility Operations Summit will take place in Barcelona on November 29 and 30.**

# AIPC Member's Code Underlines Commitment

In response to ongoing questions regarding the implications of membership, the Board of Directors has endorsed a "Member's Code of Commitment" which sets out the expectations AIPC members can have of one another relative to their interactions within the association. The code has now been approved and will form part of the new member orientation as well as being made available to existing members as a guideline for association involvement.

"In AIPC, we have often said that our greatest strength and resource is the experience and expertise of our members", says AIPC President Edgar Hirt. "The role played by individual members is critical to achieving the overall mission of the organization, and it is as important for us to define expectations of members as it is for those who provide the leadership of the association".

The Member's Code of Commitment is based on AIPC members embracing four principles that together represent what members can and should expect of each other as they work together to address issues of common concern. These are: support for AIPC's mission and objectives, active participation in AIPC activities, respect for fellow AIPC members, and an agreement to abide by association by-laws and practices

In practical terms, the Code of Commitment identifies that members agree to pursue the following to the best of their abilities;

- 1** AIPC members subscribe to AIPC's mission of encouraging and supporting excellence in management, and will pursue these in the ways that they address their ongoing operations and management;
- 2** AIPC members will endeavour to achieve standards consistent with this mission statement, and participate in association activities which have been developed to support these objectives through training, professional development, excellence recognition and communications initiatives;
- 3** AIPC members will participate in related program activities and support their staff in doing so. They will make an effort to respond to association surveys and other research activities in order to contribute to the overall knowledge base of the organization and its members;
- 4** AIPC members will show respect for other members and not engage in inappropriate criticism of those members under any circumstances;
- 5** AIPC members will contribute to AIPC events to the best of their abilities by their own active participation as well as by demonstrating support for other members who take on program responsibilities;
- 6** AIPC members agree to abide by the association's by-laws and decisions of the Board of Directors, and to use those vehicles which have been identified in the by-laws to register any views they may have relative to AIPC procedures and programming;
- 7** AIPC members agree to invest their time and expertise as appropriate to assist the association in developing and maintaining program activities.

The code will be recognized as an agreed element of the overall constitution of the association and advanced to all members for their information at the time of annual membership renewal. It will also be provided to all new member applicants as a guideline for the expectations existing members have of those who wish to join the organization.

"Ours is an organization based on a strong sense of common purpose, and being able to articulate that purpose helps everyone understand our responsibilities to one another", said Hirt. "We expect this code will contribute even further to a collective understanding of where we're going and how we can all help each other to get there".

## Former AIPC President Awarded Coveted "Unity Award"

The IMEX gala was a particularly proud occasion for AIPC members as Past President Barbara Maple was awarded the 2009 Unity Award for exemplary contributions to the advancement of the meetings industry. The award is made annually by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) and recognizes an individual that has made extraordinary contributions to the industry via their efforts in advancing industry organizations and promoting overall industry profile and professionalism. "We are delighted and proud that it is one of our own winning this prestigious recognition" said AIPC President Edgar Hirt. "Barbara not only took AIPC a long way but was a major factor in moving the industry forward through her work with many other industry councils, and we are very pleased that both she and AIPC are getting this recognition."

In addition to her time as AIPC President, Maple was also President of the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) from 2005 to 2008. During that period, JMIC expanded its role in industry advocacy and developed the Profile and Power program which continues to the present as a vehicle for providing individual industry organizations with resources to promote and explain the benefits of the industry to community, business and government audiences. She was also Chair of the World Council of Venue Management, another industry council body, and has continued her organizational involvements through such roles as Chair of the AIPC Academy for professional development.

JMIC – the Joint Meetings Industry Council – was established in 1978 as a vehicle for creating a forum for the exchange of information and perspectives amongst international associations engaged in various aspects of the Meetings Industry. Along with AIPC, JMIC members currently include COCAL, DMAI, ECM, EVVC, IAPCO, ICCA, MPI, PCMA, and SITE. It is also supported by UFI and CIC.



# Name Change Reflects Underlying Philosophy

HOK Venue recently underwent a name change to Populous as part of a corporate restructuring. But the change also reflects some important underlying perspectives and beliefs in this leading design firm. Communiqué talks with **Senior Principal Todd C. Voth, AIA, LEED® AP** on what it all means.



**Communiqué |**

**What is "Populous"?**

Populous is the new name for the global design practice that used to be known to AIPC as HOK Venue (as part of the firm HOK Sport Venue Event). We changed our name and brand to reflect our new ownership structure, independent of HOK Group, Inc., and to better identify ourselves as a global design firm that creates wonderful places for people to gather. As we look at how the world is changing and how we map our particular expertise to its needs, it is imperative that we focus on how to design memorable experiences where people are drawn together for a common cause.

**Communiqué |**

**How has the design of convention centres evolved relative to other areas of architecture?**

I am tempted to say 'more slowly.' It seems to us that convention centre design is governed by some very strict traditions that have discouraged innovation over the years. One very seldom sees centres featured on the cover of design magazines, for example. We're trying to change that, but not at the expense of buildings that work extremely well for our clients.

**Communiqué |**

**Is convention centres design responding to the new interest in sustainability?**

Yes—new centres especially are interested in sustainable design, which is a good thing, because it addresses the point of the first question. Sustainable design allows us to challenge some of the 'conventional wisdom' in the industry, such as the rule that 'there shall be no natural light in any function space.' The push for sustainability has allowed us to push against some of the limitations in the industry in creative ways.

**Communiqué |**

**How can good design address operational issues such as security and crowd management?**

We believe that good design includes the idea of operational excellence. Building security means more than just having lots of security cameras mounted everywhere. It means good sightlines that allow building staff to see what is going on all over the building. In the same way, crowd management is part of our DNA at Populous. When you have a history of designing the world's biggest and best stadia, dealing with large flows of people becomes second nature, and that idea of creating a shared experience for literally thousands of people is what makes us excited to do what we do.

**Communiqué |**

**Can centres reflect their host city and still remain fully functional?**

We see no contradiction between beautiful buildings that reflect their community and great functional design.



The reflection of a region's culture is another layer of thought that gets added to the strong functional plan that any centre should have. It doesn't detract from the building's usefulness, but adds new layers of meaning to it. We spend a lot of time trying to understand the history and culture and geography of the cities we work in so that our design work reflects those things honestly and creatively.

**Communiqué |**

**Where do you think centre design will go from here, and how will we get there?**

Sustainability, thankfully, is becoming standard practice. What we are still working toward on a broad scale is convention centres that are truly integrated with the cities they represent. This urban integration means not only reflecting the culture of the city, but actually engaging with it, both for visitors and residents. We are striving to create containers of emotion for memorable experiences where both convention delegates and city residents feel a sense of pride and delight when using one of our facilities.



ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES PALAIS DE CONGRÈS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES  
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER KONGRESSZENTREN

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