



Be Inspired

by Sven Bossu, CEO AIPC

Glenn D. Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, described his institute as “a laboratory of learning, a place where the most challenging and difficult art of our time can be measured against the achievements of the immediate past.” This must sound very familiar to any manager running a convention center, with the art of bringing people together being both difficult and challenging at this time and whereby measuring achievements needs to be re-invented to be meaningful.

The challenge event venues have is to build upon their past without being delimited or constrained by it. This is by no means a simple task. To re-in-

vent yourself is difficult and goes beyond getting out of your comfort zone. Venues have already done some amazing things over the last 12 months. They have supported health care systems close to falling apart, setting up hospitals from Washington to Singapore. They have offered their key asset—physical space—to the ones in need of it, from the Parliament in Dublin to the Court of Justice in Copenhagen. Melbourne became a center of the local movie industry, being both a film studio and a drive-in cinema. And I could go on listing examples, demonstrating how much venues have indeed become a laboratory of learning.

Now, it is time for the next step to become inspired by a

rapidly changing ecosystem. For instance, we need to have a careful look at the Sustainable Goals set forward by the World Health Organization and make organized events the most efficient way of making those happen. Who is better placed than venues and their partners to achieve SG11: “Sustainable Cities & Communities”? Where will SG 13 (Climate Action) be discussed in more depth than at the COP26 in Glasgow? And how will SG7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) will be agreed upon, other than via organized events gathering the key stakeholders? At the same time, we must reach out to our immediate community and connect the dots. SG3 (Good Health and Well Being) could be partially achieved by using venue spaces in a different way, supported by local governments doing the impact assessment when it comes to health economy and funding the effort done by the event venues. Similar to the Sustainable Goals—which are interconnected—venues have touchpoints in, and impact on many areas within their ecosystem. Each of those touchpoints offers an opportunity for inspiration—an inspiration which will become our next normal.

Making it to that next normal will ask for venues to do things never done before. Teams are facing quite a few challenges: new skills are needed to meet new requirements, flexibility has moved to the next level and uncertainty is a certainty. But we are fortunate: venue teams—and event teams by extension—love challenges, and they are extremely good at turning them into oppor-



Sven Bossu

tunities. That is why AIPC is now launching a Future Ready Leaders initiative, bringing together venue management talent from across the globe to shape the future of venue management. As put by Gandhi: “The future depends on what we do in the present.”

The previous normal does no longer exist and it will not come back. And we all knew this would happen—it simply came a bit faster than expected. The same happened to the MoMA in New York, which went through many transformations in its 90 years existence. During these, the MoMA clinched to its ambition: to be a site of narration, where stories can be developed and realized—and does so very successfully. Event venues worldwide will do the very same. ☺

Sven Bossu was appointed as AIPC's first CEO last May. Prior, he was the managing director for innovation at ESTRO, the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology. He also has eight years of experience in the meetings industry from his time at SWIFT and its world-renowned SIBOS conference. Contact him at sven.bossu@aipc.org.

AIPC, the International Association of Convention Centers, represents a global network of more than 190 leading centers in 64 countries with the active involvement of 1,000+ management-level professionals worldwide. It is committed to encouraging and recognizing excellence in convention center management, and maintains a variety of educational, research, networking and standards programs AIPC also celebrates and promotes the essential role of the international meetings industry. For more info, visit aipc.org.