



# IMEX America 2011 Association Day

Monday, October 10 | Venetian-Palazzo Resort Hotel Casino | Las Vegas

## Roundtable Discussions – Notes

### 1. AMC or PCO?

- Everyone at the table agreed that the definitions/roles of PCO's and AMC's are inconsistent at best from country to country. We need a more consistent approach to the actual role of a PCO.
- As more US based associations and corporations look globally, there seems to be a gap in the requirements for the medical and pharma accreditation – would like to see more PCO's have skillset in navigating through these challenging areas
- AMC model is highly inconsistent across the various countries – some are full service and others act as secretariats ...appears to be confusion on roles
- Local Societies – group would like to see more expertise from AMC's around the world on engaging local societies – membership growth, sponsorship, etc.

### 2. Insurance for Events

- General Liability insurance is required by most facilities and is a best practice to purchase for your protection even if the facility doesn't require it.
- Convention Cancellation insurance covers your losses even if you don't cancel the meeting. For example: if you have reduced attendance due to weather or transportation issues in a city where your meeting is not being held but many of your attendees are coming from (think Japan earthquake or Iceland volcano affecting meeting attendance all over the world).
- You can add extra cancellation insurance to cover things like terrorism, communicable diseases and earthquakes.
- Cancellation insurance does not cover you cancelling the meeting for lack of attendee or sponsor interest or financial issues or anything under your control.
- There's such a thing as hole-in-one insurance for golf tournaments so you can run a contest with a big prize for an attendee hitting a hole-in-one. If the attendee wins, the insurance pays it, not you.
- You can hire someone to do a professional risk assessment of your meeting.

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### 3. **Membership Recruitment and/or Retention**

- Organisations should ask themselves whether they should see their members as “members” in the traditional sense or rather customers?
- Should the focus be the immediate members or the overall reach/impact of the organization in the respective community but beyond the immediate members.
- Consider different categories of membership (with lower fees and varying benefits) to retain/attract members who may not want to go for the “one size fits all” approach.
- Organizations should review their communications and determine whether they communicate effectively and efficiently and focus on constantly showing members (and potential members) the organizational impact and the value the organization provides.
- Recognize new members through official Society channels/ recognize members who reach their 5/10/15/20... year anniversary to highlight their commitment.
- Streamline your communications and make them – as much as possible – personalized to your members. For example, in renewal letters, list for them what value your organization provided to them specifically (if possible). (Example: for trade organizations, list the very specific services each member took advantage of in the course of the year and/or highlight the direct impact of the organization’s efforts on the members daily business).
- Know your current and potential members – try to collect as much demographic data as possible to know in what target audiences your strength lies. This allows you also to be more personalized in your approach of them.
- Ask/involve your members - Conduct regular surveys or quick polls to recognize trends, pick up ideas or areas of weakness. Also - ask lost members why they did not renew.
- Offer incentives to members to join (ie a few months free membership, a particular discount, a particular free product/service).
- Tie membership in with something else (ie. a congress registration)
- To increase retention and combine with a fee increase consider offering “reduced” renewal fees if paid at a specific deadline and charge a higher fee for late payments (“incentive” or “penalty”)

### 4. **Using Event to Build Brand Awareness**

(Had some lively discussions)

### 5. **Building Relationships in New Markets**

- Cost effective growth – i.e. how do you grow without breaking the bank? Solution included research, start small, build relationships.
- Growing in markets with limited relationships – i.e. what are the challenges of establishing a new market and how do you grow with limited relationships
- Growing in developing countries – challenges included government involvement, corruption and financial and knowledge support. Overcoming some of these issues needed to be worked on an individual case to case basis and finding solutions in the growing markets.

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- Cultural issues of Growth – dealing with business attitudes and ways of communicating in growing markets. I.e. adopting a more local approach to these

## 6. Conference Sponsorship

- Need to partner with your sponsors to construct sponsorship packages that reflect their needs and respond to their organizational goals.
- This requires a year-round partnership with lots of communication around the topic.
- While every group is different and can provide different benefits, we discussed the importance of flexibility around sponsorship packages.
- The importance of prospecting new leads and expanding your target market to both horizontal and vertical industries was also discussed as an opportunity for growth.

## 8. Hybrid & Virtual Conferences

- Many associations are still trying to decide just how to use virtual meeting components into their education strategies. Whether synched audio/PP or just webinars or video of keynotes, pricing seems to still be a big issue. No one really has a solid formula for pricing. Some are pricing less than if the attendees went to the live event, while others are pricing higher as the member or non member did not have to travel to have access to the content.
- Seems like everyone agreed that hosting virtual meeting content either after the meeting or while the meeting is going on does not seem to impact the attendance of the live event. Everyone agrees that the virtual meeting appeals to a different market. Some associations are using mobile apps to give an overview or “teaser” of the sessions at the live conference reminding that if they cannot attend the session, it will be downloadable at a later date.
- Electronic Posters on demand seem to be of very good value for the most part. Many associations are using this successfully already with their annual meetings. A new twist is to let some attendees present their papers for just 10 minutes at the live conference. This gives those the option that like the live interaction to have a brief interactive session while not penalizing those that are not good presenters.
- Webinars still very popular and most associations are continuing to use them as a good member value and a way to build interest in the association
- Some associations have started to use summary of key presentations that are then posted online to help build interest in the content the association provides.
- The latest format being used involves taking the “best of” content from existing meetings and using it to build other meetings around it in countries or regional markets in other areas of the world. The local volunteers bring in local experts to add the relevance to the content in a very local context. This is especially important in regions of the world where members or the interested audiences cannot attend the live events.
- Some healthcare associations in Europe are now running virtual congresses for 3 months! Each day new content is posted on the portal for those that have paid to attend.

## 10. Expanding to Latin America

- Key importance of having local partners for effectiveness, both to open doors and for implementation/execution in the region
- Value of understanding cultural norms (language, concepts of authority, power, time, relationships; big difference between Brazil and rest of the continent; unique cultures in each country)
- Critical need to have very explicit contracts to spell out expectations for conferences/events, with the realization that in the region timing and deliverables mean different things to different people, even within a contractual relationship
- For conferences organization, Colombia, and in particular Cartagena, is emerging as a prime location for consideration; Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Mexico City are also key destinations for business events

## 11. Green Meetings

- Participants have initiated several 'ad hoc', tactical actions in their offices and events
  - paper use reductions/ recycled paper
  - energy efficiency
  - recycling
- Participants lacked a strategic approach.
- Much of the discussion was about how to get started, how to improve performance and how to get suppliers engaged to support a sustainable event outcome.
- Surprisingly, a number of the participants shared that they are currently including expectations for sustainable supplier performance in both RFPs and contracts.
- The planners from agencies were only starting to learn about green and sustainable events where the association based planners were driving change in their organizations and suppliers.
- The agency based planners who had awareness of sustainable event principles, or who had taken action, had done so because of client request.
- There was some discussion about regional differences and how greening is more difficult in certain locations who lack infrastructure or cultural awareness of sustainable practices (transport systems, waste management, diversity, fair labor, etc)
- both sessions reviewed the upcoming sustainable event standards both as drivers of industry change and as support for creating more strategic processes

## 12. Holding a Meeting in China

- Associations in China:
  - China has more than 60,000 trade associations with 426 headquartered in Beijing
  - Associations are grouped in umbrella associations: CMA, CAS, CAST, CCPIT
  - CMA: covers all medical fields and includes 84 speciality societies with more than 460,000 members
  - CAS: covers more than 190 associations, with six sections and 12 regional branches
  - CAST: is composed of 167 national professional societies and hundreds of local branches of various levels
- Meeting registration in China:
- International congresses held in China need to go through 2 levels of approvals – Central Government and the Province or Ministry. Approval is needed:
  - Congress organize by UN
  - International governmental or non-governmental congress
  - Normal international congress with over 100 foreign participants or total of over 400 participants
  - International science and technology congress with over 300 foreign participants or total of over 800 participants
- Approval process through umbrella organizations
- Tax:
  - There is no VAT and therefore not VAT refund
  - A 5.5% business tax has to be paid on revenue
  - A 15% withholding tax has to be paid on funds transferred out to the country. Therefore advice: to only have as much revenue occurred in China as expenses

## 13. Social Networks and Online Communities

Lively discussions included:

- What is keeping you up at night in social media implementation
- Where to begin?
- How do I know what media to select
- How can you simplify social media
- How are you building your authentic brand through social media
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Who is responsible for posting
- Depends on the size of the staff generally a communications person or intern
- How many posts
- Depends on what is authentic to you most have a few posts per week.
- A great place to start is create a social media policy that has
  - Goals
  - Objectives
  - Results
  - Legal disclaimer
  - Blogging
  - Video
  - Try to respond to friends
  - Information overload
  - What is the right content to drive a campaign
  - Younger staff is pushing us to
  - Now I only manage email
  - Intrusion

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- Not on any
- Build show awareness
- Spike in buzz
- How to leverage better
- How do I become the page people want to follow
- Advice - do it as a team
- Live chat with exhibitor
- We have a plan
- We have a schedule
- Social media policy
- What's the right content
- Be clear on your brand
- Be clear on the goal
- Blog - then break down to other tools
- Content is building the policy
- It all drives to/from website

#### **15. Using Social Media to Market your Event**

- Social Media can be defined as "technological communication tools used to develop professional and personal relationships, to foster discussion, and to promote engagement and participation among a community of users"
- Pros of using social media: quick, broad reach of communication, interactive tools and applications, ease of use
- Cons of using social media: "information overload," privacy and sharing concerns, some difficulty in measuring effectiveness (with the exception of statistics)
- To stand out in social media, you need to use innovation and creativity while maintaining focus on what your audience wants to see/learn