

Conference approaches



1. 0Introduction This report has been completed at the request of the conference organisers of the Europe & Scotland Conference to be held on the 5th February 2013. It gives details of the new trends and approaches to organising conferences and includes information on delegate profiles, conference programmes, destinations, venue formats and selection and technology.

It will also offer recommendations for options for the conference. 2.

0Procedures While completing this report the following procedures and processes of research were completed – internet search engines trade journals trade websites trade reports completed by industry experts. Full details of resources can be found in the references section.

13. 0Findings 3. 1Delegate Profiles & Conference Programmes When organising a conference the most important information that has to be researched is the demographic of the potential delegates. They can be categorised into three general sectors – generation x, y and z. All these demographics have different wants, needs and expectations and these will help to construct a suitable marketing plan. Generation X, people born between 1966 and 1976 are defined as having a ??? what??™ s in it for me??? attitude and are generally highly educated. They have a high level of concern for financial planning but generally do not have a good perspective of the social issues that surround them.

Generation Y, people born between 1977 and 1994 are known to be ??? sophisticated, technology wise, and immune to traditional marketing and sales techniques???. They have been surrounded by the boom in television,

media and internet since a very young age and this has given them a high standard of expectations. Generation Z, people born between 1995 and 2012, have not yet been defined as such but they have also been brought up in a very technology led environment. This may in time affect their social skills and manners.

Political assurance will be very hard for them to accept having witnessed the fall of the banks and the recession in Britain. Personal safety may also play a big part in their concerns, this stemming from them witnessing 9/11 and other terrorist attacks. With these three general demographics in mind conference organisers have to be able to create suitable marketing strategies with them in mind.

This will also help them decide on conference programmes. The organisers must be able to offer attractive conference packages, including interesting content (with regards to speakers and workshops etc), appropriate technology and also tailor-made entertainment programmes. Although these demographics offer organisers information on general needs, wants and expectations, this will not always be enough to determine what will work best. They will also have find out specifics of what delegates are looking for (and more importantly what they are willing to pay for). This can be done by market research, gaining feedback from previous delegates and targeting forums and focus groups. Organisers need to be able to attract delegates and they can do this by having a dynamic website, appropriate marketing and e-marketing, a good public relations plan and by making the process of registering for a conference as simple and quick as possible. Whether an organiser is matching delegates to a pre-planned conference programme or <https://assignbuster.com/conference-approaches/>

creating a delegate base and matching a conference to their needs, wants and expectations, they must work to a set of aims and objectives that take into consideration the expectations of the conference owners, sponsors and exhibitors.

(Source: The Social Librarian, William J Schroer, Generations X, Y, Z and others)²³. 2Selection of Destinations & VenuesWhen selecting a destination and venue for a conference there are several elements that need to be taken into consideration. It needs to be in a appropriate destination that all delegates are going to be able to travel to, the venue has to be in-keeping with the culture and values of the organisation holding the conference and it must also be fit for purpose. You must also take into consideration the basics of cost, capacity and availability. There are numerous options for conference venues available from hotels and purpose built conference facilities to unusual venues such as castles and stately homes but whatever kind of venue you have in mind you must decide on the best process for finding and choosing a venue. There are many ways that this can be done including venue finding websites and companies or manual research. You can use all three to complete a vast amount of research, followed then by short listing and then by personal visits. One of the more popular approaches to selecting destinations and venues is by using the AIM Accreditation service which sets a national standard for the meetings and conference industry.

Venues and destinations registered under the AIM scheme are given regular ??? venue health checks??? and are rated over three levels – entry level, silver and gold – by having this status it allows venues and destinations to work to the standards set and allows them to have a better

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footing in the industry and allows them to be more competitive. By using AIM accredited venues and destination conference organisers can be assured that they will be provided with a quality assured site, the staff will be efficient and working to the level of best practice that has been established by AIM and that all legal compliance will be held. (Source: Conference News, Calder Conference demands AIM from preferred venues, 15/11/12)³.

³Conference Formats & Delivery There are many formats and delivery options that a conference can take and to find the one that is suitable there are many specifics that need to be taken into consideration including the delegates wants and expectations, the number of delegates attending and the purpose of the conference. Some of the formats and delivery options are listed below –

- Formats – Theatre Style – ideal for large groups and presentations
- U-Shape – ideal for training and presentations
- V-Shape – ideal for smaller meetings
- Classroom – ideal for formal working meetings and conferences

Delivery Options –

- Presentation – ideal for product launches
- Lecture – ideal for keynote speakers and tutorials
- Workshops – ideal for smaller participative groups and information sharing
- Question & Answer Sessions – ideal for the closing of a conference
- Networking – Ideal for trade conferences

Depending on the purpose of the conference more than one option can be used and a popular approach now is to have different tracks in conferences for example – running 3 simultaneous lectures and workshops and having the delegates rotate round them throughout the day and finish with networking and question and answer sessions. This allows delegates to move around the conference and participate directly and not be sitting in the same place all day long. Another new approach that is becoming popular is the use of technology to engage the delegates throughout the conference.

This could be by having a conference application for android and I products (ipads, iphones) or by having a live twitter feed. Social media is fast becoming a major part of holding a conference. (more details on how this is working can be found in section 3. 5)(Source: Adam Smith College unpublished notes and class notes)3. 4TeleconferencingTeleconferencing has come a long way from the initial idea of three or more people speaking over the phone in one collaborative conversation.

With new technologies on the market tel-conferencing now covers a wide range of options these include – Telephone conferencing Video Conferencing Web Conferencing Augmented Reality ConferencingWith technology at the top of a lot of peoples expectations and companies becoming global there has been a rise in the demand for conferencing options. Companies are trying to save money due to the recession and rising travel costs and tel-conferencing software available now is allowing them to do so. It is allowing companies to hold mini conferences at a low cost. It is also allowing delegates who do not have the means to travel far and wide to conferences to still have the opportunity to learn and participate. One example of a company taking full advantage of this is TED Conferences. They are a non-profit organisations who are dedicated to information sharing on a broad range of topics. They hold three annual conferences a year (two in America, one in Edinburgh) but launched a website in 2007 that allows delegates to watch conferences either live online or from their ??? play list???. This is an innovative way of connecting with delegates while keeping the costs to a minimum for majority of the delegates.

Although they are a non profit organisation the way of spreading their information can be useful to other businesses and give conference organisers another option for enhancing their conference by taking these ideas on board. Teleconferencing doesn't have to be on such a large scale as the example above it can also benefit small businesses holding smaller meetings. Also it is now popular to have tel-conferencing facilities at conferences so that delegates can communicate with their other colleagues that are not attending the conference. (Source: www.ted.com, About TED) (Source: National Communications System, Federal Standard 1037C, teleconference, August 7, 1996) 43. 5 Technology As mentioned before in other sections technology is fast becoming a key factor when organising conferences. Not only are delegates expectations high of the technology which should be on offer but is making it easier for organisers to engage their audiences and encourage participation and information sharing.

When planning which technologies to use it is better to break it down into three areas – pre-conference, during conference and post-conference. Using technology pre-conference can ensure engagement of delegates, easy registration and booking options and generally simplify the planning stage. Some of the technology that could be used or put in place include – On-line registration & booking system (including registration for webcast) Project management software Conference dedicated website and information hotline Quick response code/barcode entry systems Conference Application (ipad, iphone, android) USB Stick (for storing important information about conference instead of paper delegate packs) On-line pre-event forums By using some of the above technologies the conference organiser can attract

the technology wise delegates and ensure that it is easy for delegates to get the information that they require.

By using paperless options such as the barcode entry and the usb sticks you can also show ??? green??? options are a priority for your conference. On-line pre-event forums offer the opportunity for delegates to start discussions on the upcoming topics of a conference and register their interest in them, this then gives the conference organisers the opportunity to gauge the popularity of each topic. During conferences there are many visual technologies that can be used to offer the WOW factor. Some of the technologies that are used have been around for a while but there are new techniques and softwares that are fast becoming popular. The options that are available include – Sound and lights shows (using av equipment) Conference recording and web casting Multimedia presentation software Live social media streaming Wifi Augmented reality Delegates no longer want to sit and listen to someone speaking all day they are looking for something different to keep them engaged and allow them to participate and the options above allow them to do that. People are always interested in science and technology if it is something they haven't seen before. By using things like augmented reality you can really provide them with that.

It provides mind-bending graphics and situations that will impress any delegate. If delegates come away from a conference having seen new technologies and systems they are more likely to return to the next conference and also spread the word to other potential delegates. Post conference is still an important time and by offering something that a delegate can take away is a great way of reminding them what a great

conference they have attended. It is also a great way of building relationships with your delegates and encouraging return business.

Some of the things you can implement post conference include – Online podcasts USB sticks (copies of presentations, recordings etc) Eforum software Feedback options By putting in place an option for delegates to discuss the conference after the event it gives them a chance to catch up, network and take discussions to another level and it also offers you a platform for gaining uncut feedback. By using state of the art technology you can build your reputation in offering first class conference organisation and this in turn will attract more businesses wanting to use your services. It also offers the opportunity to give that WOW factor that delegates are always looking for.

(Source: Adam Smith College Unpublished Notes)³. 6 Emerging Trends and Approaches Within any industry there are always new trends and approaches emerging all the time, and keeping up with these is the key to attracting both business customers and delegates. Some of the emerging trends include – Sustainability – being able to offer sustainable events and being eco-conscious with regards to consumption is becoming of a high priority (for example the London Olympics 2012 was very focused on providing a sustainable event) Wow factor events – people want to be wowed and they want more impressive factors to be present in all events (including conferences) Ancillary and Parallel events – by having an exhibition held at the same time as a conference the owners can split the cost of holding the event Catering Options – As food is becoming a growing trend in itself, the demand for high standards of foods at all events is also growing Generation Y & Z technologies – as discussed previously this is a major trend that is

affecting the conference industry Cost control tactics – as the recession has hit Britain and the world hard the need to control costs has never been so prominent.

International delegates – attracting international delegates has become a trend as this is key for the expansion of the events industry in Britain. There is a major shift happening within the events industry as a whole and it is receiving major amounts of funding from the government to try and increase the growth in business events. In the Autumn statement made by the Chancellor George Osborne he has stated there will be a 25% increase in budget for the UKTI (UK Trade & Investment) who are building relationships with the events industry to try and add value and build upon the 6export potential of Britain being the destination of choice for global conferences and trade shows. (Source: Association for Conference & Events, Trade News, Business Events can identify growth opportunities from the Chancellors Autumn statement)Imex in Frankfurt (the annual organisers of global exhibition for travel, meetings and events) have also identified the top ten challenges that are going to effect the conference and meetings business.

The research was conducted including 100 interviews with leaders and practitioners in the industry, research completed from the last ten years, desk research, a student essay competition and a global survey (750 respondents from 68 countries). The top ten challenges they have outlined are- evolving a distinctive industry persona establishing universal economic impact models proving relevance and value thinking and acting strategically nurturing agility and flexibility personalising and deepening the learning experience experimenting with business models and revenue streams

adopting value-chain thinking acquiring, retaining and developing talent and embracing diversity developing tomorrows leaders and managers Although the recession has hit business hard as a whole it is being recognised that the business meetings and events can be classified separately as the industry appears to be rising above the challenge. (Source: Imex Power of 10 Study ??“ What does the next decade hold for the global meetings industry, Executive Summary Critical insights and Key challenges, 23rd May 2012) (For full view of research see Appendix1)74. 0ConclusionIn conclusion to the research completed it is clear that the meetings and conference business has a great scope of options to consider when planning and organising.

Matching delegates to conference programmes, selecting destinations and venues, choosing formats and delivery modes and teleconferencing are all becoming more technical due to new technologies. The needs, wants and expectations of delegates, conference owners, conference sponsors and exhibitors are also changing and are of high priority during the planning stages. The recession has played a major part of how the industry has been working but from the research by Imex Frankfurt and the Chancellors autumn statement it is clear that investment and growth is showing to be valid in this sector. 5. 0RecommendationsWith regards to the Europe and Scotland Conference I would like to offer the following recommendations to the organisers for planning and organising the conference – Complete market research on potential delegates and identify their needs, wants and expectations (with regards x, y, z generations). A website should be established with an on-line registration and booking system put in place to ensure it is easy for the delegates. An on-line pre-event forum should be put

in place to gauge the interest of the delegates in the proposed topics of discussion. As it is a global conference, teleconferencing and webcasting options should be made available for delegates who cannot attend (at a charge increasing profit margins).

Sound and Light shows could be implemented for the for the parts of the conference held in the main auditorium adding wow factor. Using usb sticks to give delegates the information required instead of paper delegate packs (paper copies should still be made available for those who do not have access to computers). A conference app for iphones, ipads and android devices will also keep in with having a paperless conference. Ensure formats chosen for workshops and lectures are fit for purpose (theatre, classroom etc).

Having live social media streaming throughout the whole conference so that all delegates can keep up with what is going on. Record all aspects of the conference and give out copies to delegates when leaving Ensure there is a high standard of catering options (including any dietary requirements). The pre-event forum can then be updated for a post-event forum to gain feedback.

86. 0References The Social Librarian, William J Schroer, Generations X, Y, Z and others. [www. socialmarketing. org/newsletter/features/generation3. htm](http://www.socialmarketing.org/newsletter/features/generation3.htm) Conference News, Calder Conference demands AIM from preferred venues, 15/11/12. [www. aceinternational. org/news/trade-news/616-calder-conferences-to-demand-aim-from-preferred-status-venues. html](http://www.aceinternational.org/news/trade-news/616-calder-conferences-to-demand-aim-from-preferred-status-venues.html) [www. ted. com/pages/about](http://www.ted.com/pages/about) About TED National Communications System, Federal Standard 1037C, teleconferencing. [http://www. its. bldrdoc. gov/fs-1037/fs-1037c. htm](http://www.its.bldrdoc.gov/fs-1037/fs-1037c.htm) <https://assignbuster.com/conference-approaches/>

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