

CARMEL FOLEY • DEBORAH EDWARDS • KARIN WEBER



# BUSINESS EVENT LEGACIES

GLOBAL  
INDUSTRY  
CASE  
STUDIES



# **Business Event Legacies: Global industry case studies**

**Carmel Foley, Deborah Edwards,  
Karin Weber**

**(G) Goodfellow Publishers Ltd**

**(G)** Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,  
26 Home Close, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PS  
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: on file.

ISBN: 978-1-911635-31-4

DOI: 110.23912/9781911635291-4966

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Design and typesetting by P.K. McBride, [www.macbride.org.uk](http://www.macbride.org.uk)

Cover design by Cylinder

Cover image credit: <https://www.istockphoto.com/portfolio/Giii>

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## Foreword

A defining issue for the meetings industry over the past decade has been a fundamental transition of its value proposition from one based essentially on travel-related benefits to one that instead recognizes its real value as being associated with the economic, professional, academic and social benefits arising from these events. This was hardly news to organizers but required a big shift in thinking for many host destinations and suppliers.

The problem was – and remains – that the capability for measuring these more diffuse benefits has not kept up with changing attitudes. Most jurisdictions still rely on what are essentially visitor economy measures, such as direct revenues, hotel room-nights and economic impact measures, for the simple reason that these are easy to calculate and report on, in terms of justifying what for most destination is a major investment in the infrastructure and ongoing promotion required to compete. However, the result is an ongoing sense – particularly amongst those in the tourism sector – that these are the only ‘real’ values associated with this industry.

Even though more governments – and certainly organizers – now accept that the greatest legacies of meetings, conventions and exhibitions are derived from the kinds of exchanges and interactions that take place there, our collective grip on corresponding measures still has a long way to go, for some understandable reasons. For one, many legacies are not generated immediately, and instead only reveal themselves completely over time. For another, as critical as advances in economic prospects, academic advancement and professional capabilities may be, they are essentially qualitative measures and certainly don’t lend themselves to the kind of monetization that would facilitate direct comparison with spending or economic impact numbers.

Enter the incredibly valuable work undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney. Working closely over many years with pioneering organizations like Business Events Sydney and the Joint Meetings Industry Council, Carmel Foley and Deborah Edwards have developed and advanced measurement of the values associated with business events in ways that recognize their often-elusive but nevertheless important values. At the same time, they have helped to create frameworks in which these values can be better demonstrated and documented. In doing so, they have benefited not only an industry that needs such measures to support their ongoing role in their respective communities but assisted event organizers and their related associations and industries, many of whom have been struggling with the same issues.

It is an ongoing, but hugely important process. The fact that recognizable values are difficult to quantify with precision should not be an excuse to ignore them, and yet that is exactly what has happened for many years. By accepting the

importance of clarifying and illustrating the broader benefits, as well as a long-term view of how those benefits are often only achieved incrementally through the kinds of interactions and exchanges that only take place in the collegial environment of business events, Edwards and Foley (UTS) have been major players in facilitating a necessary transition.

The contents of this publication illustrate the progress that has been made and, equally important, the further steps that are necessary to achieve the legitimacy these new event measures need and deserve. From an industry perspective, we highly recommend *Business Event Legacies* for the insights it provides into what will likely remain the top priority for the business events sector for some time to come.

Rod Cameron, Executive Director,  
Joint Meetings Industry Council

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## About the authors

**Carmel Foley** is Associate Professor in Event Management with the UTS Business School at the University of Technology Sydney. She is internationally recognised for her business events research which has influenced public policy in Australia and redefined how business events are valued and measured globally. Key industry projects delivered with her co-investigator Associate Professor Deborah Edwards include the *Beyond Tourism Benefits* research series commissioned by Business Events Sydney and the *Value of Meetings* case study project commissioned by the Joint Meetings Industry Council. Carmel applies her expertise in developing economic and social impact measurement methodologies

in a range of event, tourism, sport and leisure contexts and her work is underpinned by a mission to support the economic, social and cultural prosperity of our communities.



**Deborah Edwards** is an Associate Professor and Adjunct Fellow with the Business School, University of Technology Sydney. Deborah has varied research interests including business events, tourism sustainability, and visitor experiences. She has a significant number of publications with her co-author Associate Professor Carmel Foley with whom she wrote *The Power of Conferences, Stories of serendipity, Innovation and Driving Social Change*. This book explores the long-term impacts of conferences through the stories of 10 prominent Australians who are synonymous with important societal outcomes. *The Power of Conferences* explains how unexpected encounters at conferences have led to significant global discoveries.



**Karin Weber** is an Associate Professor in the School of Hotel & Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She has published widely in her two major areas of research interest – service failure/recovery and business events; her research has been recognized with numerous international awards. Karin has served in various editorial capacities (co-editor, associate editor, coordinating editor, regional editor) for event-related journals in addition to serving on editorial boards of top tourism/hospitality journals. She was the lead editor and chapter author of an early book on convention tourism published by Haworth Press New York in 2002, and chaired the first Convention and Expo Summit in Asia in 2003. She also consulted for various international business event industry associations. Karin was a member of the international Advisory Panel for the Joint Meeting Industry Council's *Value of Meetings* case study project, led by Carmel Foley and Deborah Edwards.

