

Winning Meetings and Events for your Venue

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Preface

Although, at first sight, we may appear to come from dissimilar professional backgrounds – Anthony as a practitioner in venue management, sales and operations; and Rob as an educator and trainer specialising in conference management – we both share a strong conviction that venues of all types play a powerful role in today’s meetings industry. Venues from conference centres and hotels to ‘unusual’, non-traditional venues can considerably enhance the experience of those who attend the meetings and events that they host, and can play a key part in helping those meetings and events achieve their various goals and objectives.

The past few decades have seen far-reaching changes in both the quality and quantity of the venues operating in the meetings industry. On the one hand, we have witnessed vast advances in the ways in which venues are designed and constructed, resulting in more flexible, ergonomic meeting spaces that can easily adapt to changing meetings trends and enrich the experience of attendees. On the other, we have seen a considerable expansion in the supply of new venues offering facilities for meetings and events. Part of this expansion has come as a result of the growing number of new destinations targeting the market for meetings and events, particularly in regions such as South-East Asia and the Middle East, where the recent increase in the supply of conference centres and hotels with meetings facilities has been phenomenal. But part of this expansion has also resulted from the rapid growth in non-traditional venues, generated by facilities such as museums, theatres and tourist attractions increasingly targeting meetings and events as a secondary source of income.

However, while changes in the physical product of venues have been widely acknowledged, we believe that insufficient attention has been paid to the skills and knowledge of those people who are employed by venues to identify potential buyers and persuade them to hold their meetings in their facility. Every venue has at least one employee with responsibility for winning business; and larger venues may have an entire team of colleagues engaging in sales and marketing activities. Their job

titles vary widely, but Sales and Marketing Manager, Conference and Banqueting Manager and Events Manager are some of those most commonly used in the English-speaking world.

It is clear that any venue's success in the meetings sector depends directly upon the effectiveness of these employees in winning meetings, conferences and other events. For, although demand for face-to-face meetings is expanding in all world regions, the supply of venues has outstripped this expansion, leading to a fiercely competitive market situation.

Against this background of intense competition between venues, we have identified a major challenge: a significant proportion of those with responsibility for selling meetings facilities in their venues are poorly prepared for this task, largely due to the distinct lack of any easily accessible source of information on the techniques and tools necessary to do this work in an effective manner and bring the best possible results. The effect is that very many of those charged with filling the meetings spaces of their venues with events are under-performing through their lack of awareness of the best sales and marketing practices. This can result in widespread lost opportunities for winning business – and therefore lost revenue for the venue, a lack of job satisfaction for those in venue sales and marketing posts, and consequent high turnover among such employees.

This book represents a key step towards filling this commonly-found gap in knowledge and expertise. It has been written to respond to the demands of two principal categories of readers. First, those already employed in sales and marketing positions in venues of all types will find in the book a clear and comprehensive guide to ideas and techniques that will enable them to expand their existing knowledge of how to win business for their venues. Second, the book's content will be welcomed by today's fast-growing body of students of hospitality, tourism and events management, for whom a career in venue sales and marketing is an attractive vocation. The content of this book will prepare them for successful employment in sales positions in any type of venue currently targeting the market for meetings and events.

In *Winning Meetings and Events for your Venue*, we have combined our extensive experience and up-to-date knowledge of venue sales

techniques and the meetings and events market with examples of best-practice from venues around the world to produce a book that we are confident will be a source of new ideas and useful, practical techniques to anyone already working in venue sales or planning to do so in the near future.

Rob Davidson and Anthony Hyde. January 2014.

About the authors



Rob Davidson is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Greenwich where he teaches Events Management, focusing on business events. His principal area of expertise is the conference and incentive travel sector, and he writes widely on this subject. He regularly contributes articles to the professional business tourism press, including *Conference News*, in which he writes a monthly column. In addition, he runs his own consultancy, and has undertaken research for many high-profile MICE organisations.

Each year, at the EIBTM trade show in Barcelona, he launches his annual Trendswatch report on trends in the conference and incentive industry. On five occasions, he has been included in *Conference & Incentive Travel* magazine's 'Power 50' – the 50 most influential people in the UK conference industry.



Anthony Hyde is a specialist in venue management, sales and operations. Formerly General Manager of the Business Events division at the Barbican, one of Europe's largest combined arts and conference centres, Anthony was responsible for sales, marketing, public relations, management and technical production for conferences, banqueting, exhibitions and corporate hospitality. He focussed the Business Events strategy on content and the objectives that underpin meetings and events. He has steered the business successfully through a difficult economic period, while continually developing the product, launching a new venue at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and capitalising on the success of the Olympics.

Anthony is past president of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) UK and Ireland Chapter and remains an active member. He also sits on the boards of the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) and the London City Selection, a consortium of venues within the City of London which he also co-founded.

Anthony now works with clients internationally on all aspects of venue management, including strategic direction, business planning, design and operations.