

**PCMA Idea Exchange**  
**IMEX 2010 – Thursday, May 27**

**Facilitator:** Claire Smith, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre

**Session Information:** The goal of the session was to provide an informal environment that allowed for networking and the creation of ideas and solutions to overcome challenges tailored to the attendee. Ideas were exchanged (rapid fire) among attendees for each topic and shared with the group as a whole. The best ideas were collected and shared below:

- **Attendance Building**

- Incentives to attend: gauge needs/ideas during sessions
  - Compare expectations from previous conferences
  - Need to survey why they did not attend or why they did
  - Partner with other groups – example: local registrant
  - Use Professionals/attendees as volunteers
  - Use your location in your marketing campaign (Examples: Rt. 66 – 66 great reasons to come; Las Vegas – 21 lucky reasons)
  - Social media, sponsors
- \*Key is how to convince your base why to come to the meeting

- **Cost Savings**

- *REUSE*
  - Ice sculptures
  - Passing foods and donating leftover
  - Use internal material existing in-house
  - Bring your own bag
  - Centerpieces
  - Herb pots
  - Toy donations
- *RETHINK*
  - Walking distance to the venue
  - Flexible dates
    - shoulder dates
    - yield management
    - “ask the question”
    - Change patterns
  - Materials online or CD ROM
- *REDUCE*
  - Portion size for food is bite sized

Smaller glasses/plates  
Online material  
-basic schedule  
-reduce print news  
Passed vs. buffet  
Booths- moveable furniture

- **Crisis Management**

- Put yourself in the situation of the delegate
- When travelling abroad, use local DMC to assist with emergency situation
- Responsibility: who's refunded and can assist with crisis
- Be proactive and trouble shoot
- Emergency Preparation Plan
  - Have mobile access for delegates to communicate
  - Inform your embassy of your destinations of travel
- Physical presence of someone in charge and decide who this is
- Information is key
- Plan in place – practice how to work plan
- Depending on situation, establish contact with police

- **Green & Socially Responsible Meetings**

- Having a plan is always important and a budget is also a critical part of meeting planning. One planner suggested that each meeting should budget 10% of time/money for giving back to the community. By making it part of the budget it would be recognized as a part of the program. Another suggested that the meeting plan include a few sample questions that the planner asks throughout the process, such as: Is this the most environmentally friendly way to meet this need or perform this activity? How can we reduce and or reuse?
- Getting input from local meeting participants on ways to green a meeting and be socially responsible was suggested by a planner that said this practice had given them special insight into the local community and its unique opportunities that didn't apply to other locations.
- Convention/Visitor Bureaus and DMC's were identified as a good source for identifying and coordinating community work projects where a group could have a meaningful location impact.
- One planner talked about international travelers needing the first day of arrival to adjust. Their company has begun using that day for community work projects. They have found that light physical activity helps people adjust to time zone variations. And it provides an opportunity for the participants to 'break the ice'.
- Several planners have a statement in their RFP requiring the convention center/hotel to explain their green/sustainability policies/practices. That company uses a point system to evaluate proposals and the strength of the green/sustainability program accounts for 15% of the total points possible.

- Some planners maintained a list of cities that receive first look when shopping for a location because they have unique programs such as public transportation, strong recycling programs, high-focus on renewable energy and other sustainability programs.
  - One group has begun holding some portions of the meetings outdoors in natural light. They also require the hotel and convention center to reduce room lighting to a minimum when the room is not being utilized. By designing the program to place networking and discussion sessions at the end of the day they can vacate the meeting rooms early, reducing cooling and lighting usage. They have also found that the fresh air and natural light seem to energize the participants making those late afternoon sessions much more productive.
  - One planner adopted a “friend of the environment” statement with several requirements. Any meeting delegate that adhered to all points was awarded a special sticker on their name badge. The peer pressure for this special acknowledgement worked to support the meetings efforts at sustainability.
  - Some organizations have developed sub-committees for sustainability and/or social responsibility. This helps get the membership/participants involved and brings new ideas forward.
  - It was suggested that every meeting should have a simple statement of how the meeting/organization intends to reduce its environmental impact. It may sound simple, but how many meetings do you know that do this? And if you don’t state what you intend to do, it usually doesn’t get done.
- **Negotiating**
    - Date devotion
    - Language Barriers
    - Corporate & Association clients
    - Different cultures= different negotiating (Example: Big difference in US and Asia on what is expected, changes, etc.)
    - Win/win should increase value, not decrease value.
      - Understand each other
      - How do you shape the situation
      - Transparency
      - Cultural difference should not be excuse, we should all be flexible
      - The objectives of all parties needs to be considered
    - Negotiation doesn’t finish after the contract is signed (Example: communicate the details)
    - US may move to the model of charging meeting room rental fees and less room blockage control
    - Delegate rates
      - Sponsoring the coffee break
      - Culture difference of food (Example: Don’t want to waste food Asia to Spain)
    - Talking on the phone is important - build a relationship
  - **Social Media**

- Social Media Users:
    - 1% create content
    - 9% engage
    - 90% lurk
  - Can be volunteer run
  - Let communities form, some will dissolve, some will actually want to meet face to face
  - Don't pick platform, pick based on your communications/marketing plan and where your members are
  - Can't control – but monitor activity and use the information software to help (Examples: Buzz metrics, Google analytics, etc. - manually using heavy search words)
  - Build interest by topic, drive into website
  - On site – Twitter feeds to speaker for questions, comments on site in advance and afterwards
  - Make repackaged meeting info – webcasts, workshops available after the meeting
  - Let people know what they missed
  - Just jump in! Find an interested user.
- **Sponsorship**
    - It's all about the “package” – create an inventory of assets and group in packages
    - Offer exclusivity so that the sponsor “takes the spotlight” and gets credit for making the event better because of their support
    - Start early – set “main sponsor” established early - helps sell other sponsors and has longer lead time to sell.
    - Selling sponsorships is a skill – hire someone that knows the ins and outs of sponsorships.
    - Some PCO's – have a lot of experience at packaging and selling