

# **ICCA Research, Sales & Marketing Programme 2014**

## **Business on the Books**

Here is a very unpolished check-list of actions that can be taken by ICCA members between winning an international association congress bid and the time when the meeting takes place (often 3 to 6 years or even more), to identify new business opportunities (PR, new events, new clients, more delegates, better outcomes from the meeting, etc). The contents are a combination of material that ICCA has been gathering over the last year plus ideas generated by a mass brainstorming exercise by the 146 participants at the 2014 Research, Sales & Marketing Programme, held in Amsterdam.

ICCA will shortly be turning this rough material into a more structured and fully described advisory publication for all ICCA members, and we would like to thank all the RSMP delegates for their invaluable contribution.

The actions are divided into those which target the leaders and organisers of the meeting (A), and those which target delegates, sponsors and speakers (B).

### **Time periods**

The numbers shown in brackets after each action relate to the following time periods:

1. Immediately after bid is won
2. Between bid and one year out (could be 2-5 years!)
3. Between one year and one month out
4. During month prior to start of event
5. During event
6. Immediately post-event

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## **A: Dealing with leaders/organisers**

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### **Local ambassadors/champions**

PR releases about successful bid, focused on Ambassador's story: what it means for them and their field of study or business. Think about different messages locally, nationally, internationally. (1)

Use Ambassador's connections in local university to spread news of the story through the whole academic community (newsletters, websites, student journalists, etc). (1)

Through local Ambassador's connections with local students in this field, ask them to set up a long-term interactive platform for the potential delegates, so they can start communicating about the academic issues, whilst encouraging long-term thinking about attending. (2)

Social media campaign after winning bid, not just through ICCA member's own channels, but through the local ambassador's links, and the links of their local students in this academic field – how do they feel about this big international event coming to their destination? (1, 2, 3)

Celebrate/recognise success after event, via PR and/or special activity such as tea with the Mayor. (6)

Set up interviews with local press to explain the significance of the meeting. (4,5,6)

Identify what can be done with local ambassador to help local students get the most from the event coming to your destination (eg, can they register for the full event at a low cost, can they act as volunteer helpers, will speakers visit the university). Because this may be a big motivating factor for the ambassador, working with this person may be the best route,

but otherwise contacts with association executives may achieve similar results. (2-5)

Potential “super ambassador” who could be used over many years to recruit others from related fields; think about this early, don’t wait till after the event. (3-6)

Use Ambassador to help set up new event in this field that the destination can “own”, assuming main event won’t return to region/country for a long time but demand for education in this field will remain. Only logical if field is of high importance to destination’s economic development strategy. (6)

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### **Association executives (eg CEO, Meeting Planner)**

Ask for bid win to be announced to live audience at the next edition of this Congress (even if this is many years in advance). (1,2)

Ask for advice on writing press releases (or arrange joint releases) about the significance of the event itself (compared to the Local Ambassador being quoted about impact on local academic field) overall. Release stories on winning bid, just before event arrives, when in town and when leaving. Arrange a long-term media plan with the association. (1-6)

Find out if the Meeting Planner is personal friends with other Meeting Planners responsible for other worthwhile events. Can they refer or introduce? (2)

What other events does the association run, apart from this one. Are they planning to spin-off new events in the future (what are the hottest/biggest topics within the Congress programme, for example). Could you or others in the destination pitch for these? (2)

Which other associations enjoy a “friendly relationship” with this association (in the same way that ICCA has

relationships with AIPC, PCMA, IAPCO, ASAE, etc). This can be a new gateway to reach decision-makers for new events. Use ICCA database to research relationships between associations so you can ask: "Do you have any relationship with...?" rather than "Which other associations do you have a relationship with?" (2)

Build relationship with senior exec responsible for marketing the Congress, and ensure destination/venue messages are incorporated into all communications (eg by providing high quality photos, pre-written descriptive copy, helpful links to sources of information). (2,3)

Set up a more sophisticated joint marketing model (see Glasgow Model example – winner of ICCA Best Marketing Award 2011 – BMA section of ICCA website). (2,3)

Allocate long-term Client Manager in your team, so association meeting planner has a friendly contact for any questions even before the detailed planning phase. (2)

Offer to send venue/destination reps to previous year's Congress to understand better how the event functions (separate role from going to promote to potential delegates), which will enable a closer relationship to be built with the association executives/leaders, as well as providing practical information to improve the event the following year.

Obtain as much information as possible about: delegates, sponsors, exhibitors, speakers. Explore how to communicate with all or any of these groups. High level permission will be needed, so this will take time to set up. (2,3)

Video interviews: CEO on why the event was a success and why it was so great to work with PCO/Venue/Destination; Meeting Planner on why the local team was such a professional group to work with. Use in subsequent marketing material, especially when aiming at events or associations which have

some kind of similarity with this event (size, general area of interest, level of complexity, etc). (5,6)

Find out whether their academic/business publications take advertising or advertorial, which can be used to promote the success of hosting the event, to encourage similar events to consider the destination/venue/PCO. (6)

Sponsor/support the association's newsletter to its community, over the key marketing period, and also immediately after the event leaves. (3,4,6)

Potential clients for ICCA client-supplier workshops. (2,6)

Obtain permission for representatives from other associations with similar characteristics (related science, size, complexity) to visit during the Congress, and if possible to meet briefly with reps from the association. In some cases it can be possible to arrange full "behind the scenes" visits for a small number or even a single event rep. Requires advance planning. (3-5)

Help association to identify local CSR/Charity to be supported whilst in destination, in line with the association's mission. (3,4)

Could permission be given for live webcams be set up anywhere relating to the Congress, so general networking and local buzz can be communicated? If so, these could be sponsorship opportunities, or social media focal points. (3-5)

If association is organising hybrid/video broadcasts of certain elements of the event, offer to promote through your own channels. Offer to provide destination-branded material to enhance the appearance of such broadcasts, or supporting onsite material. (5)

Set up thank-you reception for the Meeting Planner and their team. Great time to find out more about potential for

additional events, or to get commitment to make introductions to other decision-influencers or planners with potential business. (6)

What key statistics or records happened at the event? Ask the association leader or meeting planner for facts and figures, memorable highlights, so that these can be promoted through your channels. Offer insights about the positive impact for the destination, and get the association to promote these through their channels. (6)

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**Association volunteer leaders**

Host Board or Committee meetings, and during these find out more about other events and associations that the leaders are involved in. When these are in town, arrange social gathering with key leaders in local universities, as part of process to encourage future ambassadors to step forward. (2)

Potential clients for ICCA client-supplier workshops. (2,6)

Set up meetings with mayor and other politicians just before event starts to welcome VIPs, whilst drawing politicians' attention to importance of event. (5)

Get local VIPs to sign Declaration of Support for the mission or goals of the association (the key focus of the association's volunteer leaders), to help them raise public awareness about societal or healthcare issues (eg "End HIV/AIDS ignorance" or "Steps to reduce Diabetes" etc). (4-6)

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## **B. Dealing with delegates/sponsors/speakers**

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### **Delegates (potential and actual)**

Delegate boosting to a variety of potential audiences, in partnership with the association. During promotion, incorporate invitations to make contact if they are responsible for decision-making for other events. (2,3)

Create and send out a coherent “picture story” about the venue and/or destination to give delegates a clearer idea about where they will be going, to inspire and encourage further registrations. (3)

Set up clear visa and VAT information online resource specifically for each meeting, in which you bring together all factual resources to help delegates worldwide to easily work out what they need to do and by when. Promote visa waiver programmes if they exist. (2,3)

Set up interactive – “all your questions answered” site for potential delegates. Find ways to help delegates communicate with each other about what they will be doing socially when they arrive, to help them meet up. (3,4)

Set up an edited form of the local destination website for the event, so delegates can find relevant information more easily than in the full-scale version. (3,4)

Attend previous editions of the Congress, but don't just promote the Congress, also gather information about the delegates and find out potential for other events. (2,3)

On-site or post-event survey can combine feedback about this event with information about whether they are in any way responsible for other events. (5,6)

On-site competition. "Fill in form, drop off business card, and win a return weekend trip to this city with your partner". Use to ask if there are any other events that could be potential business. Build up list and inform them when other related events are booked. (5)

Set up automated video booth (could be quirky chair or throne, "Big Brother" style) during the event – association can get feedback on the event content whilst you can get feedback on destination, venue, etc. Can be incredibly valuable promotional material. Needs early agreement. (4,5,6)

Create dramatic entrance to main venue or large branded set for delegates to pose for photos and selfies (see "IAmsterdam" giant wording).

Set up more professional video booth for more formal interviews. Could be joint-funded with association, if both parties can use for different objectives. Needs early agreement. (4,5,6)

Offer a fun App about local interests, but with built-in social media functions/games that can facilitate mass promotional messages by delegates about the destination. Needs to be available early, offered at least one year out. (3-5)

Use Welcome/Info desk as a means of obtaining valuable delegate feedback (eg through short competitions/surveys; or through qualitative interviews with smaller numbers of delegates) as well as to provide local information service. (5)

Arrange visible welcome banners in the city, not only to welcome the delegates, but to explain to local population and politicians that this is an important event. (4,5)

Arrange welcome banners/desks in the airport. (4,5)

Negotiate with official airline to run short video stories about the importance of the Mission of the association,

provided this is a generally important issue for the public (eg if hosting a Diabetes meeting, see if the national carrier will run a Diabetes prevention or awareness video during this month whenever their flights are coming into and out of your airport). This may be more valuable to the association than a discount on fares (!). (4-6)

Arrange with airline to publish an article in their official magazine about the association, the meeting, or the problems they are trying to solve. (3-6)

Set up area with iPads containing both info and surveys, for delegates to use. Motivate to complete surveys by promising to give charitable donation for all surveys completed. (5)

Send out a thank-you message to all delegates. (6)

Make sure there are destination/venue questions in the post-event delegate survey. Ask to be copied into answers that explain what delegates have gained from attending (can provide great stories: eg "23% of delegates reported that they felt their knowledge of new techniques has improved as a result of coming to the DESTINATION congress"). (6)

Give all delegates nice "wish you were here" postcards to send to friends and colleagues who aren't attending. (5)

Recruit local enthusiasts to provide delegates with unique insights into your destination, either in the venue or in the city itself (winemakers, artisans/craftsmen, quirky shopkeepers, secretaries of local culture clubs, etc). Use the interaction between these colourful locals and the delegates to create more unique PR stories. (5)

Ask local association representatives to create a personal guide to the destination's coolest bars, shops, cafes, museums, sights (ICCA members in Italy did this for our Congress in Florence, so the city walking tour became a discovery of their

colleagues favourite hidden gems, using a simple map with copy written by colleagues). (5)

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### **Sponsors (potential and actual)**

Obtain advance information on which companies will be sponsoring or exhibiting. Research their meetings history and needs. Invite their corporate meetings to use your PCO/Venue/Destination. (4-6)

Arrange for actual or potential local company sponsors to celebrate the event bid win, and that it is coming to their country/HQ city/etc. So you benefit from the PR channels of the sponsors as well. (1,2)

Arrange site inspection for potential and actual sponsors, to discuss and explore interesting sites for satellite meetings, social events, and other delegate networking opportunities. Use this time to find out more about their own events. Custom-make online information for potential sponsors to use or ask questions through. (2,3)

Whilst attending previous edition of the Congress for delegate boosting purposes, set up individual meetings with each of the key sponsors and exhibitors, to help them prepare better (and of course find out more about their own investment/meetings needs apart from this event). (2,3)

Pass on information about sponsors/exhibitors/venture capitalists to local economic development agency/dept/leaders. Work on joint approach if any of these are candidates to invest in the local region (either new facilities, or investment in existing operations). (2-4)

Research potential local sponsors/exhibitors who the association may not be fully aware of. These might be smaller

or more specialised companies who don't normally exhibit when the event is elsewhere. (2)

Find out if sponsors typically organise satellite events around the congress. If so, offer early advice on how to arrange these, to start building relationships and find out more about their overall promotional/meetings plans. (3,4,5)

Obtain permission to briefly visit the exhibition stands during the event, at a time when they won't be busy talking with delegates. Talk to stand holders to find out who in their company should be approached regarding their corporate meetings. (5)

Will sponsors/exhibitors be making a major new announcement at the Congress? If so, think of PR along the lines: "Company X announces major advance in cancer diagnosis at City Y Congress". Make sure your name is linked to the story. (3-6)

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## **Speakers**

Find out who will be the star speakers, and through the organisers set up lectures for local universities or the general public (depending on the technical level involved), potentially a very strong advocacy and PR approach. (3-5)

Find out if the top speakers' speeches will be recorded and be available for broadcast; add these to your company and/or destination promotional website and links, to show the quality of events you host. (5-6)

Will any speakers be making a major new announcement at the Congress? If so, think of PR along the lines: "Researchers announce major advance in cancer diagnosis at City Y Congress". Make sure your company/destination name is linked to the story, which could get global coverage. (3-6)

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## **GENERAL**

Keep a detailed record of all the work undertaken with each association client, so that a similar comprehensive plan can more easily be agreed and set up for future events.

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