



Gettin' techy wit it

IF you're a fan of the Terminator movies, you might say that the machine uprising has already begun.

We are, after all, nearly all a slave to our smartphones; watch anyone who has just smashed their iPhone's screen. They'll pet it like it's a new born, shakily legged giraffe.

So the rise in event apps should come as no surprise and I can see the usefulness in them, particularly when it comes to juggling venue maps, speaker schedules and itineraries.

Like an extended form of networking, the apps are now incorporating social networking abilities, such as messaging other delegates or reviewing speakers (although my advice would be proceed with caution - there's nothing like the awkward conversation between two people who've 'had words' electronically).

The one thing I have difficulty adjusting to is using the calendar app on smartphones - try as I might to be relevant, I find an electronic calendar less useful, somehow, than a paper diary.

I suspect it's more about adjusting my habits than anything - the app is lighter, has event alerts and allows you to play Robot Unicorn Attack while checking your appointments.

Alex (standing in for Jill while she's away)



Industry gears up for NTIA



THE nominees for the Best Business Events Travel Agency award have been announced as the industry gears up for the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA).

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) revealed that CIEvents, last year's winners, Event Travel Management, Impact Travel International and The Events Authority have been nominated for the Best Business Events Travel Agency award.

The Events Authority general manager Shelly Page said the company's purpose was to create "outstanding" events for clients that connected, inspired and rewarded.

"As a full-blown event and travel company, we are able to work very closely with our clients while taking providing support and expertise across all aspects of an event from concept design and development, implementation, travel logistics, registration, technology, content development as well as sponsorship sourcing and co-ordination."

AFTA event manager Alex

Cook said the Gala Dinner on 19 Jul, where winners will be announced, had sold almost 600 tickets in the seven days since they went on sale.

AFTA had allowed for 1300 attendees this year, up from 1200 last year, due to the interest in attending from the industry, Cook said.

While details of the evening's entertainment are yet to be announced, Cook told *BEN* it would be an Australian act and "unique entertainment that will definitely blow people away." Planning for the event took about six months all up, and was organised by AFTA, working with Staging Connections as the AV partner, Cook said.

The dinner will be held at the Hordern Pavilion, Moore Park, where it was held last year, and AFTA ceo Jayson Westbury promised an "even more impressive night".

Cook said business events deserved its own category so nominees could demonstrate unique features which separated them from other agencies.

"Business events is such a huge industry and it's only growing in Australia."

FCM business offer

FCM Travel Solutions is today promoting its product platforms and established supplier relationships to help corporates save on their business travel programs.

FCM is also a sponsor of tomorrow's Platinum Networking Night in Sydney - see **page five**.

Sofitel's 'appy

SOFITEL Brisbane Central has launched an event app which combines social media tools, gamification, surveys and live polls with up to date event information.

events@Sofitel Brisbane is provided through AVPartners and DoubleDutch and allows delegates to access programs, videos and venue maps, as well as speaker and exhibitor information.

Delegates can also post updates, comment on each other's posts and send messages, and has Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter integration.

The app is available on iOS, Android and HTML5.

This follows a similar offering from Marriott.

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Adam

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business events news

26th March 2014

Whitsundays' bus boom

WHITSUNDAYS Business Events reported it had distributed leads, or business events opportunities, to members with a value of more than \$5m for events to be held this and next year.

The Whitsundays' Convention Bureau said it had recorded "significant" growth in business events opportunities in its half yearly report to December.

The report was delivered to Business Event members only, it said.

Whitsundays business events manager Leanne Zeid said the number of event opportunities that the Bureau was working on had doubled in the current financial year.

"This can be attributed to significant developments happening within our region, both within island resorts and the Whitsunday Coast and the increase in flight access to our region."

The refurbishments currently



underway would deliver new facilities and services for such organisers, including the opening of The Palm House and One&Only Hayman Island in July, she said.

Air access had also increased over the past six months thanks to direct services and the re-introduction of Qantas services between Sydney and Hamilton Island, Zeid said.

Business event organisers are invited to a destination update and networking event as part of the Whitsundays East Coast Roadshow in Melbourne on 31 Mar, Sydney on 02 Apr and Brisbane on 03 Apr.

To register interest, email business@wmdl.com.au.

Millennium Saudi

MILLENNIUM and Copthorne Middle East and Africa will open 20 new hotels in Saudi Arabia.

This was part of a plan to operate 50 properties throughout the region by 2017, the group said.

The new hotels would be opened in cities including Riyadh, Jeddah, Medina and Makkahm with more than 7000 rooms available in total.

Millennium and Copthorne Hotels MEA have also obtained a license to operate in the kingdom as a branch of a foreign country and would establish an office in one of the major cities, the group said.

The group reported an increase of 34% in gross operating profit for 2013 compared with 2012, and a 23.3% increase in total revenue.

Net profit was not available publicly, Millennium said.

Biennale blasts off

THE 19th Biennale has kicked off with a launch party last week coordinated by The Events Authority.

Nearly 2000 industry attendees gathered at Australia Technology Park for the event which included three relaxation zones and DJ James Curd through to midnight.



CONFERENCES can be informative experiences, but sometimes things just don't work out.

Google is a veritable gold mine of the don'ts of conferencing, with search results for 'worst conference experience ever' turning up tales of varying degrees of woe.

There was the helpful comment from 'Peregrine' on www.poliscirumors.com that it's a good idea to match room size and the expected crowd or pulling power of the panel, since very well-known panelists will be able to fill a ballroom and will likely overflow the cupboard his panel was assigned.

Then there's the unfortunate, showing that double checking can be life saver, with 'Frieda' describing one conference presenter who realised half way through a presentation they'd mixed up graphs, couldn't identify one of the variables and had misrepresented a case everyone in the room knew very well.

In the downright depressing section, 'Nelle' turned up for a panel only to find absolutely no one else, not even the other panel members, had.

THE ULURU MEETING PLACE

NEW INDIGENOUS ENCOUNTERS

With the mighty silhouette of Uluru on the horizon, Ayers Rock Resort, home of Uluru Meeting Place, inspires delegates with high-impact events and once-in-a-lifetime experiences. New encounters include performances from cultural dancers and Indigenous dance workshop, a segment of traditional Aboriginal games, a session with the didgeridoo, spear and boomerang throwing and more. Enquire today!

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Expansion for MCEC?

THE Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) has called on the state government to fund an expansion of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

VTIC said the convention centre turned away 17% of potential clients due to a lack of capacity in the current financial year, with chief executive Dianne Smith (**pictured**) saying with work starting on Sydney's Convention and Exhibition Centre renovation, Victoria would lose a "significant" amount of business to NSW if the MCEC did not expand.

Business events were "vital" to Victoria, she said, as they contributed \$1.2b to the economy and were responsible for 22,000 jobs, with flow-on benefit for local businesses such as hotels and restaurants.

"Losing business events to Sydney would mean Victoria loses the very high return on investment benefits that business events provide to the events and associated sectors."

Expansion would include a new exhibition space, Smith said.

Financial details for this were confidential but it was estimated that it would generate \$150m in tourism related revenue per



annum and deliver an "excellent" rate of return, she said.

The Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher's office said the funding would be considered as part of the upcoming budget deliberations.

Indonesian focus

TOURISM Australia (TA) hosted an event at Ayana Resort and Spa Bali in February as part of a sales mission to strengthen relationships between Australian operators and Indonesian agents.

The event had a good mix of leisure and corporate agents in attendance, and Australian suppliers had the opportunity to discuss individual opportunities for increased business from agents, TA international S/SE Asia & Gulf regional general manager Karyn Kent said.

The event also showcased Australia's diversity of experiences available to the Indonesian leisure and incentive traveller, she said.



More than 100 attendees enjoyed a buffet with traditional dishes such as suckling pig at the resort's open air amphitheatre while watching a Balinese 'monkey dance' performance.

The next day involved a trade show in the ballroom and guests partook of a farewell dinner at AYANA's cliff-edge lawn with views of the sunset over the Indian Ocean, TA said.

Spicers' Outback conf

SPICERS Retreats is now offering the Outback Bush Experience, a new conferencing product set on Hidden Vale Station in the Lockyer Valley.

The product offered an authentic bush experience, Spicers Retreat group sales manager Kylie Stever said.

Guests stay in wooden cabins with an open deck overlooking the bushland and grazing cattle, with a campfire and a 20 minute drive via 4WD (or horseback, if delegates prefer for an additional cost and two hours' travel time) to the Spicers Hidden Vale retreat.

Those planning to work on last minute presentations will have to go old school - there's no power at the retreat.

But never fear for your BBM checking abilities - Telstra phone reception is available on the site.

It caters for a minimum five delegates and maximum of 20, with day packages from \$135 per person including 4WD transport, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

For more information, visit www.spicersgroup.com.au.

Race to Fraser Suites

FRASER Suites Sydney are offering special deals until 26 Apr for the BMW Sydney Carnival and the Championships.

Overnight accommodation in a deluxe studio for two with complimentary WiFi and a bottle of Moet & Chandon is \$370 per night, with the same package available in a one bedroom deluxe suite for \$425.

Guests also receive a one-way transfer to Rosehill Gardens or Royal Randwick on race days.

Chocolate masterclass

PAN Pacific Perth is offering chocolate masterclasses every Saturday and Sunday between 10.30am and 12.20pm.

Head pastry chef Laurent Xavier will cover a range of chocolates, including white chocolate, rose and ginger mediants, framboise truffles, chocolate fitters, orangettes and blondies.

Once you've wiped the drool from your computer, you can register your interest by emailing rbe.ppper@panpacific.com.

Tickets are \$120 per person and include a take-home kit.

Marketing and Sponsorship Manager (Maternity Cover)

Reed Travel Exhibitions is seeking an experienced and dynamic Marketing and Sponsorship Manager to head up the marketing team for AIME, the Asia Pacific's premier meeting and incentives exhibition, as well as heading up international marketing on CIBTM, the China Incentives, Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition.

AIME is the largest international B2B business events exhibition in Australia and forms part of the prestigious IBTM (Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings) portfolio. CIBTM is the fastest growing exhibition in the global IBTM portfolio, making this a very unique and exciting opportunity.

This role requires a dynamic, pragmatic and tenacious individual with excellent communication and management skills. The successful candidate will oversee the strategic planning, design, implementation, management and execution of all exhibitor, hosted buyer and visitor campaigns. The role will require a strategic focus and great attention to detail, as well as an individual who excels at creating campaigns relevant to both domestic and international audiences.

The successful candidate will:

- A minimum of 5 years full-time marketing experience with a strong background in direct and digital marketing, ideally within the business events industry
- Solid analytical skills and database management skills
- Strong brand management skills
- Experience with budgets and financial forecasting
- Outstanding communications skills and strong writing ability
- Marketing degree or equivalent qualification is essential
- Strong project management and organisational skills
- Ability to manage multiple agencies, including; Education, PR and Creative agencies
- Excellent Media liaison experience
- Domestic and International Travel will be required

All applications to be submitted via email to Rebecca.caines@reedexhibitions.com.au by Friday 28th March.

www.aime.com.au



Aus's Nature Coast

AUSTRALIA'S Nature Coast will be on show in Sydney and Melbourne from 07 to 11 Apr.

The initiative was launched a year ago to show the best of Queensland's natural attributes, such as two UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

Sunshine Coast Destinations, Fraser Coast Opportunities and 20 tourism operators from the Sunshine and Fraser regions will present a series of workshops and forums on products and experiences for tourism product managers, and a new product would be launched at the expos.

For more information, email Jan Foletta at trade@scdl.com.au.



Meeting in the Mid East

REGULAR, internationally-rotating association meetings in the Middle East have more than tripled in the last 10 years.

This is according to a report released by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) for its 50th anniversary last year.

ICCA said last week that looking at aggregated figures for each five year period, association meetings in the Middle East had doubled each decade in the last 50 years, and more than tripled in the last 10 years, with 532 held between 1998 and 2002, growing to 905 between 2003 and 2007.

From 2008 to 2012, the number grew again to 1,776 meetings, ICCA said, making the Middle East the fastest growing international association meeting market in the world.

Presenting at the Gulf Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings (GIBTM) show, ICCA ceo Martin Sirk (pictured right) said the region had joined the 'Information Revolution' more recently than most regions, so it was not surprising to see some of the world's fastest growth rates.

"Now that excellent meetings infrastructure has been developed, governments have created knowledge strategies to underpin their economic development agendas.

"We are confident that the region will enjoy even greater international meetings activity in the future, based on these



underlying fundamentals."

GIBTM exhibition manager Lois Hall said with improved facilities, more flight connections and reduced visa requirements in some cases, the growth potential for the region's meetings, incentives, conferencing and exhibitions sector was "exceptional."

Sydney to Suva sale

FIJI Airways has a Sydney to Suva launch date and to celebrate, sale fares are now on offer.

The new direct flight will start twice weekly from 02 May and the airline is offering launch fares from \$499 return, on sale until 06 Apr.

The sale fares are valid for travel between 02 May and 19 June.

Flights will leave on Mondays and Fridays and will be operated by a B737-700 aircraft.

The airline said the new route would be more convenient for those travelling for business, visiting family or holidaying in the Fijian region.

Grays' Say

Peter Gray, an independent Motivation Consultant, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the Conference and Incentive industries.



WHAT PRICE LOYALTY NOW?

ANYONE who saw the Checkout (ABC) last week will be in no doubt that frequent flyer points today are far from the loyalty mechanism for airlines that was envisaged when American Airlines launched the first frequent flyer scheme: AAdvantage. These days frequent flyer points can be earned by purchasing a variety of products or services the majority of which have nothing to do with flying or airlines. Indeed, as the programme pointed out, only 35% of Qantas frequent flyer points are actually earned by taking flights.

Qantas Loyalty, the segment of Qantas that runs the Qantas Frequent Flyer scheme is now more profitable than all other segments of the airline and, according to the 2013 Qantas Annual Report, its EBIT (earnings before interest and tax) was \$365 million, 87% of the total EBIT for the airline (\$418 million).

One of the conundrums the Checkout reveals is that the value of a frequent flyer point differs according to what you buy to obtain them, averaging out at a value of only 1 cent. Perhaps there's scope here for consumer legislation to force frequent flyer schemes to publicise the value of points. In the UK, in the good old days of trading stamps, issuing companies were required to print the value of each stamp on it's face and, moreover, redeem stamps for cash if required. Mind

you this was only achieved by a member of the House of Lords who had a significant interest in a supermarket chain being incensed by the success of Green Shield Stamps used by one of his rivals.

Frequent flyer schemes have become very sophisticated and there is no doubt that offering frequent flyer points can be a considerable marketing drawcard. However the rules surrounding the consumer use of such points can often disappoint as well as some airlines' habit of regularly revaluing points or applying use-by dates. There are also some expensive transaction charges that can apply, such as transferring points between family members. Emirates is a case in point which bucks the trend of most other airlines of not charging for this facility.

Airlines are a bit like casinos when it comes to loyalty schemes: they're not in it for the risk (which, providing they keep flying, is negligible); they sell points to retailers at much high rates than their redemption value and in some cases you're paying the retailer for the points anyway. Loyalty...maybe not!

Peter Gray can be contacted at peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net.



Port Arthur's app

PORT Arthur has launched an audio tour app.

The app has hundreds of photos and historic images of Port Arthur as well as about two hours of audio material, including readings from colonial-era journals and books, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority said.

The app is available on Apple iPhones and iPod Touches for \$1.99, with support for other languages, starting with Mandarin, as well as an Android app, planned for the future.

The Authority's Dr Jody Steele said the app allowed visitors to explore Port Arthur at their own pace with an interactive map.

RACV Royal Pines spa

RACV Royal Pines Resort will open its One Spa facility this Friday.

The spa offered members pampering treatments with four dry-treatment rooms, two wet-treatment rooms and a private lounge, and was the result of a \$10m investment, RACV Queensland Resort general manager John Morris said.

The resort was also close to completing a major revamp of its conference facilities, including the Benowa Ballroom, he said.

The upgrades also extended to redevelopment of the Royal Pines championship golf course, Morris said.

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