



Unconventional MCEC ideas

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) last week played host to a “virtual idea generation hackathon” to help develop new and unexpected ways to use the venue’s facilities, expertise and location.

The gathering was part of the inaugural Unconventional Ideas event, with in-house experts taking part alongside customers and stakeholders to pitch business ideas for MCEC to judges including Melbourne Lord Mayor Sally Capp, MCEC Chair John Brumby and AFL star Luke Darcy.

The centre’s CEO Peter King said the event aimed to position MCEC for the future “ensuring we remain an industry leader, a preferred partner and an innovative, successful business”.

Helen Fairclough, recently appointed as MCEC Director of Business Relaunch (*BEN* 26 May) said it was heart-warming to see valued partners taking part.

The four winning ideas will now proceed to the next phase of further exploration or delivery, with more details to be announced as they progress.

PCMA CONFIRMS C-19 HIT

EVENT planners in the Asia-Pacific region have had their revenue significantly impacted by COVID-19, with more than half recording a year-on-year decline in excess of 75%.

The figures were revealed in a new survey of industry planners and suppliers by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) which also found that just one in five events planned for the next three months will have any face-to-face components.

The PCMA has been conducting regular “COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard” polls since Mar, with the latest iteration focusing exclusively on input from Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia, China, India, Korea and Japan.

A total of 531 event industry professionals across the region took part in the survey, including 342 planners and 189 suppliers.

Planners cited the increasing use of digital event technology, which was likely to significantly impact face-to-face attendances at events in the next six months.

About a third of planners said their events would be conducted entirely online, while 46% said they would add a digital component.

Planners who participated in the survey said they expected smaller local and regional

events would thrive ahead of national and international gatherings.

There was strong optimism about a return of face-to-face events in 2021, but a quarter of planners said they still expected their turnover to be less than half of 2019 levels next year.

The biggest financial concern among event organisers was being able to budget for a hybrid event alongside expectations of face-to-face attendance, while over 70% of respondents ranked designing digital event experiences as the top skill they needed to pursue for professional success.

On the supplier side the impact of COVID-19 was even worse, with two thirds citing a revenue decline of over 75%.

Suppliers said key activities needed to prepare for the sector’s recovery included learning how to design live experiences with more stringent hygiene standards, as well as upskilling in the design of digital event experiences.

About half of suppliers polled said they would only travel within their country for a business event in 2020, while 17% were happy to travel within the Asia-Pacific region “if the program was worth it”.

Just 1% of those polled said they would consider travelling to the USA for an event.

Today’s issue of **BEN**

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

Aitken to Noosa

JENNY Aitken, former GM of Tourism Australia in New Zealand, has been appointed to represent the Sunshine Coast region.

With New Zealand likely to return as Australia’s first inbound international market and the Sunshine Coast’s previous role hosting direct airline services across the Tasman, the appointment has been seen as providing a “major boost in confidence” for the region’s tourism operators.

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IBTM evolves

IBTM Americas has announced it will hold an interactive virtual summit on 25-26 Aug, with 16 speakers across the two days on the theme of “humanising the change”.

The summit will be free for attendees and will be delivered in English and Spanish- ibtmamericas.com.



AS ANYONE in the events sector during these crazy COVID-19 times knows, the plethora of regulations around gathering sizes is incredibly confusing.

From limits per square metre through to overall venue capacity, the rules across the globe, within each country and even from city to city can vary wildly - so perhaps the organisers of a church meeting in Pennsylvania can be forgiven for their creative get-together in late Jun.

State officials formally discouraged churches from conducting services due to concerns about COVID-19 - but supermarkets were still open, leading to the leaders of the North Versailles congregation to put out a call to gather at the local Walmart.

Several hundred worshippers responded, with a video of the service - complete with plenty of prayers, songs of praise and curious shoppers filming it on their phones - going viral having now been viewed over 1 million times.



Oaks MICE rewards

OAKS Hotels, Resorts & Suites has launched a new Oaks Experience MICE Rewards Program, aimed at providing industry partners with the power to control their own commission structure.

Three tiered accounts are available, with the base Ruby Tier offering standard commission, a discounted Organiser Room, free wi-fi and a PCO staff incentive.

The mid-level Emerald Tier adds on increased commission, a bank of FOC rooms to use as required, exclusive campaign offers and a discounted Local Experience for team building.

Finally the top Diamond Tier additionally comes with a free Organiser Room per event and complimentary conference plenary and dinner venue hire.

Oaks offers 14 locations across Australia - for more info or to book contact Ben Greenwood on beng@minorhotels.com.au.

New partnership

EXPO Direct has partnered with Virtual Events Australia to launch a "revolutionary way to hold events and exhibitions" during and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Event organisers and exhibitors work with a dedicated Event Account Manager to deliver a full service show complete with registration, feature areas, theatres and exhibition stands - for more info see virtualexhibitions.com.au or call 1300 EXPO DIRECT.

Discovering the undiscovered

MICE bouncing back in Taipei!

THE MICE community in Taipei is preparing themselves to start serving domestic events after months of reflection and revising their operating formulas as needed to add "health safety" as a major factor to the planning and delivery process.

Actually as with every crisis, the MICE industry discovered several opportunities, the biggest prospect probably being the need to enhance combining virtual and hybrid components in both conventions and exhibitions.

With Taiwan's economy largely driven by industrial manufacturing, and especially exports of electronics, the availability of "low touch - high tech" accommodation and conference solutions are widely available and innovative efforts to combine the country's tremendous technical expertise with the warm Taiwanese hospitality are supported by all.

The first major convention, the 60th annual convention & scientific session of the Taiwan Society of Cardiology will take place on July 25 -26 at the Taipei International Convention Center (TICC) in Taipei, where 1,500 participants are expected.

It's President, Juey-Jen Hwang, M.D., Ph.D stated that all

above policies are in place, thanks to the Taiwan Model enacted very early stage in protecting our country from COVID-19 and, consequently, keep the important convention as scheduled, more precisely saying, just delayed for two months.

In other words, all Taipei's MICE stakeholders are ready to serve domestic MICE to it is fullest extend and are, of course, looking forward to the lifting of restrictions for MICE participants to enter Taiwan and then capitalize on their country's enhanced image on making sure their citizens, and thus their visitors are as safe as humanly possible.

For more information please visit www.expopark.taipei or www.anticovid19.org

Pictured below: The Web Conference 2020 was held in Taipei from April 20 to 24. Because epidemic-prevention restrictions made physical on-site meeting impossible, the conference was fully broadcast online. The Mayor Ko Wen-je delivered his opening speech over the Internet, and met together in the online world with top experts in the field of information technology and representatives from technology developers and governments from nations around the globe.

