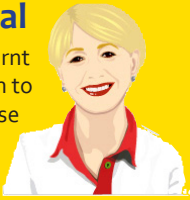




The arrival

WHAT I've learnt is that the path to true Vietnamese Visa on Arrival happiness can be a thorny one.



Prior to leaving for Vietnam, I downloaded the online forms and another with an official Vietnamese stamp and paid my \$19.

Trouble is, when I was checking in at Changi Airport, I had overlooked downloading another form and was told I couldn't board without it.

No problem, I had it on my laptop, so I linked into the airport WiFi but couldn't connect.

Boarding was in 20 minutes so with the assistance of a helpful official from Silk Air, we moved to various parts of the airport to try a connection.

Finally made, the page was downloaded to be sent to a designated Silk Air email address.

It wouldn't send.

Calls were made to the gate to hold the flight, and in desperation, we took an iPhone photo of the document, Silk Air said okay and I ran for the flight.

At Danang Airport Passport Control, no one even asked for it!

MEANWHILE spare a thought for our friends in Vanuatu where the Category Five cyclone Pam lashed the island with wind gusts of up to 32 km per hour last Sunday, killed at least 11 people and displaced 3,300.

Surfside on Breakas ceo Brian McVey, an intimate, villa-style retreat in Port Vila, described the damage to the resort as an "utter disaster."

"Our 700 metre long seawall has been ripped apart and waves of 14 metres have sent boulders from the wall hurtling through villa doors, walls and shutters and looters have taken away anything they could lay their hands on."

Islanders are now bracing for a lack of food over the coming months because crops were destroyed in the recent storm.

Jill

Hobart commits to biz ev

THE City of Hobart and Business Events Tasmania (BET) have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will see increased funding and a commitment to attract business events to the city.

The three year MoU was the second signed by the organisations, BET chairman Malcom Wells said, and saw a roughly 5% increase in funding to about \$95,000 from the City Council.

The MoU committed to working together to identify and attract events that fitted Hobart's areas of economic growth, which included Antarctic and Southern ocean science, medical research, agriculture, and whiskey distilling, with BET hoping to secure the World Whiskey Conference away from Scotland in future, Wells said.

Deputy Lord Mayor Alderman Ron Christie said a number of initiatives would be prioritised in the first year, including the possibility of developing promotional materials for Hobart.

Other initiatives included joint marketing activities, with consideration of targeted international marketing, how the Tasmanian Travel and Information Centre could contribute to



Credit: City of Hobart and Alastair Bett

incentivising and supporting conference activity, Hobart representation at tradeshows and collaboration on bids and media opportunities, BET said.

The MoU was signed by Lord Mayor of Hobart Alderman Sue Hickey, who said the City knew business events had a "significant economic benefit" across the community, as well as associated social and educational benefits.

Wells said total direct economic annual return to Tasmania of business events was \$112m.

Tourism Oz tender

TOURISM Australia is looking for a digital agency in China to deliver website as well as online, mobile and social media campaigns, targeting Chinese consumers looking to travel to Australia for a holiday.

The proposed contract term is two years, with an option to extend for a further year.

The tender closes on 07 Apr.

CLICK HERE to read more.

Outrigger showcase

THE 2015 Outrigger Resorts Global Showcase will visit three Australian cities this month to talk about its expansion.

Starting in Brisbane on 24 Mar, the showcase moves to Melbourne on 25 Mar, Sydney on 26 Mar and Auckland on 30 Mar and will feature 20 sales and marketing executives representing various properties.

Outrigger said it had plans to expand into Vietnam and China, including a 499-room property in Hainan Island, slated to open in 2018.

Tassie facility feasibility study

BUSINESS Events Tasmania (BET) is looking to undertake a feasibility study to determine whether new business events facilities should be built in Hobart, or current facilities expanded.

Chairman Malcom Wells said BET understood the business events industry was a "competitive game" with many cities developing new facilities.

The International Convention Centre Sydney coming online next year would put the industry "on notice" that it had to be competitive, Wells said.

More accommodation was also needed, and BET would seek government funding for the study, he said.

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Mantra acquires four Outrigger Oz props

MANTRA Group has acquired the management letting rights for four Outrigger Hotels and Resorts Australia properties for \$29.5m.

The properties are Outrigger Surfers Paradise, Outrigger Twin Towns Resorts, Coolangatta, Outrigger Little Hastings Street Resort and Spa, Noosa and Boathouse Apartments by Outrigger Airlie Beach.

Mantra sought to raise \$50m to fund the acquisition, as well as future "identified" pipeline opportunities, the company said.

Marketing and distribution executive director sales Kent Davidson said there would be "minimal changes" to staff, with possibly some management positions opting to stay with Outrigger.

Mantra said its brands were strong in the conference market and the Outrigger properties would complement its existing network.

"The conference market was somewhat depressed but we are now [seeing] real growth in conferencing queries."

Settlement is slated for completion by June.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

Luxperience buyer famil program

LUXPERIENCE has announced a buyer familiarisation program of pre and post tours in Australia for travel advisors attending the luxury travel exhibition from 06 to 09 Sep.

The famils were developed in partnership with Tourism Australia and were open to luxury travel specialists and MICE and corporate travel advisors, organisers said.

Famil options include a four night NSW tour and a three night Top End Explorer tour starting in Darwin.

This follows the announcement of NZ tours last month, with 10 itineraries in total.

Vibe North Sydney 2017

THE 188-room new build Vibe Hotel North Sydney is slated to open in 2017, Toga Far East (TFE) Hotels has said.

The company said it had completed a management agreement with the Cromwell Property Group to establish the hotel as part of the Northpoint Tower redevelopment.

The hotel would feature a meetings and event facility with capacity for 300 people, with details to come, and would follow the projected closure on 31 Mar of Vibe North Sydney in Milsons Point, which was sold to Cbus Property last year.

A spokesperson for TFE



Hotels said this hotel would be converted to residential use, in accordance with a decision taken by the owners.

"TFE Hotels understands the significance of having a property in the North Sydney market place and after lengthy search for opportunities, we managed to secure this landmark opportunity for a new build 'Next Generation' Vibe Hotel."

Planting seeds

WHEN Laguna Lăng Cô, Banyan Tree Holdings' hospitality group, bought a building by the Thu Bồn River in Hoi An two years ago, it had plans to turn it into a Banyan Tree restaurant, however executive chairman Ho Kwon Ping, know as KP, had a better idea.

Embracing the company's core philosophy of operating as a socially responsible business committed to the communities and culture it operates in, a joint venture was set up between it and Know One Teach One (KOTO).

Out of this Seedings restaurant was born.

Currently home to 14 KOTO trainees, Seedings provides specialist training in either kitchen service or front of house service, together with regular English classes, thus allowing trainees the opportunity to learn and grow while being employed in a 24-month vocational training program at the restaurant.

This symbolic bridge that gives the trainees employment in five-star hotels and restaurants around Vietnam and the world is a vibrant social spot for Banyan Tree and Angsana resort guests, and tourists, where traditional Vietnamese fare is on the menu.

Biz ev visitors in Tas down

VISITOR numbers for those travelling to Tasmania to attend a conference or convention were down 13% to 28,800 for the year ending December.

According to the Tasmanian Tourism Snapshot, which uses data from the Tasmanian Visitor Survey, the International Visitor Survey and the National Visitor Survey, there were 1.07m visitors in total, up 3% year on year, while visitor expenditure was up 11% to \$1.76b.

Numbers for those visiting for business were down 9% to 174,000.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.



IF YOU'RE an event organiser looking to get a few more people in the mix for one of your conferences, have you tried inviting random strangers?

We ask, because a Seattle man is all set to fly to Philadelphia to attend the bachelor party, and wedding, of Jeff Minetti, a man he has never met.

Joey DiJulio was mistakenly invited, via email, to the bachelor party and after working out the mistake, watched the message trail for a while before finally letting the groom know of the error this week, *Associated Press* reported.

However, Minetti figured why not, and invited him to the party anyway, as well as his wedding in May, saying "this is the city of brotherly love," the publication reported.

With the vast, and capricious, powers of the internet, DiJulio raised enough money for his travel costs (US\$1,200), pledging any other money raised would go to the Minetti honeymoon, and was all set to attend both the wedding and the bachelor party, *Associated Press* reported.

We can only hope everyone actually gets along in the end, and no one asks anyone about [living with their brother](#).



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business events news

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Letter to the Editor

CONFERENCE Focus director Max Turpin has written a Letter to the Editor, following his regular column on 13 Mar called 'Rinse and Repeat'.

*In the article I wrote for **BEN** last week (you can read it [HERE](#)), I threw out the challenge to any event owner reading it to make contact with me.*

So there's no confusion over what I mean by event owner, here's my definition: someone in an organisation who owns an event and controls decisions including their design, their format, topics and content, messaging, speaker selections and briefing, attendee engagement and post event analysis.

Essentially, all elements that determine the effectiveness and ROI of events.

Not one single person contacted me.

I'm not surprised since I'm almost certain most of those responsible for making these decisions do not subscribe to our industry publications nor do they attend our industry shows.

Indeed, as I mentioned last week, their events experience is most likely limited to occasionally attending events and, on a limited part-time basis, responsibility to organise them.

You may be asking what point I'm trying to make. Good question.

Every single supplier in the MICE industry in every single service category, including this publication, owes its existence to events.

Every single employee in these companies is dependent upon events for their livelihood and

careers.

Therefore, it's beneficial to all of us to ensure events are healthy i.e. effective, productive, objective-based and designed tactfully to deliver ROI. In other words, that they produce outcomes and results.

Most events are not designed this way.

So what's the impact?

Most managing directors, CEOs and chief financial officers view events as a pure cost.

To most of them, events are considered completely discretionary and there to chop at whim and will.

Whenever there's a hint of trouble in the economy, the first thing that gets scrutinised is events.

Why? Because most events don't reach their potential in terms of effectiveness and produce little or no ROI.

And the irony is that many people responsible for their health are completely detached and disengaged from our industry.

To prove this, and once again, I throw this out to all event owners: contact me if you're reading this.

My contact details are below.

I'll let you know the results in my next article.

Any and all feedback is welcomed.

Max Turpin can be contacted on max@conferencefocus.com.au.

We welcome any comments.

If you would like to weigh in on this or any other subject, you can email

info@businesseventsnews.com.au.



CONFESSIONS OF A COMPULSIVE CONFERENCE-GOER

Andrew Klein, professional MC and presentation skills speaker and director of SPIKE Presentations, presents his front line observations on conferences in a regular feature in **BEN**.

TIE ME UP – TIE ME DOWN!

Heading out the door the other day dressed in a suit and tie on my way to an insurance conference, my nine year old daughter asked me, "Daddy, why do men wear ties, they are a bit silly, don't you think?"



I didn't really know the answer but I agreed that they are "a bit silly". Historically, I believe it was an item to keep the shirt collar closed to keep out the cold. But I can't buy this argument in tropical Australia.

So why in 2015, in casual, laid-back – and let's be honest, frequently steaming hot Australia, do we continue with this antiquated tradition? True, ties are becoming less common in the office, but in some industries they are still alive and well in many capital city conference rooms. Regional and resort conferences (and most Queensland conferences) are usually tie-free, but countless capital city conferences still 'tie' themselves to the tradition.

Many conferences still expect this level of formality, certainly in the financial services area, as well as insurance, law, accounting, government etc. But why don't we actively encourage a slightly more casual code? Yes, it gives businessmen a chance to show some individuality and add a little colour but I'd argue that if you need your tie to show your individuality, well, then you're not very individual.

Having MC'd or spoken at thousands of conferences around the country, here's my simple observation: a conference where the audience is more casually dressed (men AND women) will invariably be a more relaxed, productive, enjoyable experience than a business or even business casual dressed audience.

All the conferences I attend are totally professional, with an ever-increasing emphasis on education and professional development. This has nothing to do with what the audience are wearing. Do we really need our delegates to be dressed in business clothes to maintain the 'business' focus of the conference? Can I not learn just as effectively in jeans – or if that's deemed 'too casual' then at least chinos? Can't I still work even if I'm not dressed like I'm at work?

If I had my way, I'd kill off the tie altogether. Scratch the surface and most males don't enjoy wearing them anyway. But at least let's argue for tie-free, suit-free, more casually dressed conferences. The conference will be better for it.

If there's any concern that people are less likely to take the conference seriously, then I'd suggest that might be the fault of the conference program or the company culture.

Let's keep the ties and formal dress for the gala dinner and make that night a really special one where we get 'dressed up'.

So let's start a 'Tie Die' movement at conferences.

If you are looking for an MC for your next conference or a speaker/trainer on presentation skills or pitching skills, email andrew@lunch.com.au or visit his website at www.andrewklein.com.au.



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