

A game of relevance

In-person events must prove their worth for delegates to brave Covid travel hurdles

By Rachel AJ Lee

Virtual meetings have proven their worth throughout the pandemic, by way of expanding content access to more individuals – up to 50 per cent more in some meetings – and offering interactive experiences made possible by continuous technology acceleration in the events space.

In sharing his observations during the IT&CM Asia Knowledge Session, titled Trends 2021 and Beyond, Mathias Posch, immediate past president and chair of training academy, IAPCO, and president, International Conference Services also pointed out that for planners to bring back in-person events successfully, they will need to play up advantages of such formats.

This is especially critical when registration fees for virtual events have fallen against in-person events, and when in-person delegates are made to tackle Covid-19-related attendance hurdles, such as pre-departure testing, on-arrival testing, and even quarantine.

To score good attendance, in-person events would need to be better “curated” and “exclusive”, he opined.

For example, Posch related a possible meeting idea in the field of earthquake engineering. Organisers could bring delegates out to Sendai, Japan to see how the tsunami and earthquake had affected the city. It



Nothing's going back to how it was before. We just have to accept that, and go with the flow.

Mathias Posch

Immediate past president and chair of training academy, IAPCO / president, International Conference Services



would make a “unique experience that you cannot have anywhere else in the world in that specific field”, he remarked.

Exclusive networking sessions, exchanges and workshops should also be arranged for the delegate so as to make the trip worth their while.

Posch said: “It comes down to meeting people that are relevant, be it for research collaborations, or those working in a similar field. We need to make an effort to connect these like-minded people, to create places where these individuals feel like they belong to something, and can contribute in a way.”

Meetings suppliers and governments must also extend a flexible hand to help meeting planners better cope with the sudden changes that are now common in planning events amid a pandemic.

Flexibility would ensure event groups are not stuck with a large bill should the unforeseen occur, Posch advised.

Association meetings stay on

The Covid-19 pandemic may have disrupted the meetings segment with cancellations and postponements, but over the course of two years associations have shown resilience and adaptability in their event management.

According to ICCA statistics, confirmed association meetings in Asia-Pacific from January 2022 up to December 2024 totalled more than 990, shared Waikin Wong, regional director, Asia Pacific, ICCA, a speaker at IT&CM Asia Knowledge Session, titled Meetings (Un)interrupted.

She said that association meetings have adapted to the pandemic, and are more ready to embrace digital solutions to stay

connected and to use virtual and hybrid meetings for knowledge exchange, capacity building and to leave a legacy.

“More and more associations are looking for professional (digital) solutions to run their meetings,” she added.

On the upside, virtual and hybrid solutions provide easier access to conferences, which can sometimes result in a 50 per cent increase in delegate attendance.

Octavio B Peralta, founder, president and CEO, Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives noted: “Despite the pandemic, associations to a large extent are being adaptable and resilient.”



Peralta: event revenue impacted

Many associations are supporting one another by participating in virtual events and contributing content both on the local and international level. However, they are faced with many challenges – key among them are the heavy declines in event revenue and sponsorship. As such, Peralta said associations are looking for new revenue streams.

Recognising the importance of meetings, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has established a committee made up of selected ICCA Thailand members and industry thought leaders, to build new capabilities, and leverage trends and insights.

TCEB's senior vice president – business, Nichapa Yoswee, added that the bureau is also working with member bureaus of the Asia Convention Alliance to look for new opportunities to revitalise business events.

– S Puvaneswary

Forward strides

Hong Kong dishes out more support for events



Hong Kong will offer new funding for local partners

By Prudence Lui

Hong Kong Tourism Board is laying the groundwork for a market rebound, with a secretariat being formed recently to support business leaders keen on hosting meetings in the destination.

The secretariat, formed under the purview of Hong Kong's Convention Ambassadors, will support 100 leaders of business and professional bodies in their business event planning, bidding and hosting.

The move comes in addition to new destination appeals, such as the West Kowloon neighbourhood product by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb). The tour series highlights the district's rich heritage and

thriving arts and culture scene, directing visitors' attention to the vibrant street life in Yau Ma Tei and Jordan as well as two world-class museums – M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District – which will open at the end of 2021 and 2022.

A HKTb spokesperson revealed that wellness-focused itineraries are being developed to cater to a growing interest among planners to include rejuvenating activities in their teambuilding, incentive and conference programmes.

Recognising the value of financial support, HKTb has extended its full venue rental subsidy, now accepting applications up till June 30, 2022. The subsidy is part of the HK\$1 billion (US\$128,487) Convention & Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme.

A new round of support, including subsidies and tactical programmes aimed at local trade partners, will soon be announced.

While waiting for borders to reopen and for business to restart, HKTb is maintaining communications with trade members through webinars and workshops that provide updates on current situation. These events also act as a platform for members to engage with one another.

Activity trending up

Emerging border reopening mechanisms across Asia-Pacific have helped to improve travel confidence, with enquiries for business travel and tradeshow attendance surfacing again in recent weeks.

At an IT&CM Asia Knowledge Session, titled Next 6 Months' Travel Outlook for Asia-Pacific, speaker James Ellis, director of sales, Asia with FCM, said the region's conservative approach to Covid-19 containment was finally giving way to some "positive steps in the right direction".

Singapore's Vaccinated Travel Lane with Germany has inspired some Singapore-based clients to plan meetings in Germany, where they would convene with partners from across Europe.

Ellis' confidence in business travel recovery is also buoyed by Hong Kong's new Come-2hk quarantine-free scheme for residents of mainland China and Macau, as well as Australia's decision to reopen to vaccinated travellers.

Fellow speaker Kenny Yong, founder & group CEO, Fireworks Trade Media Group, revealed that the last two weeks brought "a surge in demand for face-to-face events because I think everyone is seeing a clearer light at the end of the tunnel". Demand to participate in Fireworks' tradeshow next June in Malaysia is the strongest, he said.

In tracking passenger profiles for Asia-Pacific inbound and outbound travel between October 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, Jameson Wong, vice president, strategic client & partnerships, APAC, ForwardKeys, noted that international business and group travel volumes are still down against 2019, although Asia-Pacific business departures are rising strongly against pre-pandemic times. Business departures from the region stood at 6.2 per cent in 2019 and 10 per cent now.

– Karen Yue



Yong: rise in demand for in-person events

In brief

Melbourne wins top architectural symposium

The Symposium of the International Association for Shell and Spatial Structures will return to Australia after 25 years when it gathers next in Melbourne come 2023. Backed by the Victorian State government, the event is expected to attract more than 500 delegates and deliver A\$2 million (US\$1.5 million) economic contribution to the local economy.

Switzerland set to welcome first post-Covid Indonesian incentive group

Indonesia's Massindo Group will lead 168 management personnel and top dealers to Switzerland in early-December, making it the first Indonesian incentive group to return to the destination since the pandemic hit in 2020.

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Getting future ready

It is busy days for the Philippines and her MICE stakeholders, as they lay the groundwork today for reopening tomorrow. By **Rosa Ocampo**

The Philippines is poised to spring out improved business events capability and initiatives once foreign arrivals are welcomed again, in an effort to keep up with the changed business events vista.

Aware of the crucial role of technology and digital transformation, industry players are gearing towards extended reality – encompassing virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality – in spicing up virtual and hybrid events, and in-person events once these are allowed.

Global Link-MP Events International, one of the earliest to leverage immersive technology, seamlessly segued to virtual and hybrid events, thanks to an advanced software and in-house designers capable of customising quality 3D for their own events and for other companies' events, said COO Jing Lagandaon.

Venues, too, are catching up with high technology. The town's newest, Okada Manila, adds oomph and glamour to business events with virtual reality and advanced audio, video and ambient lighting. Marriott Grand Ballroom is already renowned for its hi-tech venue while Grand Hyatt in Bonifacio Global City is on the growing list of tech savvy venues.

Destinations outside metro Manila including Clark, Bohol, Iloilo and Davao are ramping up with new airports, convention centers, business hotels and facilities, and generous incentives for business events.

Clark in Pampanga, boosted by the mammoth New Clark City hub for government, companies and industries, is easily the most promising business event destination a few hours from metro Manila.

Said Vince Dizon, president and COO of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), which is developing Clark together with the private sector: "Clark is currently being positioned as a MICE and sports tourism destination... Before the pandemic, Clark was well on its way to becoming one of the Philippines' top MICE destinations."

Pre-pandemic, several international events have already chosen Clark for its expanding MICE venues, upscale hotel de-



Okada Manila is among the Philippines' growing number of MICE suppliers that are armed with advanced event technology solutions to support new event needs

velopments, golf courses, spas, not to mention Pampanga's renowned gastronomic delights, cultural traditions and unspoiled nature and adventure attractions.

Bucolic Bohol has joined the international MICE race with its newlyminted international airport, a convention centre near the white beach of Panglao, an expanding list of boutique hotels, and unique attractions. The local government is also supportive of MICE development.

To top it off, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) has enhanced the assistance to planners by including hybrid and virtual

events, not just in-person events.

New incentives under the Enhanced MICE Plus Programme include event technology solutions, a virtual event platform, and hygiene and care kits for delegates, said Raquel Ruth Tria, acting head, TPB MICE Department.

When the country reopens, TPB will entertain requests for immigration fast lane for event delegates and financial subvention depending upon the type and size of events, apart from mainstays, among them giveaways and tokens, hosted meals and cultural entertainment.

While in hibernation, the country's MICE players have been improving their health, safety and hygiene procedures on par with global protocols.

A TPB spokesperson said the destination's "competitive advantage in this age is its many islands that provide geographical isolation, making it safer during the Covid-19 pandemic".

She added that the archipelago's proximity to South-east Asia, China and Taiwan is another unique selling leverage, making it ideal for intra-ASEAN and North Asia travel while enticing with its endless beaches and aquatic playgrounds, diverse habitats, diverse culture and traditions.

“
Clark is currently being positioned as a MICE and sports tourism destination... Before the pandemic, Clark was well on its way to becoming one of the Philippines' top MICE destinations.

Vince Dizon

President and COO, Bases Conversion and Development Authority

Tale of two MICE cities

Seoul has improved its virtual and hybrid offerings while Jeju has kept busy bettering its sustainability ethos, in destination-wide efforts to win over international events. By **Rachel AJ Lee**



From left: View of Gangnam Square, Seoul; Seongsan Ilchulbong, also called Sunrise Peak, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site on Jeju island

Although Seoul and Jeju are two different cities, both South Korean destinations share one thing in common – the love for, and eagerness to, welcome business events.

In Seoul, even with the closure of borders, the city has been actively hosting a mix of hybrid and virtual events for months now. In fact, Seoul will serve as the Asia Pacific Regional Hub for the upcoming hybrid ICCA Congress, with the main event taking place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia from October 24-27, 2021. Content from the in-person event in Seoul will be streamed live for two days. The full programme is expected to draw 1,500 participants from 90 countries.

Coex itself has been busy, having beefed up its technology to better serve online and hybrid events; carved out new spaces to accommodate more multipurpose events; and for delegates' health and safety, installed thermal detection devices at all building entrances.

Seoul Convention Bureau's (SCB) director Jihyun Kim said: "Aside from Coex, other convention centres, and event venues, have also undergone digital transformation to accommodate online events."

"Considering the fact that future MICE participants are a generation familiar with digital technology, it is evident that hybrid events will be the way forward, hence we

need to have appropriate infrastructure in place."

That is why Seoul was also one of the first to join the Hybrid City Alliance (HCA), which offers international events organisers a solution when organising multiple city hub events.

Kim elaborated: "HCA will be a great help in coming years as the alliance covers the globe. The possibilities of hybrid events are endless due to its connections, as well as its scale. Being a member of HCA will also support SCB in obtaining resources, updates and trends in MICE industry."

SCB is also in the midst of upgrading its Virtual Seoul platform. A virtual representation of the city and exhibition halls have been added. Software has been upgraded to make it easier for planners to customise the platform during their event.

On the local level, Kim revealed that SCB has been organising "educational programmes" for local PCOs and PEOs to prepare them for recovery. This includes events such as the recent Seoul MICE Business Day where associations and Seoul MICE Alliance (SMA) members came together to network, as well as the Virtual MICE Show: SEOUL LIVE ON targeted at overseas buyers to meet with SMA members.

Meanwhile, Jeju has turned its attention towards sustainability, as it is a leisure destination filled with "world-class meeting

venues and unbeatable natural surroundings like the Seongsan Ilchulbong (Sunrise Peak)", said Seung-bae Kim, chief director of Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).

"To stay competitive in the meetings market, we are carrying out a large-scale Green MICE campaign, (which supports the government's) Green New Deal (encompassing renewable energy, and green infrastructure)," he said.

Jeju CVB has been promoting the campaign through social media channels such as Instagram, highlighting recycling and the need for sustainability across all aspects of business events.

Earlier in July, it also organised a Green MICE Forum. Comprising presentations and sustainability lectures, the forum's goal was to minimise the use of disposable goods, and increase the use of fair trade products. Jeju's Green MICE manuals were also introduced then, to help local stakeholders operate in more sustainable ways including event planning.

In addition, Jeju CVB and the Jeju International Convention Center, along with other stakeholders, are seeking to obtain ISO 20121 international certification, which will offer guidance and best practices to help planners manage events, while controlling its social, economic and environmental impact.

Greener fields await

Technology and sustainability in the business events industry have enjoyed significant development in Japan in the past 18 months, finds **Kathryn Wortley**

As the Covid-19 pandemic has been driving demand for more hybrid and online events while heightening calls for the world to address climate change, much has been done in Japan's business events sector to bring about greener, safer and more accessible events.

On the technology front, venues throughout the country have been innovating and boosting their digital capabilities to offer cutting-edge hybrid events.

Kobe Convention Center has upgraded its network infrastructure and equipment to better deliver engaging virtual elements.

Over at Tokyo Port City Takeshiba, a new building designed as a futuristic smart city, state-of-the-art equipment includes the latest flicker-free tech to reduce eye fatigue.

Meanwhile, Grand Hyatt Tokyo has completed a full renovation of its event spaces, which now feature custom LED screens, pendant lights to create original designs for attendees and high-spec projectors for projection mapping.

In a push towards more sustainable events, Yokohama City initiated the Yokohama Blue Carbon Offset System, which supports marine life that absorbs carbon dioxide around the port city. The 2nd ICCA Asia Pacific Chapter Summit 2020 was the first international conference to put the programme into practice, offsetting the total distance travelled by attendees and the energy used to power the venue.

Asami Aoki of Yokohama Convention & Visitors Bureau's Business Events Team, said interest has been rising in the green credentials of convention facilities and how companies can address the carbon footprint of their business events.

Membership of Sapporo and Kyoto in the Global Development Sustainability Index – an international platform that shares sustainable practices in the events industry – continues to draw organisers to those cities with the expectation they can enjoy a greener event.

Similarly, other meeting venues in Japan have been



Kobe (pictured) has hosted internationally-recognised events such as the G7 Health Ministers' Meeting in 2016

responding to organisers' green demands.

Pacifico Yokohama, boasts a 93 per cent recycling and waste reduction rate; while Treeful, a sustainable luxury treehouse resort in Okinawa, promises an environmentally-friendly stay, as well as nearby activities such as forest trekking or paddle-boarding: ideal for incentives or corporate meetings.

In addition to sustainable credentials, Japan's service providers have also been expanding their repertoire of local offerings.

For instance, Kobe Convention Bureau created a menu of 22 experiences that are "unique to Kobe" and "designed exclusively for business events delegates," said its assistant manager, Lance Ferguson. In addition to being fun, the goal is "to provide participants with something that will

stick with them," he added. Experiences include eating Kobe beef, mountain hikes, Zen meditation, and sustainable farming.

Up north, Sapporo has also been expanding its "wow experiences", such as snowball fights and photo scavenger hunts, said Ayako Kurosawa, a member of Sapporo Convention Bureau's incentive and corporate events team.

"We have been flexing our muscles in sports and adventure tourism especially, by making use of the extraordinary nature in Hokkaido," she explained, adding that the city's "diverse natural surroundings and unforgettable outdoor adventures in both green and white seasons", continue to appeal strongly to the Asia-Pacific corporate meetings and incentives market.



We have been flexing our muscles in sports and adventure tourism especially, by making use of the extraordinary nature in Hokkaido.

Ayako Kurosawa

Incentive and corporate events team, Sapporo Convention Bureau

Building future event worlds

Big Tech are crafting technology to disrupt events, but cost and courage to take leap forward are obstacles, finds **Caroline Boey**



VR, AI and AR will enable more immersive, interactive and experiential events

While the future of the business events industry is undoubtedly human, the sector needs to be ready to integrate different types of new technology that can enhance attendees' experience in events going forward.

This is according to Ayesha Khanna, co-founder and CEO of ADDO AI (an artificial intelligence solutions firm and incubator) who was the closing keynoter at the SMF IBTM Wired event held in Singapore.

Aside from presenting a futuristic outlook of hybrid reality with man-machine powered events and social robots alleviating Zoom fatigue when humans meet in digital spaces, Khanna said Big Tech – like Apple, Facebook and Google – was developing technologies that would disrupt events by making experiences more interactive, personalised and dynamic. These were aimed at millennials and the next generation of digital natives – the alphas.

Event spaces with virtual reality (VR) headsets could create a social presence with avatars, sound projections and haptic gloves to make vir-

tual attendees feel like they were in a real meeting. This was getting close, Khanna said.

She added that augmented reality (AR) has already successfully delivered specially curated art tours when travel was restricted, and could, for example, transform a customised experience for someone attending a car launch, she added.

While meeting planners and event organisers do not have to be technologists, Khanna advised that they needed to know about the developments to make decisions to help them know the customer – how he or she is feeling, for example – to create a better experience.

Technology is not omnipotent

Event technology solutions have no doubt been pushed to the forefront during the pandemic and Global-Sign.in founder CEO Veemal Gungadin, who is also founder and CEO of event technology platform GEVME, said he had seen a 50 per cent jump in meeting technology spend, while total budgets did not increase.

According to Oscar Cerezales, chief strategy officer, MCI Group, technology is important, but it is only an enabler.

Cerezales said: "Technology without design is useless, and there is no correlation between great events and great technology used. However, there is a correlation between great events with great design – UX or user-based with neuroscience, design thinking, etc."

What the industry needs to learn from Big Tech, he pointed out, is "how to scale up, how to grow-build-stick-monetise communities and how to develop platform business models".

To Cerezales, it is a phased process – first, a simple pivot from offline to online; second, adding design to the experiences; third, acceptance that it is not about an event but a year-long campaign with multiple touchpoints with their audience, be it corporate customers or association members and the public.

"This process requires courage, a testing and prototyping mindset, plus a learning and collaborative ecosystem. Finally, everyone has to learn about the what and how of modern outsourcing needs," he pointed out.

Focus on need, partnership and ROI

The AI, AR and VR future of events, according to Kenny Goh, founder, miceNeurol, an event technology partner and event planner, is "frightening and confusing to the industry" preoccupied now with "bottomline issues".

Moving forward, Goh advocates the setting up of a partnership model where the four main stakeholders – event technology company, production house, venue and content owner – approach a hybrid or virtual event on a "cost-share" basis with the Singapore Tourism Board or Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau as the catalyst.

PCO and turnkey agency Ace:Daytons Direct is a frontrunner in using AI to create virtual platforms and data in matchmaking, according to managing director Nancy Tan.

Tan said: "But emerging technology, production, satellite and equipment costs have to be affordable for clients and so far, demand among our primarily medical association clients is not a lot, only if it is a necessity and if adoption would result in higher ROI."

"It is different if you are a gaming event or conference. Then, AI and VR are a must," Tan opined, adding that such technology would add value to a high-end product launch.

Gungadin agreed there had been "no impetus" for the industry to "reimagine" events with the sort of technology due to the cost and "if it's not broken, why fix it" mindset.

However, he said there was a need now to reimagine the experience for those on-site, as well as to create a distinct experience for those online.

Business travel important to perform jobs efficiently

While virtual meetings and remote work are here to stay, business travel and face-to-face meetings remain extremely important. Seventy-six per cent of survey respondents to a survey conducted by BCD Travel in July 2021 said business travel helps them perform their work efficiently.

According to a recent survey of 738 business travellers worldwide, in a post-pandemic travel environment, 60% prefer to return to pre-pandemic levels of business travel, while 26% prefer to travel less and 9% to travel more.

When it comes to corporate travel policies in a post-pandemic environment, survey respondents care most about being able to decide for themselves whether to travel (64%). In addition, they desire a more simplified trip approval process (58%) and the prioritising of direct flights (53%).

For remote versus face-to-face meetings, 74% rate in-person client meetings as the most important reason for business travel, followed by teambuilding, sales meetings and meetings with partners or suppliers.

The main travel concerns remain consistent with previous BCD traveller survey results. Travellers mainly worry about quarantine on arrival, followed by concerns over sudden lockdowns and rapidly changing travel regulations.

Respondents believe remote work and meetings are here to stay, but they are clearly lacking when it comes to relationship building.

They say the main weaknesses of virtual meetings are:

- Lack of human contact (66%)
- Limited interaction (58%)
- Easy distraction (54%)
- Unsuitability for some meeting types (51%)
- "Zoom fatigue" and technology issues (49%)

"Meeting face-to-face not only remains a critical component to achieving company goals, (but) it's also essential to satisfying businesses' need for efficiency and human interaction," said Mike Janssen, global chief operating officer and chief commercial officer at BCD Travel.

"With vaccinations growing by mil-



In-person meetings are extremely important and cannot be replaced by screen-based interaction

lions every day, a majority of the workforce is ready to go back on the road, notwithstanding recent spikes of the Covid-19 variant. In a post-pandemic environment, corporations need to continue giving guidance. In order to remain an attractive employer in this fast-developing environment, they should also consider empowering employees to make their own travel decisions."

"While in some parts of the world the pandemic is slowly receding, other parts might continue to rely on virtual meetings," said Scott Graf, global president at BCD Meetings & Events.

"Event planners and managers need to up their game with a new skill set that allows them to compensate for the weaknesses of virtual meetings, such as the lack of interaction. Training or outsourced support can be

the answer to keep employees focused and motivated in a continually challenging environment."

Respondents also shared their views on the future of work. Currently, 57% are working remotely, compared to 24% before the pandemic.

When asked about the future workplace:

- 71% prefer a mix of remote and office work
- 20% favor full-time remote work
- Only 6% give preference to full-time office work

When asked about bleisure:

- 49% say they might extend a business trip for a few leisure days
- 38% like to travel for work accompanied by a partner or friend
- 33% like to extend their stay and continue remote working at the destination

Accelerating digitalisation

Ashwin Gunasekaran, CEO, Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau, shares with **S Puvaneswary** Penang's active push in embracing new meeting technology among both stakeholders and clients

How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted and changed the way Penang organises business events?

Penang is no stranger for its competence, versatility and dynamics in hosting creative and innovative meetings.

As we continue building the foundation for recovery, PCEB (Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau) Industry Partners have taken this opportunity to elevate their skills, redesign their business models and replan their business continuity strategies. Our partners were quick to embark on digitalisation and have been providing innovative solutions to clients on hosting virtual and hybrid conferences.

With robust Internet and communication infrastructure in Penang, the state's unique venues confidently transformed into virtual meeting hubs that accentuate the essence of the destination albeit travel restrictions at this moment. Our partners continue to acquire up-to-date technology and are flexible to suit diverse event needs.

In October 2020, PCEB hosted Malaysia's largest digital tradeshow in the industry, PITE 2020, which connected more than 80 Malaysian sellers to over 700 international buyers of the MICE industry.

What are the new requirements you are seeing from event organisers?

Firstly, event organisers are expected to adapt and present proactive competence for event requests during this new normal, both of which are key traits when it comes to building and sustaining the confidence of event owners like associations and corporates for them

to continue hosting meetings in this volatile condition.

PCEB is constantly in touch with all related personnel, industry players, as well as event organisers, listening to their needs, and effectively communicating creative solutions to their predicaments.

At the same time, we reassure clients that PCEB provides the guidelines for organising safe events and ensure SOPs in this current climate are adhered to. We also remind them that the virtual or hybrid event should maintain the essence, content, and objectives as if they were in-person meetings.

Secondly, event organisers must ensure that they are equipped with the most optimal technology (equipment and programming) which are important requirements in ensuring a successful virtual or hybrid meeting.

Our PCO partners are also keeping abreast with the

world's newest technology launches and best practices to convince event owners and provide them further confidence to host virtual or hybrid meetings, despite a stark change to their initial model.

Thirdly, event organisers will also be interested in destination support from the local state government, and agencies hold a pertinent key to ensuring the seamless event hosting experience is achievable while adhering to guidelines.

For Penang, PCEB actively works very closely with partners and event owners to ensure objectives and legacies are achieved for the community and the state's betterment.

What are some measures PCEB has taken to ensure the safety and security of delegates?

PCEB launched the Next Normal Guidelines for Business Events Penang, a comprehensive document detailing the new standards of organising business events in the Next Normal to guide organisers, as well as industry players, on the necessary actions and preparations pre-event, during event and post-event.

Produced by a task force of 29 industry partners spanning six business events sectors, the guidelines are constantly updated according to SOPs announced by the Malaysian National Security Council.

Are there updates to PCEB's subvention programme?

PCEB offers personalised support through the Enhanced Privilege Penang 2021-2023 aimed at supporting meetings, conventions and incentives from 2021 until 2023.

PCEB also provides customisation of the support, and extends it to selected levels of government, state agencies and institutions, industry partners and global clients to obtain the best support in relation to clients' needs.

PCEB also provides support for virtual and hybrid events and will continue to support Business Events Penang partners, as well as help ease organisers in transitioning to digitalised formats.

Event organisers can confidently apply for PCEB's support programmes as they are designed and customised according to the needs and requests from clients.



Ready to rumble

Business event planners and corporate travel managers are eager to network, and crave fresh perspectives and ideas



ALEKSANDRA TOMCZAK
President, Alex Art Agencja,
Poland

I would like to meet as many suppliers of tourist products as possible – accommodation, attractions, conference venues, flights, trains, and ships. This comes as we are thinking of organising a business industry conference in Shanghai, and our priority is to return in the direction of the Far East once the pandemic ends.

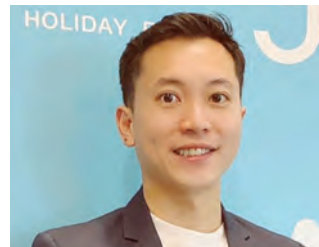
PAUL LE ROSSIGNOL
Managing director, International Telecom Development,
France

I am looking to make new contacts in Asia-Pacific for the purpose of organising future events. My objectives and priorities are to define a list of potential partners for MICE business in the region, and I am interested in learning about new properties that have opened in the last few years.



MELVIN NG
Director of commercial strategy,
KKday, Singapore

I am looking to engage with potential partners from the tours and activities sector, as well as look at the different travel business recovery plans that tourism stakeholders have. I look forward to networking, and establishing new business partnerships in the meeting hub, or during our networking conversations.



AVINASH KONRAD SINGH
Incentive travel manager, Blue
Sky Travel, Poland

I'm planning to obtain an update on the current situation in Asia-Pacific, and find out what the various Covid restrictions are in partners' destinations so I can plan for recovery. I would also like to look for new suppliers.



LONNI GULLIKSEN
CEO, Congress Consulting
Management Group, Denmark

I am always on the look out for new destinations and reliable partners for our wide range of corporate clients all over Europe. I am looking forward to the one-to-one virtual meetings as these hold great importance in building connections for our future business, as well as attending some of the seminars.

TERENCE CARDOZ
Managing director, Divine
Holiday Management, India

My key priorities are to connect with tourism boards, hotels, government bodies and if possible, film commissions. I am currently in the business of film tourism and international events like beauty pageants, and I'm on the lookout for new destinations that are welcoming the same.

SHELLA CASTRO
President, Loushe Travel and Tours, The Philippines

I'm always looking forward to IT&CM Asia. This time, I hope to gain new business partners, and am looking for new destinations in preparation for business recovery. I also hope to obtain fresh ideas and approaches that can help me be more effective and efficient in my role, especially during this pandemic.



DEBERT COOK
President, Event Planners
Plus NA Inc, US

My interest here is to contract new suppliers for group travel incentive programmes that my firm conducts annually. I hope to learn about new destinations and discover premium venues. My priority for attending is to gain more insight into opportunities to expand our current roster of destinations.



TANVI MAZMUDAR
Global travel leader, Lowe's
India

As I manage global travel, I would like to meet with dominant players in the North America and India space who deal in air and hotels. I am also keen to learn from industry peers and suppliers, what the best practices are, what sourcing strategy should I use, and when the in-person events revival is expected.

Showfloor inspirations

Asia-Pacific continues to be an enticing region for business events, evident from IT&CM Asia's line-up of sellers that are raring to welcome groups back



GANGNEUNG TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Gangneung, a municipal city in the province of Gangwondo, on the east coast of South Korea, is an emerging events destination. It boasts ultra modern business events facilities and unique venues, and can be easily reached from the international air hubs of Seoul and Incheon. Gangneung offers plenty of sun all year round with cool breeze, and various accommodation from luxury hotels to a temple stays.

MELIA HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

Melia Hotels currently operates more than 390 hotels in 40 countries and four continents under its brands, with another two hotels in Thailand – Melia Chiang Mai, Melia Phuket Mai Khao – soon to join the portfolio in 4Q2021. The company is currently running a *We Are Back, Meet With Melia* campaign for new confirmed groups before December 31, 2021 with arrival until June 30, 2022. Groups can enjoy maximum flexibility, such as free cancellation and return of deposits up to 60 days before arrival.



QUEEN SIRIKIT NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (QSNCC)

An iconic landmark at the heart of downtown Bangkok, QSNCC is a versatile venue suited to all kinds of events.

QSNCC boasts a total event space of 78,500m², comprising two main exhibition halls with over 45,000m², two large conference halls with nearly 10,000m², 50 flexible meeting rooms, and an additional retail zone. All function spaces will be fully-equipped with the latest technology.

The venue is also accessible via the Metropolitan Rapid Transit, and will have 2,700 indoor parking spaces.



CARLTON HOTEL BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT

Carlton Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit is centrally located on Sukhumvit Road with convenient access to BTS and MRT stations, shopping, dining, and entertainment.

This brand new hotel features 338 guestrooms and a range of dining options including a rooftop bar. With over 1,200m² of meeting space that are equipped with advanced technology, the hotel can comfortably host groups of up to 600 guests. Leisure facilities include outdoor swimming pool, Spa and Fitness.

REDFOX EVENTS

RedFox Events has been dealing with business events groups for over a decade, and they have handled inbound groups of between 10 to 1,000 to Thailand. Their multicultural, and experienced team will provide the best local experiences, as well as great customer service at every turn. From now until 2023, Redfox will be focusing on sustainable products and services, and aim to help groups learn while having fun in Thailand.



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