

16 Drivers of Change in the Meetings Industry

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Changes
NEXT EXIT →

“ The only constant is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be. ”- Isaac Asimov

Key drivers of change in the business environment are fluctuating economies, political pressures and environmental and social aspects. Each business segment has its own specific levers and industry trends that drive change. There are those organisations that stagnate when faced with the challenge of change while others prosper. It helps to understand the factors behind the drivers of change, for example the competitive pressures resulting from globalization, the growth of consumer, power and the scientific technological revolution.

“Volatility is the key business driver for 2012,” is one of the findings of the latest Global Supply Chain report from CapGemini, a study which asked business leaders across all industries “What are the business challenges that are driving the strategic plans and project focus of our responding companies?” The resounding reply was that market/demand volatility (52%) is the most important driver of change. Further research conducted by the 2020 Future Work Skills Report, concluded that the major game changers for companies will be: extreme longevity and increasing global lifespans, the rise of smart machines and systems, new media ecology, super structured organisations and the globally connected world.

What does this mean for the meetings industry? It means it is no different to other industries. The elements of change that impact a corporation have the same relevance to the meetings industry. Markets are volatile. Technology changes constantly. New generations of customers, workers, companies, supply chains have evolving needs. Communication means, messages and methods are crucial and need to be more creative and innovative. The economy, and its uncertainty, drives everything. Oh – and speed – it all needs to be done immediately. Meetings professionals must be ready to meet these drivers of change head on, we must be more proactive, we cannot afford not to be. The volatility of our customer’s environments affects our business. Stakeholders have changed and each group has their own expectations.

Association meetings have evolved from being the ‘activity’ to becoming ‘the platform’ for all association activities. Organisations are questioning and defining the objective of the events and meetings. Yes, the core focus remains on learning; learning for the delegates, the

members, all stakeholders. But, is learning simply about gaining knowledge... or making connections? Or both? The structure and format of the meeting are shifting. Where once we held plenary sessions, concurrent/parallel sessions, satellite symposia and the like, today our events need to be a delegate centred educational experience.

How do we prepare for the future?

1. Delegates, stakeholders and clients have new and different needs. Research them.
2. Identify the specific ideas on what makes an event successful. Implement them.
3. Meeting planners, event organisers and PCOs must stay ahead of technological advances and focus on delegates' expectations. The customer experience needs to be monitored every step of the way.
4. The meeting must be reviewed through the eyes of the participant and a unique proposition determined that will exceed their expectations.
5. Make sure you keep your promise

To match our stakeholders’ needs and expectations, here are five steps to implementing a successful event:

- recognise the need and research more creative meeting spaces designed to integrate different learning experiences
- plan on and implement high use of technology at every stage from event conception to realisation
- customise the offer with a change of the business models and the creation of tailor made meeting packages (incentives to attract delegates, pay per session models)
- focus on sustainability and the increasing need to invest in the community
- plan and implement a total customised experience for the delegates, from tailor made education to menus and meals

A new Meeting Promise for all of us

To meet the drivers of change for the meetings industry head-on, meeting planners must realise the change needed for their role. The event organiser needs to deliver an event that is truly relevant for customers and stakeholders, bring forward a unique proposition for the client, constantly show creativity, innovation and new ideas, devise solutions to every issue and fully understand that it’s the smallest of details that matter.

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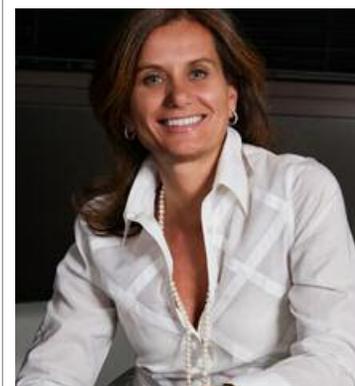
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This article was authored by Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, Vice-President AIM Group International and CEO of AIM Congress, the specialist of congress management agency. Under her leadership AIM has consolidated its position in the domestic and international markets and is now recognised as one of the global PCO players.

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