TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH ASSOCIATION LEGACIES

International associations that convene congresses in destinations around the world mustn’t miss out on the opportunity to leave legacies that reflect the values of the organisation, whether tangible or intangible, social, or economic or environmental. It’s indeed not good enough just to hold a meeting in a city: if you want to demonstrate the kind of broader ‘output’ values that are associated with meetings, congresses or conventions, you have to think in broad terms and look at the economic, business, professional, academic and community benefits that such events create. If those are sometimes a bit more difficult to grasp, that also places the meetings industry as a whole at the very centre of the global economy and the related scientific, professional, academic, business and social advancements it helps achieve.

The type of legacy chosen usually depends on many factors, including the objectives and values of the association, the nature of the profession it represents, the location of the congress, and the enthusiasm of members but no matter the choice, the examples are numerous, as the will to do good, and both the association and the destination will benefit. But if that sounds like something that a lot of meetings and conventions are already doing – as any kind of significant investment or budget to achieve real tangible return is always welcome – some argue associations are not currently taking advantage of the potential to develop these types of initiatives. When associations select a host venue for their conference, they should want the destination and everyone in the destination to understand that for the three or four days that they are in the city, what goes on in this congress centre or in that conference hotel is going to change people’s lives forever.

That is – quite simply put – what it is stake here and why associations should look at legacies as the ultimate opportunity for them to create value.

As part of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy Congress 2015, held in Singapore, the Singapore Physiotherapy Association and the national Ministry of Health formalised the creation of a four-year bachelor’s degree program in physiotherapy at the Singapore Institute of Technology. When Melbourne hosted the International AIDS Conference in 2014, Australia’s health ministers pledged to eliminate new HIV infections by 2020. And to help woo the 2017 One Young World Summit, Bogotá created a public-relations campaign that spotlighted the destination’s ongoing transformation and fostered lasting relationships among its public and private stakeholders.

Words Rémi Dévé
The first World Parkinson Congress took place in Washington, D.C. in 2006. Together with a strong legacy component, the concept was simple: create a high-level scientific meeting on Parkinson’s disease (PD) that opened its doors to the full community, including people with Parkinson’s (PwP).

Words Eli Pollard

While simple in theory, the complexities in planning a totally cross-pollinated meeting, which had never been done before in PD, were numerous. We weren’t sure if this was a one-off Congress, or a cross-pollinated meeting, which had never been done before in PD, attracting nearly 4,600 delegates from 60 countries, 26% of whom were people with Parkinson’s. The recent WPC 2016 in Portland, Oregon, our fourth Congress, attracted nearly 4,600 delegates from 60 countries, 26% of whom were people with Parkinson’s.

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