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Issue 6 Index Communications Meeting Services Newsletter BACD Supplement 2003

BACD Convention Supplement

## Editorial: Destination, Destination, Destination

The world changes but some things don't. Take, for example, the importance of a good destination in the scheme of a conference. On a scale of 1 – 10 for importance, the average score given by participants and hosts is probably 8, above all else. The choice of destination impacts upon accessibility, quality, professionalism and service – the biggest keys to the huge padlock that is successful conferencing.

Long established as an organiser of international events, Index Communications Meeting Services (ICMS) has this year decided to formalise and profile its support of destinations. Strongly believing in the huge benefits of relationships between organisers and destinations, Index has taken the unprecedented step of becoming a major sponsor of the BACD AGM and Spring Convention to be held in Liverpool from 4th – 6th June, "Destination Marketing in a Changing World".

As a medium-sized PCO, this was not an insignificant step, but to Peter Mainprice, Managing Director of ICMS, it was a very natural and obvious one. "All too often the full potential of collaboration between organiser and destination is not maximised", comments Mainprice, "As with everything, so much can be gained from communication and relationship-building, but

frequently these tools are simply under-utilised and efforts put into place too little, too late, when the event opens in a few weeks or even days".

Destinations and organisers have many common goals and they face the same challenges. In this special issue of *IndexLink*, you will find viewpoints from both sides and commentary on collaborations between the two. Index is thrilled and proud to be the first PCO to have taken this step in supporting the BACD in this way. The world does change.

Also in this issue you will find features on Index's involvement with the Business Tourism Partnership's activities (page 2). The First National Conference on Business Tourism is planned for the autumn this year, with Index having a pivotal role within the concept, development and management of the event. Inbound Business Tourism in every country faces increasing challenges in our changing world and Index is delighted to be playing a part in this highly relevant and pioneering event to address this issue for the UK market, again highlighting the benefit of collaboration between destination managers and organisers.

Please read on – this could all be very relevant to you!



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## Tony Rogers, Executive Director of BACD explains:

'The BACD 2003 Convention will take as its theme 'Destination Marketing in a Changing World'. It will explore the challenges, issues and opportunities facing convention and visitor bureaux, conference desks, and similar destination marketing organisations as they seek to increase their profile and success against a backdrop of ever-increasing national and international competition. The Convention will give delegates some new ideas and insights but also, through a series of workshops and case studies, enhance their practical marketing skills through examination of best practice. We shall also be presenting the latest industry research findings to highlight emerging trends within the conference and meetings sector.'

Tony goes on to explain the importance of sponsorship to the event: 'BACD fully recognises the importance of the support and sponsorship provided by a number of leading industry organisations which help to make the Convention affordable for members of the Association. However, such sponsorship is not only important in financial terms. It also represents a strengthening of ties and relationships between BACD and its sponsors, for mutual benefit.'

'BACD's formal links with the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) highlight its desire to strengthen strategic alliances across the meetings industry. There are clear synergies between destinations and PCOs, and the sponsorship given to the Convention by Index Communications Meeting Services is a very tangible step forward in building these business relationships, and one warmly welcomed by BACD.'



Tony Rogers

### BACD convention sponsors



# Strong Business Tourism Growth for Britain

**Peter Mainprice, Managing Director, ICMS**

As Managing Director of Index Communications Meeting Services I am very pleased to support the Annual General Meeting and Convention Conference of the British Association Conference Destinations. Today's world and its events are more vulnerable. With the increased competitiveness environment to attract conferences and exhibitions into the UK, it is important that event stagers form partnerships early in the process of winning business. This is why a PCO has sponsored the BACD event to emphasize this point.

Business Tourism is now outperforming leisure visitors into the UK and I am pleased to see the momentum behind Business Tourism increasing in the UK through the activities of individual destinations, the Business Tourism Partnership, Trade Alliance as well as the Government and Professional Conference Organisers.

Destinations, along with service partners need to be more competitive to not only attract international events but encourage our own nationals to stage their event or volunteer to host an event, in the UK. There are numerous ambassador programmes in many cities around the UK, but how can we make these 'investors' more confident to take on the role of event host?

Promoting the venue as well as the host town is very important. What is communicated to the national and international decision makers is to be underlined with pride as well as being focused to appeal to the international audience to travel to the venue. There are many less known host towns that can

contribute to the overall image of the UK as an attractive and competent event platform.

Giving confidence to corporate and association event hosts is very important in competing for business. An important but often overlooked team member is the *Professional Conference Organiser*.



**a member of the Association  
of British Professional  
Conference Organisers.**

Professional Conference Organisers can input not only on the strategic aspects of event development such as creating independent budgets and business plans but also can give practicalities to the pitch for business by acting as the architect in balancing the event's needs with those of the venue and service providers. This can give credibility and confidence to those decision makers and significant influencers for the placement of conferences and exhibitions.

With this in mind one of ICMS's goals as a member of the *Association Of British Professional Conference Organisers* is to make the conference organising experience as pleasant as possible as early as possible in the process leading to a wonderful conferencing experience for delegates. This goal also leads to the development of an image and well-being in delegates; each one may well be a decision maker for another conference as well as returning for the same event!

'My team and I wish the BACD delegates a wonderful networking time with new ideas and alliances being made, increasing the success of all our efforts in winning more business for our regions and Britain as a whole,' says Peter Mainprice.

## First National British Tourism Conference

*Index Communications Meeting Services* has also taken the initiative by organising the *First National Business Tourism Conference*. Supported by the British Tourism Partnership and Visit Britain this event scheduled for the autumn will bring together regional and international presenters with the objective of encouraging best practice and greater competitiveness for Britain's venues and service provision.

**BUSINESS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP**  
Leading the way



## A word from Hamish Reid, future chairman of the BACD

You look the word *Association* up in a dictionary (or spell check in these computer literate times) and there are no real surprises. An Association is *a union or even an alliance or a group of like minded individuals and organisations all striving to work together*.

Hopefully over the next year the BACD can work together and furthermore develop its alliance with ABPCO members such as Index. Index are a key sponsor at the BACD Annual Convention this June and this shows one of the other terms the dictionary refers to - relationship. Supporting each other is a key element to any associations success and the Convention will no doubt bring a great deal of like minded people together to discuss and educate each other in the challenges facing us all.

Whilst the convention will be a learning experience for all of us, the final term the dictionary mentioned *was friendship* and I trust the convention will start a few of those as well!

# Convention speaker profile

Part of the pleasure that Index Communications Meeting Services has in sponsoring the BACD AGM and Spring Convention is its valued association with the programme's world-renowned speaker faculty.

Giving the Keynote Lecture on the main theme of the Conference 'Destination Marketing in a Changing World' is Chief Executive of Tourism Vancouver and President of the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus **Rick Antonson**.

Antonson is a highly regarded authority on matters of destination marketing having made a massive contribution to the marketability of Vancouver as a location. He is often asked to comment on how world events such as September 11th will affect conferencing and travel both to Vancouver and on a worldwide level.

He has been instrumental in bringing people and revenue into Vancouver both before and since September 11th. He was previously the Vice-President of the Great Canadian Railtour Company Ltd, is a Member of the Canadian Tourism Commission and is a member of the Board of Directors for Vancouver/Whistler 2010 Winter Olympics Games Bid Corporation.

One of his strategies is to raise awareness of destinations with the help of the trade press FAM (familiarity) tours; 'media FAM tours are an affordable way to get credible exposure in the press about the merits of a destination' says Antonson. As well as long term solutions to the travel fear crisis caused by recent world events, he also acknowledges the importance of interim solutions, advocating the implementation of increased teleconferencing.

He is also a key player in an ambitious project to expand Vancouver's Convention Centre, a plan which would not only bring over 7,000 jobs to Vancouver but also transform the City into a real contender for big conventions competing with the likes of New York and Seattle.

On behalf of the host city of Liverpool, **Barrie Kelly**, Head of Marketing at the Merseyside Partnership will be profiling 'Liverpool – a City Destination'.

The Merseyside Partnership is an investment and tourism agency set up in 1993 by the region's political and business leadership in order to attract inward investment to the area. Its role has more recently expanded to incorporate Merseyside as a conference destination and visitor location. Mersey Tourism and Mersey Conference Bureau have now joined the Partnership. This has contributed

to make Liverpool, like Vancouver, an excellent example of a venue which has striven to boost interest with a highly proactive approach to its marketing. [www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com), a website devised by the Partnership has been awarded the Best Tourism Website in the England's North West Tourism Awards.

The Merseyside Tourism Partnership was also responsible for a campaign in the South to raise awareness of what northern destinations have to offer. 'Research has found people in the south-east are completely ignorant about Merseyside and the north. They think it's all football and the Beatles. They haven't got a clue about the cultural diversity, which is why our posters in London use "wow facts" aimed at educating them. The image of the north has improved by 40% in the last five years. We are working to further that'.

The poster campaign, which Kelly speaks of uses facts like 'Merseyside is the golfing capital of the UK' and 'Liverpool has more museums and galleries than any other UK city outside London' have been used to tempt people to visit the region, reminding them that 36% of the region is greenbelt.

**Graham Hankinson**, teacher and researcher at London Metropolitan University will be speaking about Brand Development as part of the convention. Having completed an empirical study on the effect of corporate culture on the perceived strength of brands, Hankinson is an expert on what the development of brands can do for business.

He has contributed to the Oxford Book of Marketing, the Journal of Brand Management and the Journal of Marketing Management.

His general knowledge in the area of branding has recently been focussed on branding of places and destinations as part of a research project, conducted in collaboration with the BACD, 'Destination Branding and the Business Tourism Market' in which he draws on his research relating to brand images of destinations from the business tourism perspective.

These experts' presentations and the excellent format of the convention by way of including workshop sessions to encourage interaction and information exchange, will undoubtedly make for a very informative few days in Liverpool.



*Rick Antonson*

Tony Rogers, our Executive Director, has already explained elsewhere in this Newsletter about the aims of our Spring Convention. I would like to simply add that the main purpose of the Convention is to allow delegates to network and exchange information. The format and style of the meeting have been purposefully designed to encourage the maximisation of interaction via several breakout and workshop sessions as well as the social programme. Much will be gained from the exchange of information, experience and thoughts amongst our participants and this we hope will leave them full of fresh ideas, renewed enthusiasm and focussed methodology which can all be put to good use when they return to work.

We are grateful for the support of all of our sponsors and recognise Index's sponsorship of part of the social programme. This will enable our participants to enjoy the event and take full advantage of the excellent opportunities that this Convention represents.

*Mady Keup, BACD Chair*



# “Water, water, everywhere” ... (or it should be)

**Rebecca Lawrence Bristol, Operations Manager of ICMS**

Excuse the pun, but our lives are *awash* with information about the benefits of drinking water. Supermarkets have extended their selections and their multi-buy products to encourage us to drag home bottles and bottles of this essential liquid and add to the £600 million pounds spent annually in the UK on bottled water.

All this we know. But what about drinking water when we are at meetings and conferences?

Sadly on this in the UK we are traditionalists. Conference programmers still err towards breaks entitled “Coffee” in the morning and “Tea” in the afternoon. In the US there are such things as “Smoothie” breaks and interestingly the ‘Water Cooler’ culture from the offices has transferred to conferences so that now those hunting caffeine and tannin during session breaks may be in the minority. To a regular conference-goer from the UK, this I am sure would quite literally be a *refreshing* change.

If cost and environment are your issues, here is some food for thought (or should I say *liquid* news?): the cheapest supermarket bottled mineral water is likely to cost around 10p a litre. One of the many branded bottles may cost you as much as £2.00 per litre and in a meeting venue this can become £4.00 - £8.00 depending upon where you are and the ‘class’ of the water that they provide. Turn on the tap and your glass will be filled for 1p a litre. In terms of quality, there is no difference, as those that know can tell you: the UK Drinking Water Inspectorate has stated consistently that “on health grounds, no alternative to tap water is needed”. Strict European directives control the quality of both water and bottled water. But even more intriguing: tap water quality is checked from source



to your kitchen tap. While bottled waters are checked, the same thorough *channel* of information is not available. Interesting stuff.

So in the end, the choice comes down to taste and the impact of marketing and public perception, but don't forget that once drained, the container of your expensive bottled water must be disposed of and in the same way that you are adding to the profits of the bottled water companies, you are also pouring more into the growing sea of recycling. To protect your wallet and the environment, tap water is hard to beat. Available 24 hours a day in our homes, offices, hotels and venues, with a quality second to none, it seems surprising that we need to be reminded about it so frequently.

Finally, to end on some statistics, here are some more reasons why conference hosts and organisers should be letting the water flow during events:

- 75% of people are consistently dehydrated
- Lack of water is the number one trigger of daytime fatigue
- Skin is reliant upon water and can be negatively affected by air conditioning, central heating and humidifiers
- Just a 2% drop in body water can trigger fuzzy short-term memory, trouble with maths and difficulty in focussing on the computer screen or on a printed page

So let's get out those ice cubes, be more imaginative with our refreshment breaks, look forward to radiant skin and concentrate. Cheers!

*“Water, Water, everywhere,” is from The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

# There is No Place Like Home... The Value of UK Destinations

**Hannah Leach, Project Assistant of ICMS**

There is a certain charm in the idea of taking large conferences to glamorous international destinations. Places like Paris, Rome, New York, Barcelona have a much more appealing ring to them than Plymouth, Reading, Nottingham or Blackpool.

However, the draw of the UK destination should not be underestimated and our very own towns and cities can provide modern and well-equipped conferencing facilities matched with delightful and accessible locations.

There seems to be the impression that international delegates in particular will only be interested in visiting the UK if major cities like London are on the itinerary. There is no doubt that our larger cities: London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester etc have a great deal to offer both British and international delegates and an internal proven track record, but the UK also has a lot to offer just short distances from these areas.

Smaller cities like Oxford, Cambridge, Stratford Upon Avon, Warwick, Chester, York and Harrogate have much to offer delegates in terms of locale and attractions. Additionally, seemingly relatively ‘unglamorous’, even smaller towns like Basingstoke, Warrington and Skipton have charm, character and facilities, which could make for an excellent event.

A town like Skipton, less than an hour north of the accessible Leeds/Bradford International Airport is a perfect example of one such town which can provide everything a delegate could want served up with a slice of traditional, real England. Known as the gateway to the Dales, Skipton is a stone's throw away from some of the kingdom's most beautiful countryside and one hour's drive from the Lake District, the Peak District, York and the north east coast. Bolton Abbey, Castle Howard, Harewood House, Bronte and Herriot Country are all within reach. Skipton itself is a delightful market town with 19th century

architecture and is a hub for many surrounding villages with a good supply of shops, pubs and accommodation. How much more character could one ask for? But do people know about it?

Graham Hankinson, teacher and researcher in Brand Development at London Metropolitan University has

conducted some research, with the support of BACD, on the marketing of destinations. He has found that ambient attributes such as history, heritage and culture are less important than commercial considerations and functional attributes i.e. activities, facilities, accessibility in the assessment of destination quality. Perhaps this could explain why towns like Skipton have been overlooked. However, the appeal that Skipton offers does not compromise the town's marketability as a conference destination. The Hanover International Hotel has conference capacity for 420 and being on the edge of town, space for parking is not restricted so does not cause the headache that some city centre venues bring. Skipton is just one of many UK examples. Those that choose the major cities or destinations overseas are missing out on some the best that the UK has to offer.

Look around the UK and you can find history, charm, character, style, functionality and accessibility... the irony is, perhaps these places benefit from being slightly under-known. Perhaps they're best kept as treasures to those of us who know them...sshhhhh!

