



July 6, 2019

'Practical Strategies' Achieved in a New Format at AIPC 2019

Under an overall theme of "Practical Strategies to Meet Changing Expectations" the 2019 AIPC Annual Conference in Antwerp Belgium delivered as promised within a format that delivered sweeping changes from previous events. From the highly experimental interactive think-tank "BrainShare" to special focus areas designed to concentrate on top priorities for industry action, this event achieved new insights and actions designed to help centres deal with the kinds of adaptive changes needed to compete and succeed within today's rapidly evolving and highly competitive business environment.

The process was enhanced with featured keynotes including Dr. Linda Yueh, a globally recognized economist and authority on trade issues who delivered a realistic picture of how current economic and geopolitical issues are re-shaping the business environment of centres and technology futurist Sophie Hackford whose visions of the near future implications of rapidly changing tech capabilities revealed both challenges and new business opportunities in the meetings area.

The event also benefited from the latest thinking around key client issues and innovations through panels and workshops with industry leaders in the areas of medical association meetings, exhibitions, the corporate meetings world and a PCO perspective. These insights, delivered by some of the most influential thinkers in their respective fields, helped delegates come to grips with the challenges faced by organizers in ways that stimulated discussions around how centres could better support their client's needs to the advantage of all.

A highlight of the event was "BrainShare" - a unique and custom-developed intensive session around addressing the challenges associated with growth, from scalability to resourcing and from accessing talent to resulting adaptations to business models and ecosystems. Developed by industry visionary Oscar Cerezales, the session posed key questions in the context of immersion-scale orientation, with dedicated topic stations and discussion labs used to arrive at conclusions that were then merged to create an overall change strategy. The session was designed to not only engage delegates in a structured thought and planning process but at the same time acquaint them with the needs and expectations of planners who are increasingly incorporating these kinds of participatory exercises into their events.

Another important occasion was the awarding of this year's AIPC Innovation Awards, which are made in recognition of exemplary centre innovations in the areas of management, marketing and operations as determined by an expert judging panel, with an additional 'Delegates Choice Award' based on voting by conference participants. Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre was the winner of this year's Innovation Award for their unique conferencing configuration The Hive by ADNEC, with the Cape Town International Convention Centre taking top honors in the Delegates Choice category for its A Self-sustaining International Convention Centre project.

Conference hosts the Flanders Meeting and Convention Center – the 'Room with a ZOO' played a key role as well, providing a wide range of distinctively different event spaces that kept delegates engaging in new and varied environments and experiences.

AIPC also used the conference as an occasion to announce its participation with partners ICCA and UFI in the new 'G3' Global Alliance which will facilitate cooperation and exchange amongst these three major international associations and an organizational re-structuring based on a recently developed visioning exercise to bring AIPC into its next chapter of growth, and which will see AIPC appointing a CEO in the very near future. Finally, two new Board members – Juliana Lopez, CEO Cartagena de Indias Convention Center, Colombia and Allan Agerholm, CEO, Bella Center Copenhagen, Denmark were elected to represent members through a two-year term.

"This year's Annual Conference was a significant departure from previous events – but that reflected the kinds of big industry changes we see happening around us, and a need to address these in realistic ways using the collective expertise and resources our members and colleagues can provide said AIPC President Aloysius Arlando. "By using our own interactions at the conference to learn and grow as managers we are continuing a great AIPC tradition of sharing for mutual benefit – something we will only intensify as we grow into the future".

AIPC 2019 images have been made available by the Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp for download via <https://kmdavzw.pixieset.com/aipc2019/>



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