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Collaborative approach should prevent your partner from straying



John Hooker

Padraic Gilligan makes some good points in last month's issue (Opinion: Love on the rocks?).

One could argue, but Padraic did not, that being both poacher and gamekeeper might be the answer (Ovation and MCI). However, it is simpler than that. Unless a service supplier can succinctly define what they do, ideally in one sentence, show where they add value and for what price, then they are likely to become Irish mist.

Currently around 20 per cent of destination management work comes direct and DMCs have not gone looking for it for fear of upsetting the agencies who have, to be fair, been the main bread basket.

The agencies who have embraced change do see the value of a collaborative supplier partnership and split the work according to skills in an open and transparent way, managing the expectations of the client at the outset.

However, too many still hang on to business models that are becoming obsolete and the message is simple: change or watch suppliers of every hue emerge as the first point of contact. After all, we are a global industry and technology means location is no longer a barrier.

I can see an exciting landscape emerging and one where demonstrable value-add is the norm. Those I work with are well on this road but with maybe a few hazards along the way, given the world we live in.

✉ *John Hooker, jhcp*

We received a stack of letters in response to ne Association of British Professional Conference (ABPCO) is campaigning for all UK venues to provide Wi-Fi for delegates. Here are some of the best.

Why Wi-Fi isn't free and easy



Richard Hughes

Without wanting to be too much of a party pooper, I like to explode a few myths about the current industry being able to provide free Wi-Fi at venues.

Firstly, I agree that the provision should be better. We are very much behind other countries in this regard. I'm afraid it's not just about being able to do it, but about making a switch.

Say you want to hold an event for 150 delegates in London. You want them to be able to check their office email with a secure connection, allow the speaker to present online demos and for the support crew to run the back office successfully without it taking 20 minutes to do a task. The fact is that for this to happen you will need to have a reliable internet connection of at least 50mbps, plus switches, routers, and a techie to put it all together. The cost of all this is at least £1000 per year. If venues are to truly offer efficient, scalable Wi-Fi for free, they need to take on this cost and the fact is this isn't happening yet.

The bottom line is most venues do need to bring their systems up to date, but there also needs to be a greater industry understanding of organisers' requirements and what technical infrastructure is in place.

Both ABPCO's and ESSA's campaigns have been very successful in highlighting the need for Wi-Fi in the industry. They have also helped to highlight a lack of knowledge that exists about the subject.

✉ *Richard Hughes, Max WiFi*

Well done to ABPCO for bringing this issue to the fore. Client expectations, let's say internet connections in general, is seen as an essential service by hotels and venues and a replacement for their telephone service. It's dropped right off after the introduction of mobile phones.

Of course it's understood that some venues are tied into contracts, yet others sub out their internet provision and the cost of dropping charges more difficult. My advice to them is: give it a try and shop around before you really lose out.

✉ *Roger Oakley, Global Connect UK*

At Hotel Desk we have at least one major client who has proposed venues or hotels who charge for Wi-Fi. Event organisers need to be on top of such charges that can really mount up.

✉ *Jo Egan, Hotel Desk*

Best discovery of the year was the Peninsular Hotel in Shanghai, which not only provides free Wi-Fi but also free telephone calls. Using a VOIP system, but with the in-room handsets indistinguishable from any other hotel phone, guests can make any calls, local or international, free of charge. If they can do it, why don't others follow? It's a superb offering.

✉ *David Hackett, BI Worldwide*

We're members of Conference Centres of Excellence and our member venues, free Wi-Fi is offered as standard. In fact, some venues still try and charge for Wi-Fi. We tried to charge, but years ago and even then our clients thought we were mad since and our customer feedback tells us that it is sometimes a different factor between us and a competitor.

✉ *Howard Canning, Quest Worldwide*

The Editor's blog

Lost in translation

I am always surprised at the poor standard of translation in documents coming from major tourist boards, hotels and airlines, given that they clearly want to engage the English-speaking market.

I was struck again by this thought as I perused the China Airways business class menu on the way to CIBTM in Beijing, where 'pickled, fried stereotypes' appeared to be dish of the day.

The silliness continued at CIBTM, with one exhibitor offering 'businessmen museum protected', which turned out to be historic meeting venues rather than ancient men in suits.

But, giggles aside, these poor translations are failing to get sometimes serious messages across. The organisations are already paying for someone to write and distribute the material, so why not spend that little bit extra and have it proof read by a native English speaker?

Reader responses...

How right you are, literal translations very rarely work from one language to another. We also spotted that particular exhibitor but on the night before the first day of the show, so too late for it to change. I believe it's important that we incorporate local idiom into any translation, therefore next year we are going to offer this service to our Chinese exhibitors from the moment they sign up. On a lighter note, I wonder how Reed would translate? After all, the literal meaning is a grass that grows around a marshy swamp! Plus I bet there are a few Chinese laughing at clumsy attempts by us Westerners to translate materials into their language!

Jeffrey Xu, Reed Exhibitions

To read more responses on this topic go to: www.meetpie.com/mailbag