

Graeme Barnett, Senior Exhibition Director, ibtm world

The power of face to face is an integral part of doing business

This year, the 28th edition of ibtm world will take place from the 29th of November till the first of December. Meeting International asked Graeme Barnett, Senior Exhibition Director, for an update.



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What do you expect of the number of visitors to ibtm Barcelona?

Last year we had some 15,500 international meeting professionals attend the show in Barcelona and this year we expect to see similar numbers. However, numbers are really irrelevant because the value of the event to the industry is about the quality of the meetings that take place, the business achieved, the sessions we deliver for the Knowledge Programme and the additional benefits for everyone through valuable networking events held throughout the week. Last year generated over 80,000 appointments over the 3 days - a phenomenal amount of potential business opportunities.

Has anything been changed in the set-up or the programme in relation to last year?

The 2016 edition of ibtm world will see some exciting developments for exhibitors, visitors and Hosted Buyers as we look to ensure the events meets the needs of each of our customer groups. These developments have already started with the launch of a new website and the enhancement of our appointment system through our partners Certain Technologies which will make it easier for exhibitors to manage their diaries and appointments.

We will also be introducing a new app that will have additional functionality, allowing exhibitors to capture all their leads and contacts from attendees to their stand through their smartphone rather than the traditional



lead-capture scanners. Exhibitors will also be able to 'instantly' rate each appointment in terms of potential business that will provide valuable insight to both exhibitors and ourselves as we plan future buyer programmes. Another example of how we are working to add value is the launch of a matchmaking service which provides Hosted Buyers with recommendations of exhibitors we believe they should be meeting with, based on the events they are planning for whilst attending ibtm world. This matchmaking service has the potential to provide new meetings that had not been considered prior to receiving a personalised list of recommendations.

We've also been working hard to enhance the overall experience for our exhibitors beyond the support we already provide to them onsite. In order to do this, we've created some exciting initiatives, which include providing them with their own personal concierge before, during and after the event. We're also providing them with instructional webinars to support them towards maximising the exposure they achieve through attending.

One of the big changes to the logistics of the show this year is that Barcelona has further invested in the infrastructure of the city and opened a new high speed metro that will take attendees directly from the airport to the Fira de Barcelona, this will be a great improvement for all our attendees travelling to and from the airport and ibtm world. The route will go directly to Terminal 1 at Barcelona International Airport, interconnecting with all other terminals, and trains will run approximately every 7 minutes.

Which trends can you distinguish in the international MICE industry and what will we notice of these at the ibtm?

The trends this year and their relevance in the industry have been identified through research we have done with all of our attendees, so that we can ensure that the ibtm Knowledge Programme is on track and relevant. Created by the industry for the industry, this year's trends and themes include safety, security and risk manage-





HOLLAND PRESENT AT IBTM WORLD

Every year at ibtm world NBTC promotes Holland with several partners present at their stand. Eric Bakermans, senior Project Coordinator Congress Acquisition at NBTC, considers ibtm world "a must attend event for every business driven destination as well as for hosted buyers. We have seen growth from any taken perspective. In business leads as well as number of sharing partners at the Holland Meeting Point. Especially this year there will an extra reason to visit IBTM World as we have a major event planned with MPI Foundation..."

ment, sustainability and CSR, innovation, disruption and the subject of the effects of Brexit on the international and regional MICE industry.

Probably the one trend that seems to dominate the most right now is the continuing advancements and innovation that technology brings to this sector. Technology has been the number one driver of change for this industry with so many influencing factors that require event planners and producers to think more about how best to engage audiences. Meetings planners all across the globe are placing more and more emphasis on incorporating the latest technological inventions into their meetings and events.

Rob Davidson, Managing Director of MICE Knowledge predicted in his 2015 Trends Watch Report that communications technology was one of the top sectors to experience growth in 2015 and that as technology continues to advance, cyber security is becoming an increasingly important issue among MICE professionals; over 44% of technology company CEOs regard information security (cyber) risk as the biggest risk to their organization.

Davidson's research also concluded that fostering innovation and implementing disruptive technologies are the top strategic priorities and seen as a key strategy for growth. For example, over 50% of technology CEOs are devoting significant capital to new product development and the same percentage are investing in machine-to-

machine technologies, industrial intranets and other aspects of technology.

To support this sector and the need for the industry to keep up to date with it all, we have focused on showing technology 'live' in an area we call ibtm world Innovation Zone. It is here where attendees can experience, interact with, and learn about the latest technology innovations and revolutionary solutions. Each year our independent panel of judges shortlist ten applicants for the Technology and Innovation Watch Award who are then given the opportunity to conduct live demonstrations of their 'winning' products to attendees.

What, in general, is the added value of visiting a trade fair?

There are so many reasons and every attendee could have something different to another. We always judge the value through research conducted both before, onsite and after an event, this gives us an analytical and strategic approach to understanding what we are doing right and where we can make changes. The views of our communities are what we learn from so that we can constantly add value to our events.

The real value comes from our key objectives – to facilitate connections between





Eric Bakermans (third right) and Graeme Barnett (far right)

buyers and suppliers, but at the same time there is also great value in providing learning through onsite education as well as plenty of networking to extend the opportunity to create new connections as well as have fun! Attendees at ibtm world can gain product intelligence, competitor insights, industry specific trends and more, while also gaining useful knowledge not only from exhibitors but from their peers and industry colleagues many of which can be new from just one visit to a trade show.

For example, here is how one exhibitor last year summed up their experience. Nádia Dias, Project Manager, Europolco said: "We attended ibtm world last year and it provided so much value for our business that we have chosen to return to the show again this year. ibtm world allows us to profile our company as a global services partner to

international events companies and allows us the opportunity to demonstrate our unique services to a global audience of top level meeting industry buyers."

Do trade fairs like ibtm have any future? Or will there be some sort of hybrid form of trade fairs?

Trade fairs and exhibitions like ibtm world have to reinvent themselves continuously to stay relevant and cost effective to attendees. The ibtm portfolio is part of Reed Travel Exhibitions, which in turn is part of Reed Exhibitions, the world's leading events organizer – over 7 million event participants attended events in 2015. The future is continually being defined, because exhibitions play a vital role in building industry networks and sustaining business communities as well as facilitating education and professional learning. Reed events generate

billions of dollars of business every year and every event is developed based on extensive customer research, guided and enriched by industry partners, informed by local market expertise and supported by the world's largest global exhibition network. It's the delivery of business opportunities, the opportunities to see, listen and learn also puts this form of marketing very much into the future.

Hybrid events have been around for a long time now and experience and research has shown that they tend to enhance a live event rather than detract from it, the meetings industry is very much a people industry and the power of face to face is an integral part of doing business.

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