



"I am devoted to this industry"

If you want to organize an event, you will probably start your search in the corporate congress market. But this does not automatically guarantee a success in the association market. Because this target group requires a specific approach and handling. The Dutch congress and event professionals are increasingly aware of this. Ingrid Rip has gathered over 20 years of experience in the market and is happy to help her confreres.

Ingrid Rip has been active in the hospitality business since 1992. She worked, for instance, in the hotel business, at the World Forum Den Haag (at the time 'Het Nederlands Congresgebouw') and was manager at the Rotterdam congress bureau. In 2003 she decided to start her own business and set up her company RREM. Since that time, Ingrid Rip has been offering workshops and training sessions to MICE professionals who wish to further improve their hospitality. She helped, for example, the city of Delft to position itself as an attractive destination for the international association market. She was also involved in the successful bid procedures for the attraction of academic congresses. Recently, the Summercourse of the International Space University by the cities of Delft, Leiden, Noordwijk and The Hague was landed under her guidance. On behalf of the cities, Ingrid Rip was part of the working group among NSO, TU Delft, Leiden University and ESA/ESTEC. Apart from that, Ingrid Rip has been a very active and valued member of the MPI Nederland and a teacher at that institute for many years. The experience gained, and the fact that, in her own words, she is "devoted to the industry", have made Ingrid decide that she would concentrate her activities further on the academic association market. "My own passion lies with this market. And the fact that academics usually are very passionate people, creates a natural bond."

DIFFERENT APPROACH

According to Ingrid Rip it is worth the investment for the event professionals to go deeper into this market. "The associa-

tion market usually has a longer lead time, so you know exactly what the prospects regarding assignments are in the longer term. Locations can then, for instance, fill up their remaining availability with orders that have a shorter lead time. This causes a more balanced spread and occupation." However, the association market does differ fundamentally from the corporate market on a number of points. "Sometimes there are only a few months or even weeks between the request for a corporate event and the actual taking place. An association congress needs a much longer lead time to get everything in order. One of the reasons may be the busy schedules of the academics, who you sometimes have to book years in advance." The decision processes also follow a different route. "For an association congress all destination options must be submitted to the board. Sometimes even the delegates to the preceding congress can decide on the venue of the next congress. In that case, you have to be very good at lobbying. Apart from that, there can be a huge difference in the way financing is arranged, how the event is set up eventually and the goals that have to be realized. That demands a different client approach. And not everyone realizes this."

EXPERIENCE

Parties in the corporate congress and event market who wish to know more about the association market can refer to Ingrid Rip, including the professors themselves. "Generally, they have more than enough knowledge for an academic congress, but lack the know-how and experience in the field of organization. I

can then offer them, for instance, advice and help in the selection of candidates or help in structuring the congress. I stimulate organization bureaus that are looking for new clients to take a different look at their portfolio; by handling the things that happen around you in a different way, by differently treating the people you know and considering the articles you read from a different perspective. Take, for example, a moving van that sports a picture of a hallmark or interest group. When you see this, your brain should immediately gear up, because that picture may be of an association that organizes meetings. There are many ways that lead to business. And when you have found an interesting organization, it is a matter of course to write that winning pitch."

TRAINING SESSIONS

Besides this project-based counselling, Rip also offers training sessions and workshops for, for instance, locations and suppliers. The training sessions are now held mainly in-house. In the future, participation will also be possible on the basis of open subscription. "At these meetings I explain the clients' expectations in the association market. Based on those expectations you learn how to best approach this market. During these training sessions I ask direct questions, which causes them to consider their method of working. What was the reason you lost this bid? Is it your routine? What do you present, and why do you do that this way? Together we look at how to compose a winning pitch, and how you can draw up a good quotation as a location or supplier. Locations can score extra points by, for instance, taking the trouble to call the enquiring party and gather additional information on the target group and the goals of the meeting. With the right approach and a close attention to details you can increase the conversion, and because of the lead time also maintain the level of your continuity of your portfolio or occupation. And by realizing qualitatively excellent association meetings you also build a track record that helps enormously in landing congresses. Most certainly in the case of specialization. In short: there is no reason whatsoever to not concentrate on this great market."

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