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Housing – Is Building Better Relationships a Dream?

Transparency was once again one of the debated issues at the Housing Management Seminar at EIBTM.

“Yes but what is transparency?” argued Philippe Fournier, IAPCO President, Managing Director MCI France, “I see it as an honest relationship. The hotel provides a fair rate, the PCO receives a commission for the services provided, which is not a markup but a direct recognised percentage, and the pharma groups pay a reasonable rate”.

Martin N. Jensen, Head of International Congress & Events at Lundbeck, Strategic Marketing, disagreed in as much as, representing IPCAA, the pharma companies would like to have a better understanding on the distribution of funds involved, to ensure that they are not being penalised by over greedy agencies and hotels. “Third party agencies” he continued, “are too often the key to the problem. Sometimes when approaching a city to which a leading meeting is destined, companies are informed that, as yet, no official housing bureau has been appointed and blocks are not yet available from the hotels. Lo and behold, shortly afterwards emails will be received from an unknown third party who has rooms to offer at greatly inflated rates. This is what we need to prevent”.

Xavier Guillemin, Sales Director, MICE-International, ACCOR Hotel Group defended the hotel’s position. “Rooms being blocked 2, 3, 4 years in advance – it is often impossible to foresee the rates that will be current at that time, and we have on-going relationships with third parties that we have to honour. It is a question of yield, and the hotel has to manage that yield on an on-going basis not just for peaks and troughs when a big event comes to Town.”

Gonzalo Perez Constanzó, Vice-President IAPCO, Operations Director, Tilesa Kenes Spain, stressed the amount of work that was undertaken by the PCO when managing the housing, in block bookings, negotiating rates and contracts, managing the groups and treating each request as an individual booking, each requiring different shoulder nights and lengths of stay.

“It is this service that the PCO provides, sometimes at their request and sometimes at the request of the client, but it is a service that has to be paid for, and commissions mean a saving on the budget of the client. The PCO has to build good relationships with hoteliers to make it work. Let’s face it, we are all in this business not only for the good of the event, but also to make money, for whatever purpose, be it for drug related research, for scientific development, to run a business or to manage a hotel. By recognising that fact, we can all build a better relationship.”

And” Philippe Fournier added “the Convention Bureaus have a role to play here by unifying the destination and making all the stakeholders understand the importance of playing the game together. A better understanding by all parties will build a better relationship,” he concluded.

ABOUT IAPCO: Meeting Quality

The **International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO)** was founded in 1968, is registered in Switzerland and represents today more than 100 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 37 countries. IAPCO members organise in excess of 5600 meetings annually, totaling some 2.11 million delegates and representing an economic impact in the region of 3.43 billion euros.

IAPCO is committed to raising standards of service among its members and other sectors of the meetings industry. Today IAPCO membership offers a unique quality assurance, since entry into membership of IAPCO is by meeting strict criteria and by continuous quality assessment.

The high quality standards are secured by means of continuing education and interaction with other professionals. The ‘Wolfsberg’ seminar, The Meetings Masterclass and the Annual Meeting & General Assembly of its members are the highlight events of IAPCO.

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