



Eibtm's stands in Fira de Barcelona (Barcelona)

Exceptional times call for exceptional measures in Eibtm

Redacción.-

This year's Eibtm was confirmed by Mandy Torrens, Eibtm Exhibition Director, as having attracted the largest ever gathering of Hosted Buyers and the most pre-scheduled appointments in the event's 21 year old history. She announced that unaudited figures showed that the event attracted a record number of Hosted Buyers – 3,791 up 2% on the previous year; 54,255 pre-scheduled meetings were organised over the three day event – up 4%. Overall total attendance is expected to hit the 8,000 mark.

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Mandy Torrens commented: *"These figures show not only how resilient the meetings market is in challenging times but the reputation Eibtm has as the place to do business, learn and network"*.

She added, *"we welcomed our largest ever gathering of Hosted Buyers from Europe, Africa, Asia, US, South America, Middle East, Far East and Australia and we are al-*

ready receiving requests for space for next year".

Eibtm's professional education programme saw numbers top over 3,000, up 15% – another record for the event – making it the largest European education gathering of industry professionals.

The Association Programme attracted record attendances from twenty-four countries including Russia, Israel, USA, Sweden, Chile and China; a truly international and cosmopolitan gathering of Associations representing an array of sectors.

A major success has been the expansion of the event's Spanish educational programme with ten dedicated sessions organised over the three days with speakers from APCE, MPI, Málaga Convention Bureau, Viajes Iberia Congressos, Oviedo Congress Palace and Le Meridien Barcelona. This initiative has impacted positively on the number of Spanish visitors at the show and is set to become a stable part of the show in future years.

The atmosphere around the show highlighted the enormous amount of business generated at the event.

Visit London

"Best Eibtm ever, we expect to exceed last year's figure of £52 million worth of business enquiries. We have organised three fam trips with North American, South American and Norwegian buyers. Ei-

btm plays an absolutely crucial role in our marketing strategy".

South Africa

"More high quality appointments, particularly from Associations. £3 – 5m of business enquiries which are confident will turn into actual business".

New York City

"Eibtm has brought more appointments (15 per day per person) for us this year than ever before. We have come to Eibtm every year since its beginning and intend to come back next year".

Outlook

The general outlook for the conference and events industry in the face of the current economic climate is uncertain, as many commentators believe that it is still premature to talk about the beginnings of a recovery despite growing optimism. Recovery is generally expected to be gradual – and a second dip into recession early next year cannot yet be ruled out. But even if a second dip can be avoided, business confidence will most probably pursue a moderate but cautious path to recovery, and the meetings and events industry will follow.

The general expectations for the months ahead were reflected in the MPI August 2009 Business Barometer, which, while acknowledging unfavourable

business conditions, also indicated the continuation of the trend toward a more positive business outlook, which was first reported in the April 2009 Business Barometer, with favourable forecasts rising, though cautiously. Budgets will remain low, but sources including the Business

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Barometer indicate that more organizations are showing signs of increased bookings in 2010. Suppliers report that more decisions to book meetings and events are being made, but that there is also a decrease in the average size of corporate meetings. The nature of meetings and events has also changed, however, as organizations continue to demonstrate concern of the public perceptions of incentives, optional events, celebrations, and 'frills'. Though negative rhetoric regarding meetings and events has declined significantly in the past four months, meeting professionals generally agree that a negative

public perception of meetings remains. As a result, many organizations will continue to select destinations and venues which are not considered to be extravagant or luxurious, and will plan meetings and events which include fewer celebrations, excursions, and banquets. Many meeting professionals expect this trend will continue for years into the future. In fact, many believe that the public perception of meetings and events has become one of the most influential trends in the industry, and will continue to be so.

Conclusion

Recovery, when it comes, will see the meetings and events industry emerge stronger than ever, ready to play a key role in enabling companies and individual men and women to benefit from the economic upturn. Many of the trends analysed in this report – such as cancelled meetings and travel avoidance – mean that there will be a strong pent-up demand for meeting face-to-face, once the global economy returns to full health once more.

In the meantime, the winners in the industry will be those suppliers who offer exceptional value and service and those destinations that target a diversified business base where downturns in one area of the meetings industry can be compensated for with opportunities in others.