

**Not-For-Profit Network and IMEX Global Data Exchange
October 2007**

**Not For Profit sector meetings and events in
Australia and New Zealand 2007**

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Executive Summary

This piece of research was commissioned by the Not-For-Profit Network and IMEX Global Data Exchange to provide a benchmark for all organisations in the not-for-profit sector for the size and significance of meetings in the industry and what works and what doesn't when running them.

The most significant benefit for all who choose to learn from this research is perhaps the collection of proven strategies for staging more effective events. This looks at how to: increase attendance, retain loyalty, boost sponsorship and be innovative.

The research also highlights some noteworthy key data – As a very general benchmark the majority of not-for-profit organisations stage 1-20 events annually, a large proportion of which are international (most being held in Asia and some in Europe) with a budget which has increased by 10% or more in the last three years. Typically events are annual with at least 16 booths and organisers are increasingly incorporating new technology. Putting together a compelling programme is the most important aspect of the event for most organisers and the generation of repeat sponsors the second.

1. Introduction

A first-ever survey of demand for meetings and events in the not-for-profit sector in Australia and New Zealand was conducted during July/August 2007. A massive 57.5% of respondents have proved anecdotal evidence that the sector in Australasia is growing, saying that the number of meetings they are running has increased over the past three years. Over 60% of respondents said that attendance at their meetings has grown over the past year and a further 69.9% expect attendance to grow further in the next year. In the face of this growth, the timely release of this survey will give an overview of what segments of the sector are running which kind of meeting and the steps they are taking to increase delegate numbers, sponsorship and success at their events.

The categories of respondents were:

<i>1. business associations/industry bodies</i>	<i>17.7</i>
<i>2. social service organisations</i>	<i>17.3</i>
<i>3. professional associations</i>	<i>15.7</i>
<i>4. education/research</i>	<i>10.4</i>
<i>5. health-related organisations</i>	<i>10.4</i>
<i>6. philanthropic intermediaries/volunteerism promoters</i>	<i>7.2</i>
<i>7. Other – represents 10 different types incl</i>	<i>21.3</i>

2. Hints for staging more effective events

Hints for staging more effective events			
How to: Increase attendance	How to: Retain loyalty	How to: Boost sponsorship	How to: Be Innovative
Personalised emails	Come and try days	Employ a dedicated and experienced sponsorship manager	Establish a conference-specific website
Offer a minimum of four reasons for people to attend – programme content, location, networking opportunities, and bonuses	Making each year seem better than the year before and ensuring that the programme hooks into current industry issues	Manage the relationship and give lots of profile to sponsors at the event deliver good delegate numbers to help sponsors show they're supporting the industry	Make presentations during partner programmes, and not just offer shopping
Strong support from influential people to 'talk-up' the event and pass on emails to others	Offer a strong business case to attend	Involve their staff in our cause	Reduce the number of concurrent work sessions in order to build meetings 'camaraderie' through more frequent interaction of delegates (especially foster networking with international colleagues)
Bring-a-friend discounts	Constant contact with effective networking	Media presence created by PR Person	Incorporate more workshops rather than just a day of talking heads
Offer training that people see as interesting, essential or useful	Involve them in shaping the programme	Help generate business for them	educate with the right mixture of humour
Subsidising travel of distant delegates	Achieve high quality professionalism of the events and ensure these offer value for money	Clearly demonstrate the value they will derive from the event	Develop a range of learning styles within sessions
Weekly messages targeting potential attendees	Offer a varied programme so there is always something new	Develop creative and customised packages specifically for each sponsor	Combine with other smaller conferences that would usually be staged separately and hold them concurrently

Good website and a regular high-quality journal	Looking after them at previous events – making sure each felt they had gained from attendance	Show how professional you are and impress them	Hold awards dinners to ensure high-profile members are present
Infectious enthusiasm	Offering special advance notice incentives for past delegates	Deliver all the deliverables as promised	Use technology more ... online registration ... Video-conferencing ... web-based members' forum ... conference calls; improved representation, format and purpose.
Engaging our members in listening to their needs.	Listen to their ideas and suggestions in evaluations and proactively making changes where possible.	Exceeding their expectations	Introduce a speed-dating type of exercise that allows delegates to say in two minutes what was the best thing their organisation has done during the year
Research to identify why non-attendees don't come ... And developing marketing communications to address the information gaps that they consequently have.	Don't rely on the habit of attendance last time as the reason for a repeat visit.		

3. Key Findings

3.1. Breakdown of participatory events that organisations engage in themselves:

Not-for-profit organisations in Australia and New Zealand typically engage in a full spectrum of participatory events. Key categories represented are:

- > Board And Committee Meetings (By 88%);
- > Workshops (66%);

- > Seminars (61%);
- > General Training (56%);
- > Conferences (53%).

Further types used by a third or more organisations are:

- > Training for certification/accreditation;
- > Award functions;
- > Networking events.

Other important categories include:

- > Board/staff retreats (26%);
- > A combined conference with exhibition (25%);
- > Exhibition (23%);
- > Special events, whether non-sporting (28%) or golf days (21%).

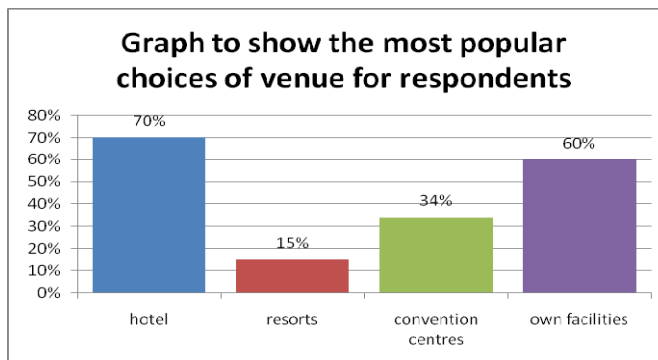
3.2. Event Frequency:

Around two-thirds of organisations run from 1-20 events annually.

An increase in the number of events arranged during the last three years is reported by nearly 6 in 10 organisations, with around 16% describing this growth as **'significant'** (i.e. more than 25%).

3.3. Event Venues:

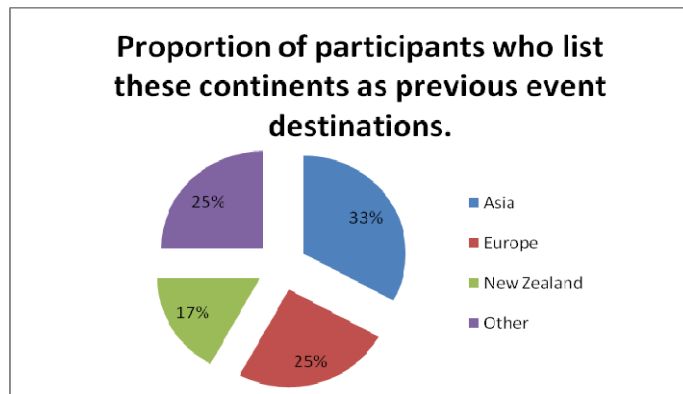
In a multiple response question nearly 70% of respondents say they sometimes use hotels (suburban or city centre) for their events; nearly 15% sometimes use resorts; 34% sometimes use convention centres; and 60% sometimes use their own facilities.



More than 1 in 8 organisations have successfully bid for an international event to be held in their country.

3.4. **International Events:**

- Approximately a third of respondents mentioned countries in Asia as previous destinations;
- around a quarter conferenced in Europe;
- and around 17% in New Zealand.



Characteristic reasons given for staging events internationally include (verbatim comments):

- > *'one-third of our membership is overseas';*
- > *'tax effective holiday/conference combination is attractive';*
- > *'more interest by members to attend off-site conferences';*
- > *'we intend to extend our work into the overseas domain'.*

Perceived benefits arising from the staging of events in other countries include (verbatim comments):

- > *'maintains membership contact';*
- > *'larger pool of delegates, exhibitors and suppliers';*
- > *'access to greater speaker base';*
- > *'spreading our programmes worldwide'.*

Perceived disadvantages arising from the staging of events overseas include (verbatim comments):

- > *'lack of on-site staff';*

- > *'communications problems, distance, freight expenses';*
- > *'lack of knowledge of suitable venues and people who can assist';*
- > *'cost and time';*
- > *'greater risk of things going wrong'.*

3.5. **Event Budgets:**

Annual budgets for staging events can be significant with 28% of organisations spending from 50,000 to 250,000 Australian dollars; and a further 20% spending from 250,000 to 1,000,000 Australian dollars. Nearly half (47%) say this figure has increased by 10% or more in the last three years.

3.6. **Events Technology:**

Ways in which organisers have successfully incorporated technology within their events have included:

- > Communication,
- > Marketing and promotions;
- > Bookings and registration systems;
- > Tele- and video-conferencing;
- > On-line forums and podcasts,
- > Interactive sessions; branding, sponsorship messages, displays and theming; speaker aids; downloading papers; and web lounges for email collection, etc.

3.7. **Event Size/Occurrence:**

The major event staged by respondents is typically annual (report 72%) or bi-annual (12%); tends to rotate between locations (report 76%); and attracts over 150 delegates in around 75% of cases (including over 1000 in 13% of cases).

When outsourcing is used for elements of this major event it can take the form of:

- > Event management;
- > Accommodation and travel;
- > The construction of an exhibition;
- > Catering;

- > Transport;
- > Entertainment.

3.8. **Booths:**

When staging an exhibition (whether or not combined with a conference), in 69% of cases this comprises at least 16 booths, but in around 1 in 10 cases involves at least 101 booths. Close to a half of organisers (49%) say that the total number of booths grew between their last two exhibitions.

4. **Events – Current Issues**

4.1. **Importance of issues surrounding events:**

The importance which respondents attach to selected issues now facing them can be gauged from the proportion selecting 'very important' in a hierarchy of five possible answers (down to 'not important at all'). Examples include:

- * generating new delegates - 62%
- * generating repeat delegates - 66%
- * generating new sponsors - 58%
- * generating repeat sponsors - 69%
- * continually innovating - 62%
- * putting together a compelling programme - 74%

(Note: only 15% think that the environmental values of venues are 'very important'; as does a similar proportion rate CSR programmes in venues).

4.2. **Attendance:**

Organisers typically report growth in event attendance over last year (say 60%), and predict further growth in the year ahead (say 70%).

4.3. **Sponsorship:**

Organisers report that sponsorship of their events grew over last year in 44% of cases, but 60% anticipate growth in the year ahead.

4.4. **Return on Investment**

Organisers are becoming more aware of the need to evaluate event Return On Investment (ROI), and are becoming more sophisticated in applying

measurement techniques.

Some focus on quantitative assessment e.g.

- > *'profit margins';*
- > *'surplus';*
- > *'cost recovery';*
- > *'number of new enquiries';*
- > *'attendance levels';*
- > *'number of potential new donors';*
- > *'participant spend';*
- > *'figures as high as 95% for delegate satisfaction levels'.*

Others concentrate more on qualitative analysis e.g.

- > *'nurturing relationships with sponsors';*
- > *'participation, interaction, feedback from members';*
- > *'enjoyment levels and smiles on people's faces'.*

Others apply both strategies.

- Ends.



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