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8th October 2008, UK

Minding your Ps & Qs IAPCO puts the P in Professional and the Q in Quality

Forty years ago the founding fathers of IAPCO decided to join forces and live up to the P in PCO. At that time organising congresses was not yet recognised as a profession, whereas the global market for meetings was continually growing and in need of unified organisation. An association was created, aiming to uphold quality standards in congress organising: IAPCO was born.

“The association and its members have come a long way since 1968 and today IAPCO is internationally recognised as the brand name for quality in professional congress organisation. But this is not the time to sit and relax”, says IAPCO President, Patrizia Buongiorno, “with the recently implemented Code of Quality Control programme, IAPCO members have a tool to measure, benchmark and improve their quality standards at the very highest level.”

It is well-known within the industry that meeting stringent criteria is a requirement for membership of IAPCO: proof of management of a minimum number of events and participants, duration, local and foreign participation, etc. References are checked with other members and clients. A current event is then audited by a Council Member together with an inspection of the applicant’s offices and systems. A scoring system is in place, with checks at each stage of the process; ultimately a minimum score has to be achieved. It is these strict criteria, applied since the formation of the Association and recently strengthened which have continued to ensure that IAPCO has put the P in PCO.

But it is not enough to be able to meet the application criteria. It is essential that the high standards required at entry are maintained throughout the membership. To meet the growing need for maintaining standards, IAPCO then put the Q in Quality.

Consisting of an Internal Survey, mandatory Congress Checklists, Self-Assessment and Educational Quality Seminars, the onus is upon the member to maintain their quality standard. The

IAPCO Quality Control process as managed by the Quality Committee (QC) is member-driven and a continuous process.

In the end, a list of all members indicating whether they did or did not comply and achieve the approval for the submission by the QC, is published on IAPCO's website so that information about member compliance with IAPCO's Code of Quality Control is public and accessible.

Part of the Quality Control requirement is the attendance at the annual IAPCO Quality Seminar. The Seminar includes a general overview of the importance of quality as a key constituent of IAPCO, covering such issues as "how is quality measured", and "how is quality safeguarded within the Association". Non-attendance at the Quality Seminar for three consecutive years may lead to exclusion of the member.

And there is further recourse: if a third party reports concerns about quality of services as provided by a member, this is referred to the Committee of Ethics who will follow the general guidelines of IAPCO's Code of Conduct, as approved by the members.

Implementation of the Quality Code of Conduct was mandatory for the first time this year, and the results can be viewed on the IAPCO website. 87% of members achieved the required quality checks, ensuring the Q in Quality of IAPCO's anniversary strapline "Meeting Quality".

ABOUT IAPCO: Meeting Quality

IAPCO, founded in 1968 and celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year, is the worldwide association representing professional congress organizers. With over 100 members, IAPCO plays a leading role in the promotion and professionalism of congress organization throughout the world. Over 4000 meetings representing 1,798,000 delegates and 492,000 m2 exhibition space were handled by IAPCO members during 2007, representing an economic impact of approximately 2.9 billion euros. IAPCO also publishes a number of documents including a code of ethics, a dictionary of technical terms (in 14 languages) and working guidelines. IAPCO is a member of the Joint Meetings Industry Council [JMIC] and the Convention Industry Council [CIC].

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