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Organising and Developing the CB Staff

Staff roles and CB structure

Contemporary convention bureaus play a crucial role in the functioning of destinations within the meetings industry. People managing these units, as well as the employees, are facing a difficult task. The challenge is to skilfully combine all the functions and manage relations not only between the team members, but also with the convention bureau's stakeholders (members, representatives of the local industry, potential events' organisers, partners, etc.).

The staff of convention bureaus may comprise from one up to more than a dozen people. This depends on the location of the institution (physically and legally) and on its financial possibilities and strategy, which includes its functions, roles and objectives. The number is not directly proportionate to, but it does depend on, the size of the represented destination and its potential in the meetings industry. These factors determine the composition of the team, which may include: the president (director, head, manager, leader), marketing specialist, association and corporate market specialist, PR, social media and sales specialist, a person responsible for preparing offers or bids, a person who monitors and analyses data, in particular the ICCA/UIA database, and a person specialising in finances and accounting.

The competences that are required from convention bureaus' employees include: exceptional interpersonal skills, rapport building skills, creativity, innovativeness, team work skills, self-confidence and the ability to work under pressure and in an international environment as well as to swiftly adapt to changes. Moreover, it is crucial to know various languages, be able to operate in virtual environments and manage social

media. Additionally, presentation skills, project management experience and time flexibility prove to be significant.

The convention bureau employees are usually graduates of diverse faculties – marketing, journalism, history, law, management, economics, and above all, tourism.

Convention bureaus and the convention bureaus' teams are active participants of the preparation, popularisation and sales of the destination's business offer, and while they are not the service and product provider in the meetings industry, they do, however, support their operations. This is why such entities are perceived as intermediaries between the meetings' planners and local providers of specialised products and services.

In accordance with this assumption, the activities undertaken by convention bureaus are targeted mainly at external groups – local and international meetings' organisers, local and foreign investors, business, scientific and cultural environments, as well as authorities at the local and state level. Another group which should be counted among the external target groups for convention bureaus are journalists and opinion leaders. The internal target group of convention bureaus' activities are usually the representatives of the local meetings industry or, in a narrower scope, members of a given convention bureau.

CB objectives

The main objectives of convention bureaus' activities are as follows:

- ◆ Fostering the development of the meetings industry at local, regional and national level;
- ◆ Developing a coherent and comprehensive image of a destination as an attractive location for the meetings industry;
- ◆ Promoting the city, region or country as a destination for conferences, congresses, events or incentive trips;
- ◆ Initiating and maintaining contacts with local entrepreneurs operating within the meetings industry, such as: PCOs, DMCs, hotels, conference centres, etc.;
- ◆ Supporting the entities from the meetings industry in the course of preparing as well as during the business events;

- ◆ Substantive assistance as well as professional and objective consultancy and support for business events planners in the scope of marketing communication regarding particular services within the meetings industry;
- ◆ Lobbying in the meetings industry interest;
- ◆ Preparing analyses concerning the position of a given destination in the meetings industry.

The tools used to accomplish the objectives are:

- ◆ Replying to requests for proposals, preparing offers or bids;
- ◆ Organising fam trips or press trips for business meetings and events organisers and industry-related press;
- ◆ Implementing the programme of Congress Ambassadors (city or country promotion programme with the support of persons operating in the structures of international organisations, including scientists and specialists in various fields);
- ◆ Cooperation with academic centres and international organisations and associations;
- ◆ Implementing referral programmes (systems) for business meetings and events organisers (PCOs, DMCs) and service providers within the meetings industry (e.g. hotels, transportation companies);
- ◆ Ensuring professional and objective consultancy for business meetings and events organisation;
- ◆ Facilitating contact between business events' organiser and local service providers;
- ◆ Maintaining statistics on business meetings and events, including meetings calendar and collecting data from entities dealing with business clients;
- ◆ Creating and updating databases concerning business meetings and events organisers;
- ◆ Processing the database of clients of i.e. International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), provided that a given convention bureau has access to such database; creating and updating their own database;