



Speak up!

why? who?
what? how?
when?

A GUIDE TO COMMUNICATING INDUSTRY VALUE

why is it important to speak up for the industry?

The Meetings Industry has seen the consequences of a low profile and a lack of appreciation for the key roles it plays in supporting business and professional development.

Without this appreciation, meetings and business events can be amongst the first cuts made by businesses and governments – whether as investors in necessary meetings-related facilities and programs or simply recognizing and supporting participation in the actual events.

This has become particularly acute in recent years as both governments and the public as a whole have been weighing what investments are most appropriate in a time when broad economic stimulation is the priority in most parts of the world. To the extent that meetings and conventions

are seen as more of a social exercise rather than a means of advancing things like innovation, knowledge transfer and economic growth, they can end up receiving little attention when in fact they should be seen as important strategies for economic recovery.

Messages about the value of the industry in economic and social development aren't going to deliver themselves. It will require all of us in the industry to take on a part of the responsibility for communicating those messages as part of our role.

Why You?

It's your future – and better awareness of industry value will help you make the most of that future and enhance your interactions with your community.

Besides, there is a limit to what any industry organization can do to influence opinions in your local community or region, which is where most of the big industry-related decisions are being made.

As a member of your own community you:

- Have more credibility than any outsider
- Have a better understand local issues and priorities
- Are more likely to have access to key decision-makers
- Can develop ongoing relationships with the business, professional and academic communities that benefit from meetings, and
- Can deliver messages and information like economic data that are directly relevant to your community

In any case, you're not alone.

One of the first things to do is to see how you can link up with like-minded industry professionals in your area to create a stronger program and engage more resources. Wherever you are, there are industry colleagues who will share your concerns about the future of the industry and by working together you can achieve a lot more.

Additional Resources and Links will be regularly added to the JMIC website at www.themeetingsindustry.org

who are the key audiences?

The short answer as to who you should be trying to influence is anyone who is either a decision maker in areas affecting the industry or who is in a position to influence those decision makers.

Amongst these groups are:

- Governments, who make investment decisions in industry programs and facilities and who create policies that influence who attends meetings the support available to make them more successful.
- The community at large, because they see the direct benefits like jobs, delegate spending impacts and educational opportunities and whose opinions influence government decisions.
- Special interest groups who have their own interest in the success of the industry and who often have more access to decision makers.

These can include:

- The local hospitality industry (who benefit from increasing numbers of visitors)
- The local business community, who benefit from delegate and visitor spending as well as the new knowledge and networks that events bring;
- The academic community, who can use events to raise their own profile and get the opportunity to host colleagues from around the world;
- The professional communities, who can use events to more easily access specialized knowledge and practices.

And you don't have to go after these broader audiences on your first outing – just talking to friends, colleagues and business contacts is a start. From there think about organizations you may belong to that you can influence, or local groups you might want to join in order to get that influence.

You can't do the whole job yourself – but you can be a leader and a catalyst to organize and inspire others.

what are the messages?

In recent years the industry has come to understand that we are a key facilitator of economic development because the events we support are responsible for all of the things that drive business and professional development —

particularly in the critical areas like innovation, product development, knowledge transfer and network creation that are considered to be the basic factors in driving the knowledge economy of the future.

As mentioned previously, the good part is that economic growth is now the number one priority of governments and communities all over the world. That means we have a whole new set of messages to deliver as to what our value is really all about.

Some key messages for the industry today;

The purpose of identifying key messages is to encapsulate and detail what we most want to say in an efficient way that makes it easy for people to grasp.

They also help to ensure some consistency in what is said so that messaging from various different sources tends to reinforce what is being said by others.

To support this, JMIC created a “**Statement of Principles and Value Proposition**” as a reference for those communicating the industry story. Here are some of the messages it contains:

1. The Meetings Industry consists of a broad range of organizers, suppliers and facilities engaged in the development and delivery of meetings, conferences, exhibitions and other related events which are held in order to achieve a range of professional, business, cultural or academic objectives.
2. The Meetings Industry is a distinct economic sector, with its own unique organizations, standards, priorities and communications vehicles but is linked to many other sectors by the kinds of events it supports and the wide range of services required to organize events and accommodate participants.

In particular, it works closely with the business, academic and professional communities who represent important users of its products and who depend on meetings activities in order to achieve their own objectives.

3. The activities of the Meetings Industry are an essential element in the future growth of the global economy, integral to the spread of knowledge and professional practices and a key factor in building better understanding and relations amongst different regions and cultures. Specifically, it

- Stimulates global economic growth by creating forums for new product development, exchange and marketing;
- Facilitates academic, technical and professional advancement by encouraging the global development and exchange of research, knowledge, standards and procedures;

- Supports communities by creating access to global knowledge and expertise and attracting new investment potential;
- Enhances and supports transportation, hospitality and tourism infrastructure by creating an economically important rationale for non-leisure travel;
- Promotes international cooperation and collaboration by encouraging and sustaining business and professional networks, and
- Supports economic transition by facilitating retraining and professional development on both global and local bases.

4. The primary value of the meetings Industry is what events actually achieve for organisers and participants. These benefits also transfer to communities and governments in the form of significant advancements in social and economic progress. An important secondary benefit is the direct and indirect spending associated with these events.

5. The Industry also acts as a vehicle for local communities to achieve their own economic, investment and social objectives by using events to attract knowledge, expertise and investment that are consistent with their overall development aspirations.

There are lots of other messages – and examples – that can be used to illustrate the value of the industry – but these will make a start toward what may work best in your particular community.

Adapt your messages:

Recognize that communications is seldom ‘one size fits all’

Any audience will filter information on the basis of what is important to them. This means you need to be constantly thinking about how best to adjust the emphasis in order to be effective.

We all do this in our everyday lives – it’s just a matter of picking those aspects that are most relevant depending on who you’re speaking to. This may mean

an emphasis on jobs and growth for government audiences; business opportunities for business audiences; professional development for professionals and academic excellence for the academic community.

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how can you deliver the message effectively?

There are two parts to this question. The first is how to gather the kind of relevant data that will support the general arguments above. The second is how to deliver this information to the right audiences.

How #1: Developing value data

So where does value measurement come in?

These days governments, corporations and associations – three of the biggest investors in the meetings industry – are more than ever interested in evaluating their investments in order to ensure they are getting optimal value. But it's not enough to talk about value – it is necessary to be able to actually demonstrate it, and that requires measurements that are credible and consistent and which can support comparison with other investments these groups might be considering.

For many years, the industry did not have rigorous value measurements – and credibility suffered as a result. Today, such measures are being put in place and are available for use by those who need to provide clear estimates of their value.

This area was the subject of a recent industry conference and produced a report on the status of measurement and the tools that are currently available.

This report is available on the JMIC web site www.themeetingsindustry.org and identifies three major value components;

- The direct financial and economic benefits associated with staging the events and the spending by participants such as delegates, organizers and exhibitors;
- The value of the meeting to the organizer and participant in terms of what they are able to achieve at the meeting and
- The broader societal benefits that are outcomes of the meetings and which relate to improved knowledge, better communications, enhanced business and professional practices and benefits to the host community such as increased awareness and better positioning in terms of priority industry sectors.

The approaches to both are very different and still evolving, but there are two areas – economic impact and meetings outcomes – that relate to local communications needs.

Economic impact models:

Economic impact models take many forms but have a common objective: to calculate the spending associated with an event and how that spending translates into economic benefits including business activity, jobs and tax revenues to government. This calculation can be done at a very high level (i.e., for an entire country) or more specifically in a local community or even as it relates to an individual facility or event.

In some parts of the world, such a calculation is an essential part of how performance is measured and what kind of overall return an investment in facilities or promotional activities can be expected to generate.

National models:

In recent years a model for EI calculation at a national level has emerged, based on definitions original created by the industry and sanctioned by the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO). This model has been successfully applied in a number of countries including Canada, Mexico, the United States and Denmark and has become a “standard” for such calculations. Further information about these studies and their outcomes is available on the JMIC web site as well as from those who carried them out.

Local | regional models:

No single comparable standard currently exists for calculations performed at a local or facility-specific level. Having said this, there are a number currently under development which offer alternatives to members of the industry who want a model that will help them develop specific, credible data for their own region of community. A list of these has also been assembled in the JMIC web site www.themeetingsindustry.org along with the organizations that have developed them and how they may be available.

In addition, there is an effort underway to adapt the methods used for national models so that they also collect regional /local data that can be used on its own. Developments in this regard will be added to the web site as they evolve.

Measuring event 'outcomes':

While there is general agreement that the "outcomes" values are greater than the benefits associated with local spending, it is also accepted that the latter better lends itself to measurement and, in fact, there are questions as to whether or not the outcomes can ever be measured in a systematic way due to their diversity and the fact that they arise over a period of time. However, their value is understood at an intuitive level, so it is often sufficient to use devices such as case studies to illustrate them in ways that can be inferred for similar situations, and this has been done by a number of jurisdictions that are also listed in the JMIC web site.

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How #2: Delivering the messages

Once both the messages and the specific measures have been developed the next question is how best to deliver these to key audiences.

This requires a communications strategy that sets out goals and activities in a logical way so that direction can be maintained and progress measured.

Developing a communications strategy is a whole other topic in itself – but fortunately JMIC can help.

Our **Guidebook to Government and Community Relations for the Meetings Industry** is filled with industry-specific information and practical ideas, and it is available for download free of charge from the JMIC web site.

when should we do this?

Right now.

Why: because a combination of current global conditions and what our industry delivers have made our messages more relevant than ever before.

Throughout most parts of the world:

- Economic recovery is elusive and uneven; recession is still a factor in many areas. That makes economic recovery and growth a top priority everywhere.
- Unemployment still a major issue in many areas, which creates not only economic but social concerns, and increases the need for retraining and education.

At the same time...

- Globalization is a reality – so broad networks are more important than ever before

- We are shifting to a knowledge-based economy, which means the jobs from the past will not necessarily be the jobs of the future
- Innovation and knowledge transfer are keys to economic development – because they create the new products and services a new economy will demand.

Together, these define our role and our message as an industry – because they reflect exactly what we do every day! The problem is that we're not necessarily seen in that way – and now is the time to do whatever we can to change that perception while we have this opportunity.

document & share

Whatever information or ideas we can provide as industry organizations, it will always be what we can learn from each other's experiences that will be most valuable. For this reason, we encourage you to keep track of what you do in advancing our industry value image and share this with your colleagues in other parts of the world. We've created a place for you to do this, again on the JMIC web site, and urge you to use it as a way of sharing your experiences and successes.

We'll also be looking here for potential recipients for the Joint Meetings Industry Council "Profile and Power Award" which is made annually to individuals or organizations that in the view of Council members have made the most important contribution to industry value and profile.

But that's not the only way you can share – you can also:

- > Create a case study
- > Write an article for industry media
- > Participate in an industry conference session (or organize one) on this topic

a last word...

Creating or changing the image of an entire global industry is not simple or easy – it is the product of a continuing effort on many different fronts over a period of time. You can be an important part of that effort by using your own contacts and networks to advantage right in your own community and at the same time, have an immediate effect on your own working environment.

Together, many such initiatives will bring about the changes in attitudes that will help make what we all do seen as a critical and essential part of the global economy – and support a brighter future for the industry and everyone that works in it!

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who is JMIC?

The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) was established in 1978 to provide a communications link amongst international associations engaged in the Meetings Industry and to maintain industry networking and awards activities. It is currently expanding its activities in the areas of information exchange, advocacy, value research and the development of a collective voice in order to enhance industry profile and advance key industry issues.

JOINT MEETINGS INDUSTRY COUNCIL

JMIC MEMBERS NOW INCLUDE

AACVB | the Asian Association of Convention and Visitor bureaus
AIPC | the International Association of Congress Centres
COCAL | the Latin American Confederation of PCO and Related Companies
DMAI | Destination Marketing Association International
ECM | European Cities Marketing
EFAPCO | the European Federation of Associations of Professional Congress Organizers
EVVC | the European Association of Event Centres
IAEE | the International Association of Exhibitions and Events
IAPCO | the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers
ICCA | the International Congress and Convention Association
MPI | Meeting Professionals International
PCMA | the Professional Convention Association Management Association
SITE | the Society of Incentive & Travel Executives
UFI | the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry

