

It's all about the MICE experience!

MICE to an association stands for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions. All associations and membership organizations provide MICE events to their members, which can provide services to members, as well as revenues for associations.

In the United States MICE events comprise 20 percent to 40 percent of an association's annual revenue source. This is good to know for association managers in the Philippines who are looking for other revenue sources aside from annual membership dues, the "bread and butter" of associations.

But a MICE event must not only be "profitable" from the financial standpoint; it should also be, first and foremost, a unique and memorable experience to a MICE attendee—be it attending a board meeting, a company "bonding trip," a conference or a tradeshow.

So what makes a MICE event an exciting and must-attend activity?

Last week, I participated as a speaker at and a delegate of the two-day Meetings Forum organized by the Chicago-based Professional Convention Management Association, the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau, and the Singapore Tourism Board. I have attended hundreds of MICE events around the world in my 25 years as an association executive, but this event sticks out as one great experience. Let me tell you why.

First, the venue. The event was held at the sprawling Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore, and the speakers were conveniently billeted in the adjacent MBS hotel with upgrades to the club floor (a special perk)! While

there were only about 100 attendees, there was a “room for every size of MICE event” that the convention center offered.

The venue has all the conference amenities—Wi-Fi, twin projection screens, large backdrop, a “catwalk” stage, sound and lighting system, comfortable seats and ample spaces to move about, a nearby room for catering and, more important, an efficient and pleasant serving crew.

Then there’s the content, delivery mode and speakers. The scope of the topic revolved around the challenges and opportunities for collaboration of associations and MICE professionals, e.g., professional conference organizers, event management companies, and venue providers or destination management companies. There were 16 speakers: all practitioners and experienced association and MICE executives.

The content delivery also varied from session to session, such as rapid-fire presentations (not more than 5 minutes), experts panel and audience discussions, peer-to-peer learning using a “world café” format, online polling through a mobile app and a technology-based business-card collection—all in the spirit of a fun networking experience, with prizes to boot for game winners.

Third are the other experiences. The night before the Forum, the attendees were treated to a “scholars appreciation night” in another posh hotel. Yes, there were “scholars”—about 25 of them—who received grant money from the organizers for their participation in the event, i.e., to cover plane fare, hotel accommodation and some miscellaneous expenses.

The dinner started with cocktails that opened up later to a bigger hall with a welcome, dry-iced, cloud-like, heavenly atmosphere, and yet, another surprise when another curtain was raised, opening up a kitchen environment where the hotel

general manager, the event organizers and the master chef were waiting to welcome the attendees amid the background of food and drinks laid out in an organized and appealing setup.

The next morning, attendees were treated to a “wakeup with yoga” session before the educational sessions started. The closing dinner was styled as “eat, work and play” in a bar within the MBS complex.

The event altogether provided the attendees with a special, holistic experience, which every association should be doing for their MICE events. After all, what we already know, but sometimes fail to achieve in our own MICE events, is for attendees to say when the “show” ends...it’s all about the experience!