

From the resident

The brief here, as reproduced in this issue is a long letter I sent to the PCO's behalf to the President of our fellow organization ACE. It was in reply to a very surprising and surprising letter from ACE. I would be most interested to hear from other, non-partisan individuals what their opinion is of the "profession" of organizing.

February 21 to 25, IAPCO meeting in Athens for our General Assembly. Among the agenda are "How the meeting industry can work with PCOs", a panel discussion, with input from credit companies, on a better deal for PCOs accepting assignments, a session on the meetings and incentive and several workshops to members on their toes! Value our participation in the General Assembly. It is not a formal business, the sessions and the of new IAPCO projects are important. The informal sessions we have during meals or drinks and coffees open doors for us all. Because membership is so low ideas and opportunities are cropping up. Some of them have been organizing conferences for 20 (or 30) years. But let's learn from each other. Best wishes,

Priscilla Riontino

Priscilla Riontino
President
President MGR, Milan, Italy)

Even a professional sometimes needs a professional

"In-house" is possibly the wrong term for a conference organizer such as Judy Lane of the International Bar Association. "Globe-trotting" would be more apt, as Judy spends much of her time travelling in order to check at first hand the best venues and suppliers for IBA meetings. Some in-house organizers prefer to employ a local PCO to utilize their inside knowledge and contacts. It was Judy Lane's policy not to, until she encountered Congresos Internacionales in Buenos Aires. Priscilla Playford talked to her.

Judy Lane readily admits to having the best of all worlds, conventionally speaking. With an enormous buying power, she can select, negotiate and work with venues and services on behalf of the association, and she is responsible for programmes and tours. Together with her in-house team of three, she can rely on the help of all IBA staff for meetings. She also knows most of the delegates attending the meetings, so at every conference there's a "family feeling" often only achievable in the corporate world. IBA's membership is 12,000 lawyers worldwide, so both the international congress, for some 4,000 delegates, and the smaller, sectional meetings, are held in rotation around the world. As a result, for Judy at least one out of every four weeks is spent travelling. Her knowledge of conference centres, hotels, suppliers and the variety on offer is vast and she commands wide respect, not only within her membership, but from fellow meeting planners. From her office in London, organizing meetings in places as far afield as New Delhi, Hong Kong, Nairobi, Beijing, Warsaw, Buenos Aires and Cannes, the potential for disaster could be enormous. Yet Judy seems to have developed an almost foolproof formula. She is responsible for all initial inspection visits and oversees the details of every meeting. In other countries she relies on convention bureaux and local ground operators

who organize the tours, events and travel. Meetings are almost always held in convention centres with which she deals direct, as she does with hotels. Although local host committees are involved, major decisions are made in London.

With new centres opening almost daily, the choice is hard, and a lead time for large conferences of four to five years necessitates several site visits. Being non-political there is, technically, no restriction on destination, but visas can be a problem. However, Judy has been successful in agreements for South Africans, Israelis and Russians to attend some meetings, thus increasing the scope.



Judy Lane



I asked Judy which meeting she felt to be most successful. Without hesitation she replied, "Buenos Aires." This was the international congress of 1988 and I wondered what made it so special. "First, we were made so welcome," she said. "Secondly, because there had been hiccups beforehand, I had anticipated a few more. But, no, it went perfectly." A major problem was imposed restrictions, which meant that printwork had to be done in Argentina. And then, as with other equipment, the artwork was refused. Not accustomed to using a PCO, Judy called upon Jorge Castex, President of Congresos Internacionales a

*Dear Jorge,
If I could run all my conferences in Argentina I would be a very happy person. Well, the conference ran and we were all very happy. It was a combination of your efficiency and your willingness to work with that made the conference go to all my problems.*

Cautionary tales — two rainy stories from IAPCO members

QUESTION
ANSWER

A busload of "older"

even chocolate bars were rationed at the nearby kiosk. One delegate threatened to sue the President of the university to which the PCO's office

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Italy: August, and a storm flooded the city and most public buildings were evacuated. Nine parallel meetings were in session at a big international congress. Rain poured in through the ceilings of three conference rooms, creating electrical hazards and general discomfort.

Now is the time to enrol for IAPCO 16th Seminar on Professional Congress Organization.

This is the world's only definitive course on the planning and management of international meetings and is open to executives from the congress industry and allied activities — for example international associations, conference centres, travel agencies, national tourist bodies, corporate meeting planners, exhibition management