



Charging for supplier knowledge is arrogance



This first came to my attention before Christmas ('A tax on our knowledge', Supplier Sounds Off, M&IT, January). I found it incredible, scandalous and downright arrogant. I know some of the agency perpetrators of this new phenomenon of charging partners/suppliers to come and visit... and, frankly, I'm ashamed of them and the bad name they give our industry. Now that I am 'small fry', I value even more the need to be educated by industry partners on new developments. I still choose which presentations I accept carefully so as not to waste anyone's time, but for an agency to charge a partner to come in and educate and update their staff is outrageous. All in all it smacks of arrogance and/or a short term easy way to stash some cash, which I imagine the agencies will use for their own marketing (internal or external) or to cover expenses that they can't put through their own company. Co-operation is a two-way street. My door is open – and at no cost!

✉ **Chris Clarke, Purple Dog Solutions**

Chris wins a night of bowling at All Star Lanes for a party of six

We have ways of making you pay... maybe more than you bargained for!

As one of the foremost independent group air travel management providers in the UK, we have been grateful as more leading airlines have in recent years revamped the means by which group travel specialists such as ours, who partner with the MICE industry, can procure group inventory.

Very recently Lufthansa came to the party with a product that in nearly every regard is cutting edge. The Book-A-Group portal is in the most part exceptional in providing instant quotes.

But like many of the best products there is a snag. The Book-A-Group tool is truly global, you can quote from any origin to any destination served by Lufthansa and, like many who serve such markets, our enquiries can often have no UK element other than the parties making the booking (ourselves) and those paying (our clients).

In their infinite wisdom, Lufthansa only quotes the fares and, in a brand new departure in my book, the airport taxes and fuel surcharges in the local currency. They do not provide a cost for either fares or taxes in sterling.

So we have a problem. Our clients, like any others in a commercial environment, want a guaranteed cost for a known entity. Yes, we do advise that airport taxes may change, but that is generally not an issue because as we are going through a period of stable aviation fuel prices, it is only the minor fluctuations of general taxes that come into play.

To use a speculative forecast, we could end up presenting a bill of £9k over and above what we quoted for flights that had a cost of £600k. The fare itself will not have increased, but we would have been stymied by the vagaries of the currency exchange market.

✉ **David Wheeler, Quorn Business Travel**

When is dining too quirky?

Interesting concept ('Anyone for upside down cake', Editor's Blog, meetpie.com) and possibly a little risky combining food with motion (always a consideration with hospitality held on the water, too). However with 'risk' and 'adrenalin' being the theme here, it could well present a quirky corporate experience that is enjoyable and memorable if done well!

✉ **Michelle Mainwaring, Vivid Event Group**

I really like quirky – so do lots of clients. But I wonder if sometimes in the search for something new, the experience may over promise and under deliver? I quite like people with personality and panache delivering food.

✉ **Penny Pottinger (via LinkedIn)**

Slow march of sustainability



I don't really think it's make or break time ('2016: make or break time for sustainability?' Editor's Blog meetpie.com). There is a slow but steady move in our industry. Every year at MCI we ask our largest clients about sustainability. In 2011, 11 per cent were in action; last year more than 67 per cent were doing some type of action with their events. Leaders in sustainability still gain benefit to the business. It astounds me that the laggards have not caught on.

✉ **Guy Bigwood, MCI**

Remembering event pioneers Len Wilcock and Graham Frazer



Len Wilcock



Graham Frazer

A true friend for more than 25 years, Graham was the epitome of a gentleman and also a very gentle soul. Once he trusted you in business, he worked with you strongly and loyally as the consummate professional, attending to the tiniest details. I learned a great deal from Graham and, as we prepared for

a massive Jaguar launch in Cape Town (and spent a great deal of planning time with him there) I tagged this event for our DMC Green Route staff as 'Excellence is in the Detail'. The industry has lost a true doyen.

✉ **Glen Byrom
Twice Victoria Falls DMC**

One of the nicest, most knowledgeable people in the business. A competitor who became a friend. Graham will be missed by all of his industry friends. My thoughts go out to his wife and family at this sad time.

✉ **Paul Ratcliffe, Conference Contacts**

What a sad month for our industry. Three leaders – Peter Franks, Graham Frazer and Len Wilcock – all departed. The meetings and events sector now employs many thousands in the UK but at the time those three were entering the business, it was tiny so this is a real thinning of those who helped to found, promote and operate the early corporate groups who embraced this new marketing tool. Len was indeed a pioneer and he

quickly established both a reputation and impressive client list despite his seemingly remote base in north Wales. He was always a joy to share time with and a significant contributor to the success of the events industry. He, like Peter and Graham, will be greatly missed. My thoughts and best wishes to Les's family and friends as they remember a great bloke.

✉ **David Hackett
Meetings Guru Limited**

Indeed, what a sad month. Len created a company that had such energy and force and it's great to see Jason continue on in the same fashion. Like Peter and Graham, he was a huge character in our industry and our world will be all the sadder without the likes of them in it. My thoughts and love go to Len's family and his colleagues at Worldspan.

✉ **Jane Filler, Fivestarfiller**

Truly saddened by this news. I remember well Graham during his tenure at Travel Awards and in subsequent years. True pioneer and gentleman of the industry.

✉ **Malcolm O'Neill, MON Associates**

I had the pleasure of working with Graham at Maritz, he was a consummate professional and a lovely man.

✉ **Amanda Stranack**

Wonderful knowledge and passion of all things travel – and a wonderful man. I'll miss the twinkle in your eye and the ski conversations, Graham!

✉ **John Bonner, Associations Network**

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