



**Incentives, roadshows and exhibitions are among the event types on the increase, according to C&IT's State of the Industry 2015 Report. C&IT's State of the Industry 2015 Report - 23 JUNE 2015 BY LIZZIE CERNIK**

Client events are on the increase, with more than half (54%) of the 100-plus corporate event planners surveyed for C&IT's State of the Industry Report saying they organised more events in 2014 than 2013. And that growth looks set to continue, with 59% forecasting they will deliver more events in 2015 than last year.

There has been growth across a broad spectrum of event types, but despite 85% of corporates surveyed stating that they don't run an incentive travel programme, incentives are the area where agencies are seeing most growth.

Of the 87 agencies surveyed, 25% said they had witnessed an increase in incentives, 15% saw growth in roadshows, 13% cited a rise in the number of exhibitions, while 8% had seen an increase in teambuilding and 8% in training events.

Floyd Widener, SVP of CWT Meetings and Events, said much of the growth could be attributed to economic recovery. He added that the development, particularly the rise in incentive travel, was the result of strategic planning, with corporate groups keen to maximise their return on investment and choose the right type of events for their organisation. Confidence is back, budgets are climbing and the 'extras' from the pre-recession days are back on the menu. But what has been the driving force behind the type of events they've chosen?

### **Incentives**

Like last year, around a quarter of event agents witnessed an increase in incentives, demonstrating that travel is still on the rise. According to Hannah Wilkinson, director of sales and business strategy at Zibrant, the focus for incentive planners has shifted to individually tailored programmes, which allow delegates more flexibility.

"We know that companies recognise the importance of rewarding their top staff," she explained. "But some of these people may have family or different interests, so now organisations are keen to ensure these trips really cater to what their employees want. Incentives are not only increasing, but also becoming more specialist."

Jason Hill, events and internal communications manager at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said the company had seen a positive impact on staff morale as a result of incentive growth. "We've come to the conclusion that reward and recognition is an important lever in terms of job satisfaction and retention. If people are happy in their role then they'll look after customers and that customer satisfaction for us is absolutely crucial."

### **Roadshows**

Roadshows have also seen a surge in demand, with businesses deeming them a time-effective way to spread corporate messages across a national workforce. "Many of our clients see roadshows as a good-value option, because it means lots of people can experience the event, without losing time in the office," said Alan Wight, managing director of Cascade. "If there's a national audience, collating them all in one place isn't always time effective. Roadshows are proving a popular option for businesses keen to minimise time away from the office."

### **Teambuilding**

Employee engagement was crucial for corporate success in 2014, according to Charlie Hepburn, managing director of Vivid Event Group. "It's vital that companies broadcast their brand internally as well as externally, and teambuilding, or employee engagement, plays a huge part in this," he explained. "It's not enough to do a motivational event any more and companies are really starting to place value on their individual employees." He added that the success of teambuilding could be easily measured through technology and social media feedback, which contributed to its increased popularity.

### **Training**

As with all other aspects of event sector growth, training has become increasingly tailored to meet the needs of the client. Social media feedback and other technologies have enabled companies to customise their training products to their employees' needs, delivering better overall programmes. For Wilkinson, improvements in training mean corporate clients will see a better return on investment. "For example, some of our petrochemical clients have seen a decrease in the number of health and safety incidents, as a result of their enhanced training," she explained.

### **Exhibitions**

William Sutton, director of operations at Vista, said economic recovery and increased budgets had contributed to the success of exhibitions. "We're definitely doing more in exhibitions and trade shows, both locally and internationally. I think clients are just getting out there more and promoting themselves." His comments echoed the thoughts of Hepburn, who stressed that brand engagement was essential across all sectors of the event market, both internally and externally.