

‘I’m sick of being asked why I’m charging’, says DMC manager

21 January 2020 by Mark Williams

Event agencies and DMCs debate issues around cost and creativity during a panel discussion at C&IT’s Incentives Retreat.



“I’m sick of being asked how much I’m charging, how much I’m making, why am I charging? I think it’s totally ethical to have your clients pay for your services,” said Olga Navarro, managing partner at Spanish DMC, ITB Events.

“What I bring to the table isn’t my ability to lift the phone and make a reservation with a hotel or restaurant, I bring value to the incentive programmes we put together.”

Navarro was speaking as part of a panel of DMCs and event agencies at C&IT’s Incentives Retreat, held at Chewton Glen. Alongside her on the panel from another DMC was Christian Hobbs from Uniqueworld, while Odette Peel from Quintessentially Travel and Charlie Hepburn from BE Vivid spoke for event agencies.

“I look forward to the day when everyone knows how much things cost and it will be a normal conversation where so many hours of work is going to cost this much or that idea is going to cost that much,” said Navarro. “And there will be no bargaining or thinking that whatever we do we’re going to take a high commission. There needs to be a very open conversation from the beginning about what a client wishes to pay for.”

BE Vivid’s Charlie Hepburn agreed that more transparency was needed about what was being paid for but also suggested that DMC’s needed to be more creative when working with agencies on incentives.

“Yes we should be transparent about the payment side of things, it’s something that should be set out right from the beginning,” said Hepburn. “There should be a conversation at the start and if it doesn’t work for you or your client, then just say thanks very much and until next time...”

“We mentioned creativity earlier on and whenever you do go on an incentive it’s so much more than just going to a hotel, gala dinner and so forth. However, there still seems to be, from the majority of DMCs, a more transactional way of thinking, rather than transformational.

“They’re looking to tick the boxes. We find that quite difficult because we do want the input from DMCs and their suppliers but it’s quite rare that there is a creative individual within a DMC.”

To which Navarro replied: “The word creative means different stuff depending on who says it. If your clients tell you ‘I need you to be creative’ that means ‘I have zero budget, make me look good. But when I say we are a very creative DMC, what I mean is ‘give me your money and I will make you shine!’”

[Source: C&IT Magazine – Mark Williams, 21 January 2020](#)