

Global Meetings and Events Forecast 2015 – Technology and Economy

American Express have once again published their forecast for the year ahead in global meeting and events and the results from their 2014 survey of businesses, hoteliers and meetings planners have highlighted some interesting trends and predictions for 2015 in the use of technology, budgeting and financial implications and the way that the events planning is taking on a much more global outlook. The author – the Vice President and General Manager of Meetings and Events – is optimistic that meetings are "back in business" but why is this the case?



Technology within Meetings and Events

As is to be expected, this year's survey had a slight technological theme, with a number of questions posed to participants to see how this aspect was affecting meetings planning globally. This is an area where growth is always expected as more regions take on new ideas, and this was seen with approximately 25% of planners using virtual technology in the Americas and Asia Pacific; however it was certainly a lesser issue this year, much like environmental concerns. There is a lot of talk about global changes in the report but it must be remembered that not all trends are universal; some regions only predict about 10% growth in the use of technology in 2015, some areas with a typically great performance, like Asia Pacific, have seen a slowing of growth and the optimism that is said to be felt by meetings planners is not quite as strong in Central and South America.

The main focus of 2014/2015 seems to be spending and budgeting, so what impact is this likely to have on meetings and events planning?

Technology may be tentatively on the rise but it is the economic side of meetings and planning that appears to be the most prominent factor in this 2015 Global Meetings & Events forecast. When meetings planners were polled about their greatest concerns, economic and political instability came second (behind the perception of a resort destination) and many highlighted a shift in policies where payment and procurement processes were on the rise. Organizations are looking to keep a strict budget, a decision that is believed to be partly related to the predicted rise in airfares of 2%, as some companies are said to be integrating air travel into their plans much more and taking more notice of group offers.



Tight Budgets Beneficial to Affordable Hotels

With this shift to an economic focus, it is important to consider the effect this will have on planners and hoteliers who are working with, and relying upon, these company's meetings and events.

Understandably, these tighter budgets are forcing companies to rethink their approach a little and they are expected to become more focused on mid-tier hotels than can provide a more affordable and practical option. This is great news for hoteliers within this bracket, many of which are already optimistic because of projected rises in occupancy rates for meeting rooms in 2015. When it comes to the meetings planners being hired to find these rooms, however, there is slightly more pressure to meet procedures and there could be greater competition to snap up the best rooms if everyone is set to narrow their criteria.

There are some potential problems to this new approach but the report also highlights some benefits.

There are some clear downsides to increasing procedure in this way and having to scrutinize every detail of the planning to work to a more restrictive budget but this American Express survey has shown that there are some positives to adopting this new approach. It is also important to highlight their finding that budgets are now "showing movement in the most positive direction" since they originally started surveying businesses in 2011. In fact, budgets may be getting stricter with some companies but there is a general trend that program cuts are actually decreasing. Essentially, these new policies seem to be more about regulation of spending, accountability and a stronger focus on the issues than an attempt to cut spending, which is seen as a positive step forward.



What to Expect?

While enthusiastic talk of a boom in meetings planning should be taken a little more lightly than American Express would perhaps like following this report, there are still plenty of positive points to take away from this 2015 forecast. Procedures and trends are set to develop on a global scale within meetings planning and technology – with varying impacts – and even though companies are looking to

focus their budget and could potentially put more pressure on their planners, there is still hope for progression and a slowing of cuts.

Date: 2014-11-24

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-american-express-published-the-global-meetings-amp-events-forecast-2015-article2527>