

EUROPEAN MEETING PLANNING MARKET CHANGES



The results of a survey into the trends of European Meeting Planners have just been released during a event attended by the Development Counsellors International (DCI) and International Association of Conference Centers (IACC) and they look set to have an important impact on the future of bookings and developments in conference spaces. The results of the study, which spoke to 101 European meeting planners, have been split into four key generations - Mature (aged 66+), Baby Boomer (47-65), Generation X (33-46) and Millennials (18-32) - and it seems that their expectations are changing.

What are the key expectations that are shared between the generations and the differences between them?

The survey has shown that there are clear generational differences in those looking to book meeting spaces but also some shared priorities. The importance of accessibility and the location of the meeting place was seen across the board, suggesting that age was not a factor and is more a simple matter of convenience, and there was also a shared need for value - it is not just the older generations looking to get the most for their time and money. Where things start to change is with technology; it is a major consideration for each of the four generations but in different ways. Older bookers see the need for wi-fi capabilities while the younger groups favour the use of digital materials during the selling process, an area where the "Mature" group prefer the personal touch of in-person selling at tradeshow. What makes the stats regarding technology more interesting is that it is claimed to be more important to Baby Boomers and Mature bookers than to the Millennials, who place it below the cost of a meeting space on their list of priorities. Aside from differing views on technology, there is one additional, clear contrast shown in the needs of Generation X and Millennial bookers. These younger travellers are looking for more innovative spaces to work in, open spaces with moveable furniture that offer informality and fluidity for expressing ideas.

What does this mean for the future and what can facility managers learn from this data?

The importance of age here is clear, not just to the venues hosting these delegates but also to those attending; in fact, 55% of those asked say that their corporate groups take note of the average age of attendees and tailor bookings accordingly, with Generation X and Millennial groups looking at off site activities for the younger members and the venue's wow factor. Those in charge of these facilities need to take note of these changing views because as one generation retires, another comes into the workplace requiring changes and these facilities have to adapt with them - soon the Baby Boomers will be on the way out and the Millennials wanting these new concepts will be running the show.

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