

The Importance of the Relationship between **CORE PCOs** and **DMCs**



Authors:

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AIM Group International, according to client's needs, can be a PCO (Professional Congress Organiser), a Core PCO (Long-term PCO for Associations), and a DMC (Destination Management Company).

The relationship between Core PCOs and DMCs often raises considerations about aspects like the effectiveness of their cooperation, or if this can be a real added value.

Due to our experience, this white paper will focus on different related issues such as local DMC as «local expert», how a PCO can work with a DMC and the expectations of clients.

Why a local DMC is an added value for a CORE PCO

- **A local DMC knows the local destination at best**

An experienced PCO knows how to organise events all over the world but a strong support from a "local expert" can be helpful to familiarise with a new hosting venue in many features like attractiveness, weaknesses, or strength, and to facilitate contacts with local institutions. A local DMC provides knowledge of the destination and "becomes" the link you need.

- **A local DMC knows the local suppliers**

A DMC may assist a PCO finding the best suppliers available, according to eventual needs of size and kind of event, and may give advice on all the logistical aspects; moreover, due to its relationships, it has a stronger negotiating power.

- **A local DMC knows local customs and traditions**

When a DMC has a "local touch", it can help a PCO connecting easily with the Local Organising Committee, and understanding the needs, as the PCO gets to know the local habits and customs.

- **A local DMC avoids wasting time and money**

The DMC selects suitable suppliers and services to create a targeted offer according to the specific needs of the PCO, first, and then the client.

The selection process of a DMC

The selection of a DMC should be done with anticipation and should considerate the following aspects:

- **Adherence to the detailed RFP sent by the PCO**

A complete adherence to the RFP means that the DMC has understood the level of services requested. The accuracy of their answer is a first step in evaluating the DMC.

- **Previous experience in international congress organisation as DMC**

The right partner must demonstrate to be able to work for an international congress: this is a key factor for your selection.

- **A profound knowledge of the hosting city and its surroundings**

An unavoidable requirement: the selection should favour a DMC that has its office in the hosting city. The membership in associations recognised world-wide (i.e. IAPCO, ICCA, SITE etc.) as well as the one in local Convention Bureau belonging to these kinds of trustworthy associations, is a guarantee of professionalism and proper working methods.

- **Up-to-date IT tools (i.e. on-line systems and payment procedures for hotel and tour reservation, etc.)**

Do not take this aspect for granted! It should be an indisputable fact nowadays. However, it is always recommended to check the IT systems provided.

- **Best price/quality ratio**
Attention to budget is an important factor, however this must be always linked to the quality of services provided.
- **A knowledge of the same technical or scientific area of the congress**
Though is not always possible to have this kind of support from a DMC, this is surely an added benefit that a DMC can offer and helps the PCO select the right partner because of this experience.

What a **CORE PCO** expects from a **DMC**

- **A strong relationship with local institutions**
- **A strong link with municipality, public transportation company, tourist board, etc.**
It's a **key factor** for an international congress in terms of **security, discounts, promotion** and **fundings** where possible
- **A “side-kick” for local site inspections**
A PCO expects to have full support during the site inspections, particularly in regard to **local viability, social venues, hotel site inspections, menu tastings**, and so on. **The aim** is to **allow** the client/PCO to **experience the essence of the destination**.
- **An offer for a complimentary site inspections or an effort in limiting the costs as much as possible**
The amount of services requested DMC will of course have an influence, however it is much appreciated to have some complimentary services (i.e. transportation). For the local suppliers, the site inspection is a way to make themselves known by the PCO and it can be considered a sort of investment for future collaborations.
- **A vision of past congresses as input for the next ones**
Recurring congresses always helps promoting the next destination, therefore the support and presence of the DMC is crucial to sponsor the hosting city with maps, touristic material and information.
- **A clear understanding of its role**
The DMC should act as partner to the PCO, as that latter – not the client - **will be its main contact**. The **reasons** are mainly two: on one hand, this thing exhibits a **fair code of conduct** and on the other hand, it **allows the PCO** to have a complete **overview** of the **services** and **budget**. Keep in mind that a core PCO knows the client's standards and desiderata, and last but not least, the client usually prefers to have one main contact.
- **A cost transparency in submitting the offers**
This is a crucial point. Budget issues are the main concern of both client and PCO, therefore being transparent is at the basis of the relationship.
- **Observance of the economic agreement set by the PCO**
Once the DMC is appointed and the financial agreement has been set, it is important that the DMC sticks to it.
- **To facilitate the congress promotion on a national level**
Whenever is possible, and if the DMC is familiar with the same technical or scientific area of the congress on a national level, **sharing this expertise with the PCO and the networks is a great value**.
- **A strong negotiating power with local suppliers**
This is the basis of the relationship between a PCO and a DMC, not only because it may be budget-wise, but also because it may solve any problem or issue that may arise in the facilitation of the event.
- **A clear understanding of the PCO needs**
The **DMC should** always try to accomplish all that the **PCO needs** by **understanding** exactly the **requests** and the **goals**.
- **A constant update from the DMC regarding executed services** (i.e. hotel rooms reserved, tours confirmed, etc.)
When there are constant updates about these processes, it means that **the DMC has a perfect control** on the executed services **and helps the PCO** to adjust the budget and inform the clients on the progress of the congress.

What a DMC expects from a CORE PCO

- **To receive data from previous congresses**
Knowing previous congress features in advance **allows the DMC** to scrupulously **plan all the activities** like, for example, the selection of suppliers for the appropriate services. **A PCO should always share this data with the DMC!**
- **To attend the meetings between the Core PCO with the final client**
This will **help the DMC to better understand the client's needs**, and consequently, **support the PCO.**
- **To be aware of the budget forecasted for the DMC services**
It is a waste of time either for the DMC, or for the PCO **not to receive clear budget instructions.**
- **To be considered a partner and not only a supplier**
Working in a trustful environment **is a win-win situation** for both the DMC and the PCO as **the final client will benefit and will receive better service.**
- **To be promptly updated about the congress trends**
The DMC should always be updated on congress trends to better perform the duties requested, especially about registrations, sponsors confirmed, etc.

To succeed in the meeting industry in today's competitive world it is vital to create solutions that go beyond the client's expectations.

For a core PCO in particular, a strong relationship with a DMC can make a difference in the services you offer: this is why a core PCO should do its best to achieve that connection!

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A constant update from the DMC regarding executed services



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Marica is passionate about working for the international congress market, developing business and bidding for international association congresses. She has been working in the congress industry for more than 26 years. Before joining AIM Group, Marica was the Executive Manager for scientific societies: she worked in the organization of cultural events in the field of new technology of communication but in 2006, she joined the AIM Group Team as a Sales Manager. Marica is an active industry leader participating at various events as speaker and presenter. Exemplary was her presentation at Expoeventos (Buenos Aires, Argentina) on behalf of IAPCO entitled: *“Experiences of a Professional Congress Organiser: Submission of nominations, the success stories and the unsuccessful cases – the secrets of a good Bidding Book”* and at IULM Master in Tourism Management on *“Competing for International large events “*



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Lavinia is a milestone here in AIM Group, since she joined the company in 1998.

She’s the Business Manager Congress Division at Milan office, and it’s been a very long time since she started working for us, gaining a wide experience in the PCO and DMC sectors.

Planning, management and co-ordination of all the on-site congress services, exhibitions and social events have always been her daily bread.

ABOUT AIM GROUP INTERNATIONAL

AIM Group International organizes over **three thousand events and meetings every year**. Despite our size, AIM Group still has a “small company” approach to **client partnership**.

AIM Group is committed to helping its clients reach their goals, to personalizing their event experiences, to providing an innovative environment, and to making a difference. Our strong sense of identification with client projects means that we are constantly striving to provide solutions, even for issues they aren't yet aware of. To this end, we adopt a

progressive approach to technology and marketing techniques.

This sense of identification also means we value and promote seamless interaction with clients' own teams, and ensure the best value is obtained from their event budget.

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