



“PCOs must change their value proposition”

IAPCO Member:
AIM Group International -
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How can PCOs face the urgent challenge to recognise the value of services offered to clients, avoiding a mere price competition? Is it possible to raise the PCO-client relationship, basing it on long-term competitive value sharing? Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, Vice President of AIM Group International and an expert international speaker, gave a stimulating lecture session in Bologna at the PCCO Academy, the training programme for events professionals organised by the Italian industry association Federcongressi&eventi.

“PCOs nowadays, if they want to be competitive in the market and perceived as a relevant partner by clients, must raise the level of business discussions with clients and continuously find new opportunities for value creation,” said Patrizia, “otherwise they will be compared only by the price of services and thus will easily lose clients and business opportunities”.

In a highly competitive market, it is necessary to give more value to services to avoid being perceived as a simple commodity. “The question to be answered is this: is commodity killing PCOs or is it that PCOs are not renovating their products and the way they promote them?” she asked.

The first means to achieve these goals is a deep understanding of the client needs and expectations: “First and foremost a PCO has to identify

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its strengths and the areas where, for each particular client, it is able to deliver outstanding value,” added Patrizia. “Then, and this is of the utmost importance, listen carefully to the client’s needs, history, problems, challenges, business model and expectations (even those which initially might not be clearly declared by the client); and finally, to be totally customer-oriented”.

During the lecture session Patrizia also outlined the importance of open, clear and full discussions with the client: it is key to ask themselves and the client the right questions regarding the event, to be able to implement the most appropriate solutions.

“PCOs must convince clients that it is worthwhile to buy the best value and to recognise that it is not how little you pay, it is how much you get. Added-value may be more expensive than services, but worth the price,” she concluded.

Top Tips

To effectively attract and retain association clients

- Demonstrate the competitive advantage offered to clients
- Deliver tangible benefits, both quantitative and qualitative
- Focus on long-term goals, based on trust and on a common strategic approach
- Improve upselling, offering more high-value items
- Learn from past experiences (successes and problems)
- Propose innovative solutions, in terms of event format, fundraising, participants’ engagement, etc.
- Be responsive and proactive as an extension of the association