

## **El Valor perdurable de los eventos cara a cara, ¿por qué serán siempre necesarios?**

**Fuente:** M&C Meetings and Conventions. [http://www.meetings-conventions.com/article\\_ektid25776.aspx?page=1](http://www.meetings-conventions.com/article_ektid25776.aspx?page=1)

One of the most urgent challenges facing planners today is to make an unassailable business case for the value of meetings. Traditionally, that has entailed tracking spending, measuring results, and concluding that the meeting did or did not deliver a satisfactory return on investment. Proving ROI and conscientious spending is still a vital part of the argument (for more on this topic, see "Defending Your Event" on page 63), but on its own, it's an incomplete defense of meetings.

That's because demonstrating a meeting's value doesn't prove that some other, possibly less expensive communication method (tele-conference, website, memo, etc.) couldn't have produced an even greater return. In other words, in addition to the normal justification for an individual meeting or event, planners now have to make the case that meeting face-to-face is more effective than alternatives that meetings provide opportunities that other communications methods don't, and that those advantages are worth whatever extra money and other resources in-person events might cost.

### **Talking points**

When asked to present their best arguments to justify face-to-face meetings, industry sources often rely on emotional or rhetorical arguments because, in many cases, the opportunities in-person meetings provide are hard to quantify.

The human factor. The defense of in-person events usually begins with the fact that, as human beings, businesspeople crave and benefit from social interaction with their peers. "We're not robots," says John Baldoni, a leadership and communications consultant based in Ann Arbor, Mich. "There are many virtual ways of connecting, but there's nothing, I believe, that can replace face-to-face interaction. We want bonds to develop. We want the energy that brings."

Relationships form faster and stronger in person, Baldoni says, which is one of the reasons networking often is cited as a top benefit of meetings. The Center for

Exhibition Industry Research, in a six-part study called "The Role and Value of Face-to-Face Interaction," published in 2003 and 2004, found that 69 percent of attendees consider in-person networking to be "very or extremely important" to their job performance. Doug Ducate, executive director of CEIR, thinks the results would be similar if the survey were conducted today.

The difficulty of making the business case for meetings in times of recession is the meetings industry's own fault, believes Doug Ducate, executive director of the Dallas-based Center for Exhibition Industry Research. Over the past 20 years, the exhibition industry grew at such an impressive rate that "we became enraptured with our own data," he says. "The success story became built on growth: 'We had 10 percent more attendees than last year, therefore it was a better show.' We sold that message."

When growth gives way to contraction, however, the trade show or conference becomes a failure by those flawed standards of success. "Organizations now realize the weakness of the argument," Ducate continues. "We've got to get back to the core value proposition" as the essential defense of meetings.

Better measures of an exhibition, he says, are the quality of attendance and whether the event drove sales, influenced purchases, or strengthened relationships between buyers and sellers. But it's no wonder attendance and net square feet became the favored standards. Those metrics are much easier to measure.