

A real crowd puller

Meeting Makers is at the vanguard of online event registrations, says Clare Mackay

WHEN Meeting Makers set up business 20 years ago as Scotland's first professional conference organising company, it could take months to register delegates by post and staff spent days stuffing up to 20,000 brochures into envelopes and mailing them out to publicise the event.

Today, Meeting Makers registers most delegates online: it creates and manages dedicated websites for conferences, it can organise social events for the meeting, and it can even set up a bespoke company to take care of all the financial arrangements for a convention.

This commitment to constant innovation to offer ever-improving services to clients is one reason why the company has grown from a staff of two in the 1980s to 13 full-time employees today. In that time, the Glasgow-based company has organised meetings that have attracted more than 40,000 people to the UK, generating £28m for the economy, and it is still Scotland's most successful professional conference organising company.

Meeting Makers pioneered the use of online registration in 1997 for the 2,500 delegate International Congress of Plant Pathology at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) in 1998, which resulted in the company winning a Thistle Award for business tourism.

"We have had to be very flexible and be prepared to change to meet the demands of our clients," said joint managing director Lynn



More than 1500 international business women flew the flag in Glasgow at the SECC

Samson. "As our company has developed over the years, our ethos of providing the highest quality service has remained central."

Next August, Meeting Makers will organise its biggest conference yet – the 6,500 delegate International Association of Pain's 12th International Congress at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC), worth around £8m to the Scottish economy.

The company is also strongly involved in managing high-profile corporate events in Scotland. It worked on the prestigious Global Scot event at the EICC last year, which attracted more than 400 delegates.

Meeting Makers has also worked with the Law Society of Scotland and Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland. Among the other corporate meetings it has organised are the World Congress of Women Entrepreneurs at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow in 2004, which attracted 450 delegates, and the Soroptimist International Convention at the SECC in August, involving 1500 influential businesswoman from more than 130 countries.

The company offers a free venue finding service for clients, a free accommodation

booking service, a free bidding service to bring meetings to the UK, and complete conference management. It can also organise awards ceremonies, undertake exhibition management, association membership management

Conference delegates and organisers are increasingly concerned about sustainable events and the company can offer advice on carbon reduction and strategies to reduce the environmental impact of hosting a meeting. Key to this is choosing a venue with good environmental policies and public transport links, using Fair Trade, organic and locally sourced food and drink, and considering the support of carbon offset schemes.

"We'd like to thank our staff for their dedication in providing a consistently high quality professional service over the past 20 years, and to all our clients who have trusted us with their conferences and come back to us ensuring the continuing success of Meeting Makers," said joint managing director Graham Samson. ■

For more information, email Graham at graham@meetingmaker.co.uk, call 0141 434 1500 or see www.meetingmakers.co.uk

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