

Monday, 13 October 2003

Building Bridges and Opening Doors

According to Carl Bildt, Former Prime Minister of Sweden, there isn't a more appropriate country to host an ACTE Conference than Ireland. Ireland proves the value of alliance. Bildt portrayed the country as a unique symbol of strength and resilience. In the past two centuries, its people have suffered terror, poverty, and a lack of presence. Now it is the second richest country in the European Union. "Aligning forces that were often opposing has created a lasting peace, and a remarkable success," he said.

According to Bildt, Ireland's progress proves two things. The first is that great social and economic change is possible. The second is that the fight against terrorism, though not an easy fight, can and must be overcome.

Focusing on the importance of cooperation and integra-

tion, Bildt described the fall of tyrannical governments like that of the former Soviet Union as a "miracle" and a symbol of hope for the world. Ten years ago many central European countries were plagued by poverty and isolation. Now, these same nations are becoming increasingly stable. Bildt forecasts that not only Turkey will become a member of the European Union, but so will the seemingly unpromising countries throughout the Balkans. In a cooperative international environment "bridges are built and doors are opened."

There are few certainties, he said, but there is one that is distinct and undeniable. "As the world is shrinking, its nations' dependencies on one another are growing." This truth defines the path of the business travel industry. •

Stocking Shelves With Distribution Principles

What do a supermarket, a university, and a global transportation model have in common? Distribution. The transition from groceries on a shelf to air travel as a commodity will become clear in a dual presentation by powerhouse keynoters Eamonn Quinn, Deputy Chairman, Superquinn; and Dr. Fariba Alamdari, Head of the Air Transport Group, Cranfield University.

Distribution is a relative principle. See how it relates to your programme in a series of explanations that link supply and demand with price and profitability. Attendance at the keynote presentations on Monday at 14.15 will prepare you for additional data released in the Future of Travel Distribution breakouts (M301-304) at 15.30.

Silver Bullet Strikes Gold For Members Only!

The first educational session of the ACTE Global Conference hit a bull's-eye yesterday, as a "Members Only" crowd heard the message that innovation is a learned skill. Dr. Dennis Sherwood, Managing Director of the Silver Bullet Machine Manufacturing Company, LTD., systematically presented a unique philosophy that fosters successful ideas — again and again.

"The message was refreshing in content and style," said Earl Foster, a former ACTE President and travel manager with 35 years of experience. "There isn't much I haven't seen in this industry, but I agree that innovation begins and ends with attitude. This session was all about developing and keeping the kind of attitude that spawns creative thought."

Foster added that he isn't the type for workshop exercises, but found these to be "on target" for generating a creative environment.

That sentiment was echoed by others in the session. "Initially, I thought the material in the session seemed somewhat familiar," said Sally Mahoney, an ACTE Board member and veteran travel manager. "But it was during the chess game exercise that the object of the lesson became evident. The presenter clearly demonstrated that revisiting a lagging challenge with a new approach can accelerate resolution."

Mahoney noted that this observation is often easier to describe than to apply. "Yet with some modification, the session exercise could easily be applied to challenges in the office."

The second of these "Members Only" sessions will convene today at 10.15. While designed to dovetail with yesterday's presentation, this session is an excellent "stand-alone" problem-solving exercise. •

Conference Scores a "First" for Some Travel Managers

First timers and new members got a close-up look at ACTE's global scope Sunday afternoon, as Association President Mark Williams took them on a virtual tour of industry interdependence. Williams emphasized that ACTE programmes are a logical progression of ideas to policies to results, driven by a multi-national volunteer team. He then introduced the team of leaders, regional representatives, committee chairs, and sponsors behind this year's agenda.

Nadine Dewart — ACTE's EMEA Regional Chair — urged new members to give their careers direction through participation. The meeting became a series of roundtable discussions about trends and pressing issues, prominent among which was the slide of business travel management toward procurement.

"The atmosphere was positively electric," said ACTE Board Member Colleen Guhin. "The association is

attracting some highly motivated people." One motivated travel manager, Terry Grace of the Ford Motor Company, flew 30 hours from Australia to attend this conference.

The First Timers' Reception presented special prizes to five lucky draw winners. Two autographed copies of Robert Reich's book — *The Work of Nations* — went to **David Moran**, Vice President, Human Resources for Carlson Wagonlit Travel and **Sean McCurdy**, Global Director of Worldwide Sales for Bridgestreet Corporate Housing. Two complimentary registrations to Executive Forums were presented to **Catherine O'Regan**, Assistant Vice-President, Global Strategic Sourcing — Global Procurement Services, JP Morgan Chase and **Claudia Fitzpatrick**, International/European Representative, Tri-Pen Management. And for the day's grand prize, a complimentary registration to the 2004 Global Conference in Orlando, Florida, was awarded to **Michael Lutze**, Assistant Director of Sales, The Leading Hotels of the World. •

From Start to Finish At Guinness

The folks at Navigant are keeping true to their promise to stay with ACTE members from start to finish. The start was an opening night reception at the Guinness Storehouse. More than 800 conference participants — including speakers and guests — got a firsthand taste of local culture fresh from the Guinness taps. The tapping was accompanied by food, music and a grand view of the city from the Gravity Bar. In a country where so much is expressed in song, travel managers returned singing... Thanks to Navigant. •

Forward Looking...

by Tony Hughes

President and Chief Executive Officer, RADIUS - the global travel company

"Green shoots of recovery" is a phrase I have heard from several corporate travel experts in recent weeks. It may be a cliché, but after two difficult years, it is a cliché I am pleased to hear.

For supplier members of ACTE, it is good news that September brought business travellers back into their aircraft, rental cars and hotels. For client members, it is also good news. Yes, more travel means more expense — but that is a short-term view. Travel is not really a cost; it is an investment in business. Without it, corporate functions wither on the vine.

The trouble with green shoots is that they can easily be trampled. Only one-month's good figures suggest the market is recovering. Nevertheless, economic indicators are optimistic, suggesting that growth truly can be sustained.

While it is premature to congratulate ourselves on riding out the storm, it is fair to state the travel industry has adapted with remarkable resilience to challenges. Busi-

nesses have responded worldwide by sharpening their travel programmes with professionalism. They have continued with essential travel by utilising deals to full capacity and cutting non-essential trips. There has been greater agreement that business must reduce process costs to the mutual benefit of all.

Challenges still lie ahead. Debate is raging on both sides of the Atlantic over potential reform to the structure and pricing of global distribution systems. Data ownership is another problem that must be resolved.

These issues will be confronted as we emerge from crisis mode, starting with energetic debate here at ACTE. Travel management has come of age during this period. Let us use our new pragmatic perspective to sort out industry issues once and for all. •

Showcase Laptop Giveaway Odds In Your Favor

Travel industry actuaries have determined that ACTE Global Conference participants have a 1 in 300 chance of winning a state-of-the-art laptop, by simply getting the inside story on the latest automation from any of the vendors at the Technology & Business Process Showcase. But the word on the street is that serious techno-junkies who make the rounds have even better odds. •

