



A highlight of ID Events' work over the years has been welcoming Oprah to Australia.

WHAT CLIENTS WANT

Longevity in business comes from moving with the times and continuing to make the client your key focus, explains ID Events Australia's Karen Livermore.

ID Events Australia opened its doors on June 7, 1973, coincidentally just a few months before the Sydney Opera House was unveiled to the world.

Since then the business has changed significantly since inception.

"In the very early days there was steady growth in incentives, particularly from western markets," Karen explains.

"This continued well throughout the 80s when money and budgets were of little importance as clients and industries attempted to 'outdo' each other. Australia really shone throughout these years.

"The 90s heralded some tighter budgets and the introduction of meetings to some programs. Clients became more focused on value and there was less lavish excess. The new millennium brought challenges with increasing globalisation affecting Australia's 'piece of the pie' with some newer destinations aggressively targeting Incentive business.

"In 2000, ID established the new PCO arm of our business which allowed us to offer the

same level of expertise to local corporate clients. Recent years have seen procurement departments take a tighter rein on marketing spends, which has meant that often we are selling to people who have no interest in guest satisfaction and experiences."

Karen says often this means there is less emphasis on personalised service and little regard for the IP of the business.

"There has also been increasing consolidation taking place, especially in larger western markets, where companies are merging and acquiring others to create super brands. Opportunities have arisen as companies look to create preferred partnerships, streamlining purchasing and maximising value from existing suppliers."

What hasn't changed is that every client still wants the wow factor – something that "can't be bought or achieved as an FIT experience".

"Budgets often don't translate, and that is a constant challenge. Clients will shoot for a high-end experience without disclosing budget, which can lead to a lot of unnecessary back and forth to establish real ability.

"The internet has also encouraged the so called 'armchair experts'. We had one client who had Googled estates in Sydney and had gone so far as designing her program around using one, not realising that it was in fact well outside the city limits and not possible!

"Conversely, the challenge within the domestic market is the trend for some clients to take on more in-house, registration and travel management. And there is always that creative challenge, to present and unpack a unique concept with often a very limited brief!

"Some good news stories for the international market include better access and higher lift into Australia, which has affected pricing and provided that much-needed competitive edge to the whole Australia proposition. Otherwise we are seeing some shorter leads for programs, which has been a trending change over the last few years."

Adapting to change

To keep ahead of the competition and remain a valuable partner to its clients, ID has ramped up its offerings, with Karen saying that clear channels of communication are vital.

"With the advent of so much technology at our fingertips, I find the old fashioned approach of a phone call infinitely more beneficial than countless emails.

"ID as a company, is all about the people. That is the client, our staff, but also our external clients – the suppliers. We are only ever as successful as the ability we have to foster partnerships, and that is our key aim and what we are constantly adapting towards.

"That being said, we have adapted parts of our offer to suit the changing world and client requirements, particularly locally. And of course social media – where do I start?! Staying abreast of anything 'new' is paramount, with everything being so much more accessible through technology."

A recipient earlier this year of a Meetings & Events Australia award (Meetings & Events Management Award – eight or more employees), Karen says just submitting an entry was a chance to sit down and take stock of what they were doing.

"As Bill Wright our chairman says, we are only as good as our last job. So we wanted to go through the process [of the awards]. We may have over 43 years in the business, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be striving to learn more every day. Practice, conscious effort and presence. We wanted to have the opportunity to refine and master.

"The year ahead is looking busy. We have lulls like everyone else, but we are looking into a very

good year and the forward trends are positive.

"I've been thinking about what our 50th party will be like! Seriously though, with the increasingly changing world and evolving purchasing channels, ID is working on numerous initiatives that will hopefully see us continue to be leaders in our field.

"Sometimes in life we surprise ourselves with the scope of our ability. Going through the award process identified that we are much more than logistics/project managers and that we have an amazing pool of creative talent within.

"And, we are just about to move to a fabulous creative warehouse space - with amazing harbour views - which, right now at this stage of our business life, seems like the perfect home for ID as we continue to evolve." **m**

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