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Working with airlines

Ideas and advice for
international association
meeting planners and
decision makers



ICCA Intelligence is a free, regular electronic educational resource for the international association community, supplemented by specialist printed guides. International association executives and volunteer leaders can subscribe by emailing natasha@icca.nl with the subject line "ICCA Intelligence subscription".

Contents

1	Introduction	01
2	International associations	03
3	Airline partnership with other industry suppliers	06
4	Measuring airline-relevant data	07
5	ICCA member Airlines and Alliances	09

Introduction

ICCA

ICCA, the International Congress & Convention Association, represents over 670 companies and organisations across 80 countries worldwide, covering all supplier segments of the international meetings industry (congress travel agencies; airlines & alliances; professional congress organisers (PCO's); convention bureaux; congress centres; meeting hotels; consultants, publishers and technology specialists). One of ICCA's most important roles is to maintain a two-way communication channel between its members and the thousands of international associations on its specialised events database.

This publication has been produced as a practical educational guide for both association executives and ICCA members on how to deal effectively with the airline industry in the 21st century. This industry has grown up in tandem with the development of the international meetings industry, but structural changes over the last decade have changed the relationships and opportunities for partnership between conference organisers and their delegates, airlines, and other ICCA suppliers.

ICCA member airlines and alliances listed in this guide are experienced in handling international meetings and in working with international meeting planners and their delegates. The contacts listed are those who specialise in the association market segment: please contact them for additional advice.

The new airline environment

The airline world has undergone a revolution in the last decade: budget airlines are here to stay; some of the established "legacy" carriers are only just able to remain in business, and some companies have ceased to exist. Global alliances rule the long-haul marketplace, and are facing the challenge of no frills airlines on short haul routes. A new generation of aircraft from both Airbus and Boeing will be coming into service in the next few years, further accelerating the processes of competition and innovation. Add to this a wildly fluctuating market for fuel, the airlines' largest expense, and the pressure on the entire business sector becomes apparent.

In the midst of all this change, two things remain constant: the search for any competitive advantage that will increase an airline's market share above the "natural proportion" of traffic carried on a route; and a never-ending search to cut costs. In this environment, any potential partners need to be able to demonstrate their capacity to enhance the former at the lowest possible real cost to the airline.

Why are airlines and alliances interested in partnerships with international associations?

Some airlines are not at all interested in partnerships: their view is that they will get a "fair share" of the business wherever a meeting takes place, and they focus instead on persuading the public at large to select their brand.

Thankfully, many airlines and alliances, and certainly all of those listed in this publication, take a more sophisticated view. They recognise that international association events offer an opportunity for them to influence their market share, whether by helping to win the bid for a destination where they are a strong carrier, or by promoting to delegates to boost their "natural" level of market share (the amount of business they would in theory win if they did not invest in promotion or other partnership activity).

They also recognise that many conference attendees are potential business class or full fare economy ticket purchasers, whose impact on profitability is far greater than the average customer.

The airline executives responsible for these partnerships need hard evidence to persuade their superiors of the merits of such deals.

Association executives need to be aware that without clear facts and figures to demonstrate the capacity for the airline to win increased market share, the chance of forging an effective partnership is much reduced.

The days when national airlines supported bids for international events for reasons of national pride are long over. Bottom-line financial impact is an absolute necessity today and for the foreseeable future.

International Associations

Key points when negotiating with airlines:

i) When does your event take place?

Most airlines and alliances are only interested in setting up a formal agreement between 3 years and 6 months prior to the event taking place. However, if you are organising a particularly large event with a longer lead time and you want to get the airline involved as a partner in the bidding process, there are exceptions to this timeframe. Actual delegate booking can only commence one year prior to the event, since airline booking systems are typically not designed to handle earlier requests. It is recommended to shift meeting dates to the periods which avoid capacity constraints (depending on airline/area).

ii) How many delegates attend and where do they travel from?

At the very least, you should have internal statistics from past events showing nationalities of attendees, patterns of growth or regional variation. Many airlines and alliances require specific minimum delegate numbers before they will invest in partnership with an event organiser:

below 500 delegates you will typically have to make a very special case before any of the airlines will enter into negotiation.

Be sure of your figures before approaching them. If you have accurate data on airline use at your most recent event, it would be ideal analysis to drive.

iii) What is the status of your bid?

Do you need airline support to secure the bid for a particular destination, or has the venue been selected? The answer will have a big bearing on what sort of partnership is possible, and whether it is best to approach an individual airline, or one of the big alliances.

iv) What key objectives do you have for the partnership?

It is vital to determine the basis of your working relationship from the outset. Once the agreement is set, additional requests (eg a late upgrade for your VIP speaker) are no longer part of negotiation, they are effectively "begging for favours". Refer to our checklist to make sure you have covered all the possibilities and have identified which have the highest priority for you.

v) What benefits can you offer the airline or alliance?

Be clear about what you are offering to make the partnership worthwhile, whether you promote "official airline" status, or a less formal arrangement. Be clear about how much influence you have over your delegates' travel decision-making. Spell out the promotional and booking channels in which you will promote the airline or alliance exclusively. Remember the airlines' motivation: they want to improve their market share above the "natural" level they would get if they were not partnering with you.

What kind of support can airlines offer?

We have listed here check-lists of possible airline support and benefits that are of interest to them. It must be stressed that each item needs to be negotiated with the airline, and that the association executive should set priorities since only some items are likely to be offered.

Bid stage partnership - checklist

- Airline participation on bid committee.
- Airline letter of intent/support included in bid documents.
- Airline assistance with site inspection tickets and/or upgrades.
- Airline presence at bid presentation.

NB: at the bidding stage your partnership will inevitably be with a specific, perhaps "national" airline, rather than with an alliance. The latter cover the globe and have to avoid "taking sides" in competitive national bids. Once the destination is confirmed, the individual airline belonging to an alliance will almost inevitably wish to involve their partners in the alliance to a greater or lesser degree, but may sometimes wish to retain "official" status for themselves alone.

Support after the destination is confirmed-checklist:

- Single point of contact to manage the partnership.
- Discounted rates for delegates (could be limited to full fare business and economy rates, or could also apply to budget rates such as APEX). It should be confirmed whether these rates are offered to delegates travelling in groups and/or individually.
- Complimentary or trade-price tickets for VIP's.
- Complimentary or trade-price tickets for organisers.
- Set monetary value of "complimentary" tickets.
- Special rates for organisers' and/or exhibitors' freight.
- Support (eg presence of local office personnel) at promotions aimed at boosting delegate attendance.
- Capacity increases (could be available in some cases). Could be particularly useful if analysis shows a potential bottleneck on a particular route into the host city): a few airlines are willing to schedule larger than usual aircraft for a limited period, subject to proof of likely delegate demand.
- Airline desk at the meeting itself (quite rare in the current economy).
- Special website codes and telephone numbers to easily make and amend bookings.
- Acting as intermediary to obtain special rates with other airlines

Benefits that associations can offer to airlines:

- "Official airline" or "Official alliance" status.
- Exclusive logo presence in all printed material.
- Complimentary advertisements in conference programmes and other association publications.
- Providing a list of potential and actual attendees for the conference in order for airline to promote transport to the event.
- Exclusive mention in association and event websites, including links to airline booking engines (NB if the association members have a particularly valuable business profile, the opportunity for the airline to market to the entire membership should not be underestimated, especially if member numbers are significantly higher than likely delegate numbers).
- Proactive marketing to inform delegates about promotional flight offers and about the range of potential routes using the "official airline" and its partners, and to encourage early booking.
- Organiser/association to provide sales lead contacts, subject to the approval of the delegates and the applicable legislation.
- Distribution of airline collateral material to delegates (eg invitations to join Frequent Flyer programme).
- Recognition of airline during the event (eg invitations to VIP events; logo presence on signage; name mention during key elements of the event; airline executive as speaker if the conference is on a subject relevant to airlines).
- Complimentary participation in the conference program or workshop if deemed relevant to airline/alliance
- Monitoring of how effective the partnership has been (e.g through carrying out a DOME survey of the event, which enables airlines to monitor, flight sector by sector, the proportion of traffic carried versus the expected "natural" market share). This is important not just for securing support for one event, but also if the association wishes to develop a longer term partnership with a particular alliance.

Airline partnerships with other meetings industry suppliers

Professional Congress Organisers (PCO's)

Many international associations use the services of a PCO when organising their events, either in an ad hoc capacity for a specific event, or as a "core PCO" to coordinate and organise their events worldwide. Association executives should consider the following airline issues as part of their routine evaluation of a PCO's services:

- i) Has the PCO an existing business relationship with one or more of the major alliances and/or the national airline in their home country?
- ii) What experience does the PCO have in negotiating "official airline" status with alliances, and have these deals been for single events or for a longer period of time?
- iii) Does the PCO routinely incorporate airline booking channels into the delegate registration websites they design for their clients?
- iv) Is there a measurement system in place to track airline relevant data?

Convention Bureaux and Congress Centres

The convention bureau is the marketing organisation of the convention industry in a given market and should be responsible for targeting association events. In absence of a convention bureau congress centres takes the lead in dealing with association clients. Association executives should consider the following airline issues as part of their routine investigation into the merits of potential destinations and venues:

- i) Does the bureau and/or centre have a special relationship with their national airline, for example enabling them to act as intermediary with out-of-the-ordinary requests, or to provide resources to promote the event?
(In some destinations the airlines, venues and bureaux work very closely together on destination promotion or delegate-boosting projects).
- ii) Does the bureau and/or centre supply tickets for site inspections?

Measuring airline-relevant data

Requirements

Associations wishing to negotiate with airlines need to provide hard evidence of the value of their event, with measurement criteria which make sense to the airlines. Some associations can adapt their own in-house event statistics to achieve this, especially if they consult with airlines in advance to confirm the best way to present the information. Adding a few standard questions on delegate surveys to obtain statistically valid airline data is a simple solution.

DOME

DOME – Data on Meetings and Events – is a non-profit organisation supported by a range of international meetings industry associations including ICCA, whose aim is to improve the measurement of meetings and their impact.

With regard to airline data, delegates are prompted to enter their departure, connection and arrival airports, their carrier and their class of ticket, resulting in comprehensive statistics that are otherwise very difficult to collate. For an example of DOME survey, the full results from the 2004 ICCA Congress can be seen on the ICCA website www.iccaworld.com.

ICCA member airlines and alliances

Global Alliances

Below the Global Alliance members of ICCA are listed

oneworld Management Company Ltd.

Address : Suite 980 The Marine Building
355 Burrard Street
CA- Vancouver, BC V6C 2G8
Canada

Phone : 1-604-6062244

Fax : 1-604-7132668

Email : flemmens@oneworldmngmt.com

Website : <http://www.oneworld.com>

Contact person : Mr. Filip Lemmens, Manager

oneworld was launched in February 1999 to provide its customers and carriers with services and benefits no airline can deliver on its own or bilaterally with another partner. These include: Global coverage: oneworld is the most international of the global airline alliances, serving more countries than any of its competitors. Together its members currently offer travel to more than 560 destinations in 136 countries.



Global Alliances

Star Alliance Services GmbH

Address: : Frankfurt Airport Center, Main
Lobby
DE-60546 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Phone : 49-69-96375000

Fax : 49-69-96375400/500

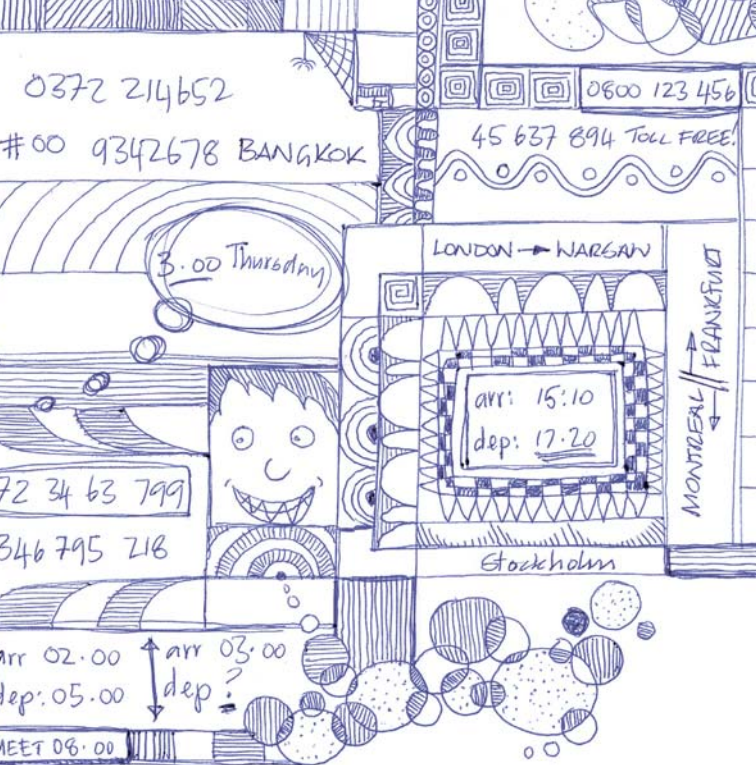
Email : roswitha.clement@staralliance.com

Website : <http://www.staralliance.com/conventionsplus>

Contact person : Ms. Roswitha Clement,
Manager Conventions

Star Alliance™ Conventions Plus is the first ever global conventions programme designated to meet the needs of people planning and attending international events. We offer access to 15 member airlines' schedules and discounted fares in one handy place. For more information see www.staralliance.com/conventionsplus.





Airlines

Austria

Austrian Airlines

Address : Fontanastraße 1
AT-1107 Vienna
Phone : 43-5-17662252
Fax : 43-5-176652252
Email : conventions@aua.com
Website : <http://www.aua.com>
Contact person : Ms. Margarete Gamauf,
Manager Congress &
Conv. Sales Promotion

The Austrian Airlines consist of the 3 carriers - Austrian, Austrian arrows and Lauda Air and offer a dense network of shorthaul as well as many longhaul connections, from business destinations to leisure spots. The current network comprises 130 destinations in 66 countries on all continents. The Austrian Airlines are a member of Star Alliance and can offer either an Austrian Airlines official carrier agreement or Star Alliance ConventionsPlus for international events taking place in Austria.

Spending too much time on the phone sorting out flights for your delegates? Conventions Plus puts you in touch with 16 airlines in one go.

Organising an international conference is tough. Especially when you have to call around all the airlines trying to get flight information for your delegates. Fortunately, our Star Alliance™ Conventions Plus Programme means you don't have to anymore. Register with us and you can reach 16 airlines, through just one point of contact.

Even better your delegates can look forward to reduced fares and an easy way to book tickets - your conference will have its own event code.

All of which makes life much easier for you and your delegates. For more information, please visit www.staralliance.com/conventionsplus

AIR CANADA



AIR NEW ZEALAND



Asiana Airlines



bmi

LOT POLISH AIRLINES



Scandinavian Airlines

SINGAPORE AIRLINES



TAP PORTUGAL



UNITED

U.S. AIRWAYS

VARIG

STAR ALLIANCE
THE AIRLINE NETWORK FOR EARTH.





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Denmark

Scandinavian Airlines System

Address : 88 Hedegaardsvej
 P.O. Box 150
 DK-2770 Kastrup

Phone : 45-32322151
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Email : conventions@sas.dk
 Website : <http://www.scandinavian.net>
 Contact person : Ms. Sus Nygaard, Manager
 Conventions & Events

SAS is the Nordic region's largest listed airline and travel group and the fourth largest airline group in Europe, in terms of number of passengers and operating revenue. The Airlines within the SAS Group are Scandinavian Airlines in Denmark, Scandinavian Airlines Sweden, SASBraatens (Norway) Scandinavian Airlines International (long-haul), Blue1 (Finland) and affiliated airlines are Widerøe, Spanair airBaltic and Estonian. SAS has a fleet of some 200 aircrafts and operates more than 700 departures a day. We can offer SAS Group Official Airline or Star Alliance™ Conventions Plus agreements for international events taking place mainly in Scandinavia/Finland, see more information on www.scandinavian.net/conventions





Hong Kong, China

Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd.

Address : Cathay Pacific City, Scenic Road
Hong Kong International Airport
HK- Lantau
Phone : 852-27475332
Fax : 852-21415332
Email : helen_ho@cathaypacific.com
Website : http://www.cathaypacific.com
Contact person : Ms. Helen Ho,
Marketing Coordinator

Cathay Pacific operates scheduled passenger and cargo flights to 47 destinations in Asia, North America, Europe, the Middle East and Australia. The carrier currently operates 63 aircrafts, all wide-bodied, a fleet that is among the youngest and most technologically advanced in the world.

SAS for your successful meeting

If you are planning a meeting or event you know that every detail can be vital. We will be there for you from the beginning, starting with your site inspection to the delegate's trip to your convention in Scandinavia.

By choosing SAS as the Official Airline of your event, we offer competitive rates and SAS regular and flexible services, which are, designed to get your delegates where they need to be, on time and ready to meet any challenge! Although mainly concentrated on Europe and Scandinavia, our flight operations span the world and include intercontinental routes linking Scandinavia with Bangkok, Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo in Asia and Chicago, New York, Seattle and Washington in the US.

Our active participation in global networks such as ICCA enables us to offer skilled partnership to ensure that your event will be a success.

In addition we have thorough knowledge and expertise of the Star Alliance™ Conventions Plus program that is targeting congresses above 1,000 international delegates.

For more information, please go to www.scandinavian.net/conventions or contact us at conventions@sas.dk



Scandinavian Airlines

Italy


Alitalia

Address : Centro Direzionale
Via Alessandro Marchetti 111
IT-00148 Rome
Phone : 39-06-656226653
Fax : 39-06-65626818
Email : demarin.rita@alitalia.it
Website : http://www.alitalia.it
Contact person : Ms. Rita Demarin,
ICCA Contact

Choosing Alitalia as your official carrier for congresses allows you to take advantage of reduced fares and to gain access to exclusive services. Alitalia can help you to handle the confirmation of all bookings and pre-check-in operations upon request to save time.

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Japan

Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.

Address : 2-4-11, Higashi-Shinagawa 2
chome Shinagawa-ku
JP- Tokyo 140-8637
Phone : 81-3-54603759
Fax : 81-3-54605864
Email : motoko.yamamoto@jal.com
Website : <http://www.jal.com>
Contact person : Ms. Motoko Yamamoto, Int.
Passenger & Mark. Plan.

Founded on August 1, 1951 as a private company, recognised now as former-Japan Airlines. The merger of the JAL and JAS brings with it a strong focus on improving customer convenience and overcoming worldwide competition. JAL Group operates internationally to countries and regions in The Americas, Europe/Africa & Middle East and Asia/Oceania.

Malaysia

Malaysia Airlines

Address : 7th Floor, Bangunan MAS
Jalan Sultan Ismail
MY-50250 Kuala Lumpur
Phone : 60-3-21655177
Fax : 60-3-21630761
Email : dzultann@mas.com.my
Website : <http://www.malaysiaairlines.com.my>

Contact person : Mr. Dzulkefli Zakaria,
Incentive & Convention Manager

Malaysia Airlines flies to over 100 destinations across Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Australasia from Kuala Lumpur with a modern fleet of B747s, B777s and Airbus A330s. It has the capacity and experience of handling large or medium sized groups for conferences, exhibitions, incentives and can assist as official airline.

Netherlands

AirFrance KLM

Address : Amsterdamseweg 55
NL-1182 GP Amstelveen
Phone : 31-20-6485256
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Email : cosmando.byarugaba@klm.com
Website : <http://www.klm.com> or
<http://www.af-klm.com>
Contact person : Mr. Cosmando Byarugaba,
Manager Business Dev.

By striving to attain excellence as an airline and by participating in the world's most successful airline alliance, Airfance KLM intends to generate value for its customers, employees and shareholders. In this respect, KLM developed a MICE programme intended to help event organisers plan and manage air travel for their customers attending meeting or events of any type.

Thailand

Thai Airways International Public Co., Ltd.

Address : c/o Travel Industry Relations
Department (BKKSG)
89, Vibhavadi Rangsit Road
TH- Bangkok 10900
Phone : 66-2-5451892
Fax : 66-2-5453870
Email : jantarat.c@thaiairways.com
Website : <http://www.thaiair.com>
Contact person : Ms. Jantarat Chulakiet,
Manager - Agency Sales Prom.

A member of STAR Alliance and the national airline of Thailand, THAI, operates with internationally high standard of safety and service to more than 70 destinations in Asia, Europe, North America, Middle East and Australia.

Uruguay

Pluna Uruguayan Airlines S.A.

Address : Plaza Independencia 804
UY-11100 Montevideo
Phone : 598-2-9021414
Fax : 598-2-9030281
Email : ankine.attarian@pluna.aero
Website : <http://www.pluna.aero>
Contact person : Mr. Diego Benia, Sales
Manager Uruguay

The Uruguayan national airline - Pluna operates high standard flights in co-operation with VARIG - Brazilian Airlines. The network includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Spain. Pluna is member of the Montevideo Convention Bureaux.

Pluna Uruguayan Airlines and VARIG - Brazilian airlines have been appointed official airlines and are offering special rates for the attendees of the **44th ICCA Congress & Exhibition** taking place in Montevideo, Uruguay 6-9 November 2005

