

ICCA BEST MARKETING AWARD 2005

Overview

Already established as one of the UK's leading exhibition venues, ExCeL London now aims to position itself as a premier European conference and events venue. Whilst the venue's unique selling point is undoubtedly its size and the flexibility this affords organisers, the challenge lies in communicating how effectively the vast space can be utilised. Furthermore, there has also been a lack of awareness of what London, and particularly what London's Eastside – home to ExCeL London - has to offer the domestic and international events industry. Organisers have not been aware that London has a conference centre that can accommodate large scale international events.

Objective

CAMPAIGN TITLE

The launch of ExCeL London's conference and events division.

OBJECTIVES

- To become recognised as a world class venue.
- To provide unrivalled facilities and services.
- To provide a complete solution for a range of large, multi-faceted events.

KEY MESSAGES FOR MARKET POSITIONING

- ExCeL London is a leading conference, exhibition and events venue.
- ExCeL London offers unrivalled scale, versatility and flexibility.
- ExCeL London provides world class, modern and high quality services and facilities.

STRATEGY

A number of changes and new initiatives have been undertaken since September 2004 to launch the venue's conference and events division.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

To foster professionalism and best practice, ExCeL London has formed close alliances with a number of leading professional industry organisations over the past 12 months:

- International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC)
- The British Association of Conference Destinations (BACD)
- The International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA)
- The Meetings Industry Association (MIA)
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI)
- Visit Britain
- Visit London (upgraded to Platinum Partner in January 2005)

TARGET AUDIENCE

The venue's marketing campaign was targeted at organisers of large scale, multi – faceted events operating within the corporate, government and associations markets, both in the UK and overseas.

MEANS OF MEASUREMENT

The venue's integrated sales and marketing plan was to be measured in two ways: through the sales revenue, new, major business wins and being awarded coveted industry accolades to help underpin the venue's growing reputation as a major international conference player.

Campaign

ESTABLISHMENT OF CONFERENCE AND EVENTS DIVISION

Vanessa Cotton was appointed as managing director of the venue's newly formed division in September 2004. A prominent figure in the UK conference market, Vanessa Cotton has more than 20 years of experience in the industry, including running her own highly successful events company. In addition, a team was structured around her to ensure the venue's new business venture was fully supported.

In order to align itself with its target sectors, three dedicated account management sales teams: corporate, public sector/government and associations were established, whilst a new reservations team was put in place to manage incoming enquiries.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Anna Simmonds was appointed as the department's dedicated marketing manager to head up its marketing strategy, while PR agency Davies Tanner was taken on to target specific business sectors and the international media to raise the venue's profile outside of its immediate domestic market.

PROPOSED MAILINGS

- Bespoke mailing to the automotive industry – linked to the win of The British International Motor Show 2006 (first time back in London in 30 years).
- A mailing piece to promote the availability of Here's the Plan handbook to UK event organisers who cater for events for 500 plus delegates.
- Three consecutive mailings highlighting the proximity of the venue to the financial companies within Canary Wharf and the City.
- Christmas party package flyer to local companies in Canary Wharf and City companies.

REBRANDING AND LAUNCH OF NEW IDENTITY

A new corporate identity was unveiled in April 2005 to reflect and reinforce the continued growth and future strategy of the venue's conference and events business. Developed by brand communications consultancy, Imagination Ltd, the new dark blue logo is supported by the word 'London' and strapline: 'the international exhibition and conference centre'.

The new identity was necessary to accurately communicate the importance of the conference and events business, as well as incorporate the venue's increasing international stature for world-class conferences, events and exhibitions.

Adopted in all sales and marketing literature, a dedicated conference brochure was produced to capture the essence of ExCeL London – dynamic, young, fresh, fast paced and innovative through the use of creative and colourful visuals. Its purpose was to demonstrate the venue's core strengths - scale, versatility and quality.

ExCeL London's conference and events division worked closely with its design agency Hudson Fuggle to create uniformed marketing and sales collateral, which effectively demonstrate and reflect the venue's brand identity.



PLATINUM SUITE INVESTMENT

ExCeL London undertook a £3 million investment to upgrade the Platinum Suite in September 2004. Spanning three floors and with its own dedicated reception area, the revamped Suite provides event organisers with a highly contemporary, prestigious and versatile facility. The space can be used for stand-alone events, or as an integral part of large-scale, multi-faceted events requiring a centrally located plenary area, media centre, large syndicate rooms or hospitality space. Few UK venues offer this level of choice, versatility and capacity to accommodate 1,100 delegates.



PUBLICATION OF ORGANISER'S HANDBOOK – 'HERE'S THE PLAN'

ExCeL London and Visit London joined forces in 2005 to showcase the opportunities and benefits London, particularly its eastside, offers UK and European event planners - with the launch of a new handbook entitled '*Here's the Plan - A practical guide to planning your next event at ExCeL London*'.

The handbook was designed to inform event planners – in particular, UK event planners based outside London and international organisers - of the venue's suitability and viability for staging large (3,000+ delegates) complex events. Furthermore, it educates organisers on the diverse facilities, services and opportunities the capital offers and challenges the misconception that London is expensively priced by highlighting value for money services for event planners.



INTRODUCTION OF AN EVENT SET-UP SOFTWARE SOLUTION

Clients can now take a virtual 'walk through' and see how their event will look within ExCeL London's wide choice of spaces, before they even book it. Already at the forefront of providing a highly advanced and resilient IT and communications infrastructure, ExCeL London has invested £45,000 in strengthening its service with the addition of MeetingMatrix™, an industry approved and revolutionary event set-up software solution. ExCeL London is the first major European venue to have MeetingMatrix's cutting-edge technology installed.

The software programme allows event organisers to transform any of the venue's event spaces from a standard floor plan into accurate, three-dimensional set-ups. Organisers can work with ExCeL London to develop bespoke room set-ups at a touch of a button, thereby reducing the time needed to alter event configurations. Organisers can even access the software from their own offices, so it is ideal for providing an effective and efficient service for overseas organisers.



CAMPAIGN COSTS

MeetingMatrix – cost £45,000

This new tool was developed by a USA based company, and as such, the project had to be meticulously planned to fully maximise the time required by the team sent over to set up the software tool. If the project time had overrun, additional expenses would have been incurred by having to fly the team back and forth from the States. The MeetingMatrix was installed on time and within budget.

‘Here’s the plan’ – cost £25,000

The support of other industry players, particularly local partners to ExCeL London, was instrumental in helping to deliver a quality piece of marketing collateral that really captured the vibrancy and dynamic nature of London’s conference capabilities. It was also important to show a united front for a city which can often be considered too big, impersonal and daunting to overseas event planners.

To this end, ExCeL London enlisted the financial support of its onsite hotels, its local airport (London City Airport), local area tourism organisation (Tower Hamlets) and even its key local shopping and leisure destination (Canary Wharf). It was also essential to partner with Visit London, as it was not only a case of promoting the venue but of showcasing the attractiveness of the city. The design and content of the handbook was agreed by this united and enthusiastic team, resulting in an informative and colourful representation of what this leading city has to offer the international meetings industry.



Results

The venue's integrated sales and marketing plan has been measured in three ways. The first is through the increase in conference and event sales revenue, which has more than doubled year on year (Sep 03 – Aug 04 and Sep 04 – Aug 05).

New business wins have also been an effective way of measuring the division's success. The venue has been highly instrumental in London being awarded many large international and domestic association meetings over the past 12 months including:

- European Academy of Dermatology & Venereology Congress 2005 – 8000 delegates
- National Association of Pension Funds 2006 – 1500 delegates
- European Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgeons Congress 2006 - 4000 delegates
- World Congress on Intelligent Transport Systems 2006 - 2500 delegates
- British Society of Colposcopy & Cervical Pathology 2006 – 600 delegates

Based on delegate spend alone, the three international events are estimated to contribute £6m to London's economy.

Marilyn Benham, chief executive officer of the British Association of Dermatologists explains why they took the decision to bring the EADV to London: "ExCeL London is the capital's only venue that could provide all the conference and exhibition space we needed to meet the high standards that our international delegates now expect. In terms of design and technical support it can compete with the best European centres and I believe the facilities offered by ExCeL London were a key factor in us being able to win the bid to bring the EADV to London in 2005."

Finally, winning key industry awards has also been an indication of ExCeL London's growing stature as a premier facility for conferences and events. The venue was recently named as the UK's number one purpose-built venue by Conference and Incentive Travel Magazine's readers (July 2005). This was a remarkable feat considering the venue was opened just 5 years ago, with a Conference & Events division officially established just 12 months ago. The venue has also been awarded the title of "Europe's Leading Conference Venue" at the World Travel Awards 2005 and the "Venue of the Year" at the Autumn Event Awards 2004. More recently, the venue's event management team won "Best Customer Service" at the Association of Exhibition Organisers' annual award ceremony.