

ICCA Congress Victoria 2008 Best Marketing Award Entry Arena and Convention Centre Liverpool



ICCA Congress - Victoria 2008 Best Marketing Award Entry Arena and Convention Centre Liverpool

Venue Launch Campaign - Summary -

Our ICCA entry showcases the pre-launch marketing of ACC Liverpool, a new venue in a new destination city. This entry reflects the tremendous success of our launch, commencing 2006.

Our two main challenges were

- Launching a new venue into a saturated, competitive and mature national and international market.
- Launching a new meetings destination on two counts
 - Forging a citywide approach with individuals and organisations that did not have prior industry knowledge or background in a bid to achieve 'buy in' and support.
 - Launching a new meetings destination, nationally and internationally with no previous track record and a destination reputation that was not always positive.

The material supplied as part of this entry provides the full context and breadth of the launch plan together with the financial impact/results. We have highlighted below the specific elements that made our campaign so unique, effective and successful.

- Environmental credentials were not initially identified as a USP but an integral part of the building design. Our decision to focus on being 'green' was a realisation that we were the right building, at the right time with the greenest of credentials.

By positioning ourselves as such we were consistent in being environmentally transparent in all that we do.

- Authenticity, passionate and true to our values. Our brand values are based on the City's personality in who we are and how we do business. All our recruitment, operating policies and practices reflect these values.

To continue this process, our recruitment strategy centred on local people who might not necessarily have industry knowledge but had a fresh approach, passion and desire to experience a huge learning curve, taking ACC Liverpool to the international market.

- Simplicity. With a new build, we had little to work with. Keeping it simple fitted with our brand values and was an expedient means of working at the early stage of our development.

We ensured that our message to the market was uncomplicated, heartfelt, simple and consistent to ensure success in establishing a new brand.

We used simple tools to get this across. Our fact cards were a particularly successful example of how a simple tool can be so effective.

- The use of icons. Liverpool is famous for the football and the Beatles. Whilst this served Liverpool's leisure industry well, we were creative but mindful about how we would use this appropriately for our business.
- We linked in with the work the Capital of Culture team had done on the Liverpool brand as part of the bidding and development process for the 2008 celebrations.

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As a result we changed our working title from LACC to ACC Liverpool to embrace the recognition, familiarity and emotional attachment of the 'Liverpool' brand.

- The theme of emotional attachment for both the venue and the destination to our clients and our industry continued through CRM. With a nucleus of a team in the early days, undeveloped means of IT communication, limited marketing collateral and no marketing department per se we continued the relationship with interested parties through effective CRM and generating a familial feel with the building and the team through its developmental stages.
- We set out with a 'hearts and minds' campaign to create emotional attachment and ownership of the venue at a local level to engage our stakeholders, local businesses etc. We needed them on board for our business to succeed.

The high level of support and goodwill locally from the business community is a major contributor to our success.

- We pooled resources into creative familiarisation events that would stand out from the crowd and grasp industry headlines. Whether the events were personally attended or not, the awareness was that ACC Liverpool was out there doing 'something' and 'something unique'.
- Events secured for ACC Liverpool for 2008 and beyond.

1. Euro Cities 2008
2. FACE – First Aid Conference Europe 2008
3. International Test Commission 2008
4. European Regional Science Association 2008
5. Astronet Symposium 2008
6. MTV Europe Music Awards 2008
7. Waterfront Expo 2008
8. International Port Cities Conference 2008
9. World Fire fighter Games 2008
10. EURAM – European Academy of Management 2009
11. IFPTS – International Forestry Products Transport Symposium 2009
12. International Free Electron Conference 2009
13. Managing Nuclear Liabilities 2009
14. 21st International Drug Dependency Harm Reduction Conference 2010
15. PIANC – Permanent International Association of Navigation Congress 2010
16. 7th International Conference of the Hospital Infections Society 2010
17. European Sport Science Congress 2010
18. International Society for Scholarship Teaching and Learning 2010
19. International Society of Haemostasis and Thrombosis 2012
20. 15th International Hand Bell Ringing Symposium 2012
21. EuroSpine – The Spine Society of Europe 2013

1) Marketing Challenges to be addressed:

ACC Liverpool opened its doors in January 2008. A brand new venue in a brand new convention city – with no track record nor recognition in the world meetings market place. Liverpool was known internationally for many things but major congresses and conferences was not one of them.

The challenge, before the venue was completed, was to create a dynamic team that would put ACC Liverpool on the world meetings map and generate real interest and business, years before the venue opened. There needed to be a fully integrated marketing and media campaign, driven by sales – that would take the venue through its pre opening phase – right through to opening; establishing the venue's reputation for years to come.

Key challenges:

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The market place was saturated and if a city was not building a convention centre it was developing and expanding an existing one. We set our stall out with no track record as a convention city and with only previous local and national destination awareness campaigns led by the city's regional Tourist Board.

ACC Liverpool went to market unknown as a venue or for delivering events. We had nothing but artist's impressions and masses of enthusiasm and passion for both our venue and our city.

It was identified that people, rather than marketing activity in isolation, would play a key role in the campaign which in turn would result in a number of interesting and unique ways in which we would attract attention to our product, ensuring that ACC Liverpool became a major player in the national and international marketplace.

Liverpool had no experience of creating showcases and generating mass interest from potential conference and congress buyers so how could ACC Liverpool stimulate interest and what was going to make people come to one of our familiarisation events? In addition, how could we educate and genuinely interest our city partners in the value of a venue that was not built and would not give them any real business for another 2 years? We had to create something special, interactive and memorable.

Liverpool was known for many things – good and bad. We had to play to our strengths and spread the word that Liverpool had and was continuing to change. European Capital of Culture award created a frenzy of developments in and around the city centre which translated into 25 years of development within a 5 year scale. The city was a building site – and we at ACC Liverpool were trying to sell, at that stage, a building site.

The enormity of what was happening could be clearly seen by the mass of cranes across Liverpool's skyline so that when we started to invite potential clients to the city they were overwhelmed by what they saw. Many developments have finished but there are still many more yet to finish on the waterfront, this means that we can bring people back again and again to see Liverpool developing into a truly international business tourism destination.

These challenges fed into our marketing strategy. The strategy gave direction to the business and individual teams whilst focusing activity on key areas that would need attention in order to achieve the campaign objectives.

2) Innovation and Creativity:

Emphasis was placed on ensuring all activity reflected ACC Liverpool's vision, mission and brand values; the aim being to win not only minds, but the hearts too, of local, national and international audiences. It was also key that both the design and function of the building was communicated in an easy to understand way – fresh and uncomplicated – just the way we like to do business!

Our Vision:

To be a successful world class Arena and Convention Centre that serves its customers to the best of its abilities and attracts visitors to Liverpool, thereby contributing to the long term growth and prosperity of our enterprise, our city and its people.

Our Mission:

Through our responsive service we will ensure face to face events of all kinds flourish here in Liverpool, making sure every one is a positive experience that does credit to our people, our enterprise and our city as a whole.

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Our Brand Values:

Individual

We're proud to be a one off

Resourceful

We have the capabilities to do anything

Welcoming

We're approachable and easy to work with

Evolving

We look to develop

Genuine

We're straightforward and down to earth

Inspiring

We see the possibilities



Our brand values are vital to the way we run our business and have an affect on everything we do:

- How we recruit
- Who we recruit
- How we carry out day to day tasks
- How we generate leads
- How we speak to our clients

The extensive team that now exists at ACC Liverpool was recruited with the brand in mind and all activity is reflective of the core values and our proposition. To give us the edge over some of the existing competition we ensured that this was integral to all marketing and sales activity and that the team not only bought into the principles of our new brand but also delivered it in all areas of business.

The Creative :

Following significant competitor analysis our design agency was briefed to come up with a creative that would set us apart from the competition, incite interest, be easily recognisable and allow us to sell a new venue based on the use of artist's impressions.

Black is the new Black:



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The black creative was designed to be instantly recognisable. It was chosen as the ideal backdrop to our artist's impressions of the venue and enabled us to get extremely creative with subsequent advertising campaigns that really made ACC Liverpool stand out from the crowd.

Marketing Collateral:

Although we aimed to promote our venue mainly through multi media based marketing activity – we still felt that as a new venue potential clients would like to take away a clear idea of the venue to refer to – so the brochure was developed as well as a DVD that highlighted the functionality of the building and the destination of Liverpool as key selling points. Liverpool, the city, played and continues to play a major part in our sales and marketing activity. From the start we valued the importance of promoting where we were in addition to who we were. Artist's impressions combined with open and honest statements of commitment from the senior management team, again reflecting the brand values of ACC Liverpool and personalising the business to our potential customers were used to create a focused, no nonsense, brochure.



We also developed Fact Cards for client's ease of reference, which were the size of a business card and made from durable material, again highlighting the building and its capacities in a small easy to use form. This was used in a number of ways. Easy and simple to reproduce – it could be handed out in conjunction with any business cards and carried around by members of the team – not only for customers and contacts – but also as reference for team members to ensure that messages were consistent and clear. They were also used as part of the campaign for Liverpool – creating understanding from key partners – such as taxi drivers – through to tourist information and travel providers so they too had an idea of what was being developed on their doorstep and were able to talk about the development – again keeping the message clear and consistent.



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Multi media campaigns formed a central part of the marketing activity. Building the database was a key platform to reach sales targets and to ensure that we had a starting point to build on following the opening in 2008. A website was developed that reflected both sides of the business (Arena and Convention Centre) with a specific area dedicated to the exploration of the building. It was key that this was an instructive site – that content was regularly managed and updated and that clients were able to explore the facilities and activity of the building.

3) The Campaign – Key Steps Undertaken:

A launch campaign called for unique marketing and innovation. Through the initial assessment of the marketing challenges that ACC Liverpool faced it was clear that we would need to stand out from the crowd and ensure that we offered a fresh approach not only to be creative but to how we conducted business. The following activity was carried out to try to ensure that ACC Liverpool was at the forefront of any industry related activity before the opening in 2008.

As a green venue and with the sustainability agenda high on ACC Liverpool's priorities (as well as being a USP for the venue) – the majority of the marketing activity was designed to be web / email based.

Over and above the sales targets that needed to be reached in the first year – specific objectives were set to ensure that the launch campaign remained focused.

A series of campaign objectives were set to ensure that it was clear what we would be aiming to achieve throughout the campaign.

Campaign - objectives:

- To establish a new brand in an already competitive market place. Ensuring that it differentiated us from the competition and was reflective in all our activity.
- To highlight what a Convention Centre is to Liverpool as a city and gain support locally from the Tourism Board, Hoteliers and local attractions.
- To achieve the target of £2.4million by January 2008, 50% of our overall annual target for the year end being 31st March 2009 – and inspire event organisers to imagine the possibilities.
- Create buzz, interest, curiosity and competition around Europe's newest convention centre through a multi layered approach to the campaign.
- To create buzz, interest and knowledge locally ensuring ownership of the new venue and a clear understanding of the value of ACC Liverpool.

All of the above objectives were centred on the following common threads that were communicated through all activity, cementing clear messages about our offer:

Campaign - key principles used:

A multi media approach

Using the full marketing mix – media, promotions and press.

Website activity, eblasts and experiential marketing, alongside supplementary marketing materials and DVD's.

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Multi – level marketing

Advertising campaigns, combined with features in industry press, exhibitions, familiarisation trips to the venue, show case events in UK and Europe, direct communication with clients and customers.

Proactive press campaign

Building up to the opening in January – highlighting key stages of development. Key wins and milestones in the business development.

Venue Design – flexibility of the venue in terms of size and choice. The 10,600 seat arena and 21 room convention centre with 3725sqm of exhibition space is one venue which can be uniquely split to create two separate venues.

Location – Located on the famous waterfront of the River Mersey, adjacent to a World Heritage Site yet in the heart of a vibrant city centre, surrounded by cultural attractions, restaurants and bars all within walking distance.

Sustainability – One of the greenest venues in Europe. Wind turbines generating 10% of our power, venue design to use natural daylight in many public areas, light sensors fitted, natural ventilation, equipment to reduce CO2 emissions by 48% and rainwater harvesting generating 70% of water usage for cleaning and utilities.



Campaign - key activity:

Liverpool is European Capital of Culture 2008, an award that was won at the end of 2003. In the run up to 2008 the city created themed years:

- 2004 Year of Faith
- 2005 Year of the Sea
- 2006 Year of Performance
- 2007 Birthday Year – the city was 800 years old
- 2008 European Capital of Culture Year
- 2009 Year of Environment
- 2010-2011 Year of Innovation

In addition to the themed years the city undertook various and numerous research activity which helped all to understand where its position was in the wider world. ACC Liverpool was able to tap into this information early on in our campaign which helped us to play to our strengths and in synergy with Capital of Culture (CoC) work on our weaknesses. Research continues to date and in conjunction with CoC we continue to help to develop Liverpool towards the top of the list of major cities of choice in the UK and Europe.

2008 will be over in 3 months but it is just the beginning for ACC Liverpool.

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Experiential Marketing:

Experiential marketing played a key part of the activity carried out by the Sales and marketing teams. We wanted clients and buyers to experience Liverpool – either by actually coming up to look at the site as it was being built and to experience the hospitality and attractions of what Liverpool has to offer – or alternatively to take Liverpool to London and across Europe so that our clients could experience the city at their own convenience – giving them a taster for the real thing. This was carried out in a number of ways:

Liverpool Familiarisation Trips:

For clients and agents that were already interested in the idea of ACC Liverpool as a future venue we organised familiarisation trips to Liverpool where they experienced, first hand, Liverpool's heritage, attractions and people as well as the building site of ACC Liverpool. Hard hat and boot tours added to the excitement of these visits and we felt that by people getting up close and personal to the building whilst it was being built it made them part of the process and we were inundated with requests for repeat visits to view the progress of the building first hand. When clients returned to the completed venue they took pride in seeing it develop and were the ones who sold the venue to their colleagues as they felt part of it.

Showcase Events

Working closely with key partners within Liverpool (the Tourist Board, Hoteliers, and key attractions) we were able to achieve two key objectives with showcase events:

- Taking Liverpool to London, for example, cemented the relationship ACC Liverpool now has with all key providers of any convention City. It enabled us to ensure they had a greater understanding of the impact a Convention Centre has on a city. They were able to experience first hand how this would affect not only their bottom line, but their business profile and the profile of their city.
- They were also able to start to make wider links with the meetings industry – and understand the calibre of delegates that would be attracted to the city. For ACC Liverpool it was fantastic for us to take our clients through an experiential evening – giving them a flavour of Liverpool and making connections with key clients so they had an understanding of the product first hand and were able to speak to the city and its offer in one place.

Our first showcase was in October 2006 and took place at Shakespeare's Globe. The title was 'A Bard Days Night' and the evening was themed around The Beatles and the City's Year of Performance, one of the themed years in the run up to 2008, European Capital of Culture.

We did not want to use the Beatles in their raw state and felt this was an excellent opportunity to feature something very much associated with Liverpool but slightly more sophisticated. We used an actual extract of a newly written play featuring the Beatles travelling back in time to 1556 to meet and audition for Shakespeare himself. This mini production was able to use the stage of the Globe on a fabulously dark and starry night.

Our venue, at that time, was just a frame of a building but this did not quash the interest of prospective buyers. Attendees on the night were 95, including press, and we generated £1.2 million in revenue for the venue and in the region of £7 million for the local economy (Visit Britain calculator used). Below is a copy of the invitation that was created.

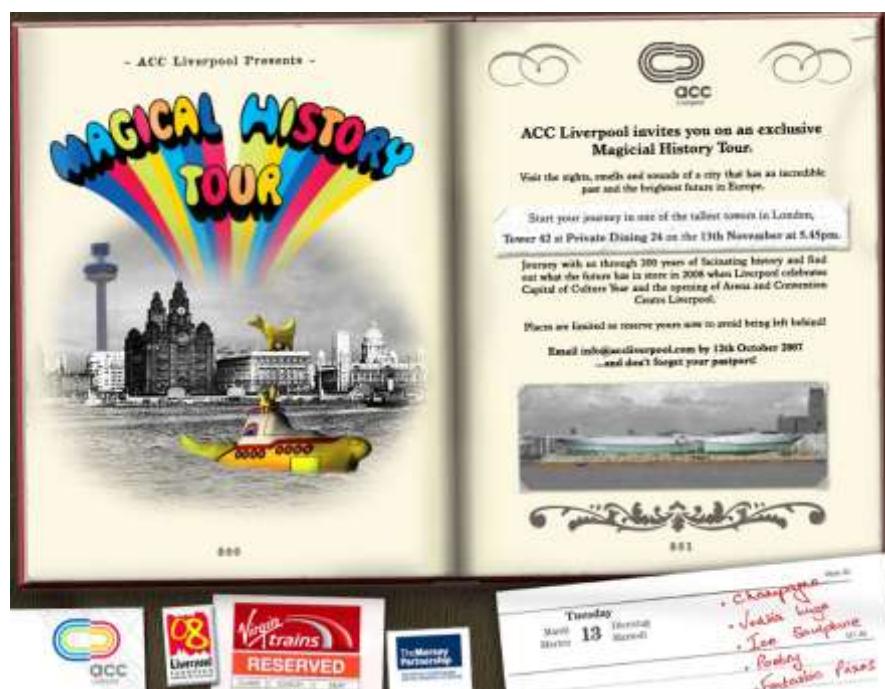
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The 2007 showcase took place at Tower 42, on the 24th floor with stunning views over London city. The evening was themed 'A Magical History Tour'. Clients were taken back some 200 years to get an insight of where Liverpool came from, through its evolution into a business tourism destination and home of ACC Liverpool. This was done by using actors and props to play the part of prominent 'Liverpudlians' through the ages.

Attendees on the night were 85, slightly down on the previous year due to the fact that we chose a venue that capped our numbers. This meant that we had to say no to many potential clients, which generated some excitement as what was so interesting and unique about Liverpool that a showcase 'sells out'.

This event further developed existing relationships, created many new ones in addition to the much wanted business on the books. Below is a copy of the invitation created.



Press and Media Activity:

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A key dimension of our pre-opening campaign was to engage with all levels of media in the build up to the opening of the venue in January 2008. Our main objective was to win hearts and minds of local, national and international audiences and to change any pre-existing ideas people may have had about Liverpool as a destination. This event highlighted what the city has to offer culturally as well as a business destination.

Press trips were arranged for trade press to view key stages of development for the building. Key aspects of the sustainability of the building and the measures that were going in to pioneer greener meetings in the industry were central to all activity.

Key learning for ACC Liverpool:

The key area of development for us was the wider engagement of Liverpool and the city into what a Convention centre is and means for local business. This continues – and still remains a principle activity of both the sales and marketing teams.

A united city means the offer is simple and easy for clients and organisers to utilise to best advantage for their events. Experience is increasingly proving that clients want one point of contact when organising their event and we have created a truly seamless experience for both our clients and partners.

This, we learnt, does take time. Presenting a united front as a Convention City is critically important – this does mean being very proactive and supporting areas of the city's development that may need time to catch up with you.

The sales and marketing teams were very active in ensuring that the city was working together to maximise impact at other levels. Working hand in hand with Liverpool's inward investment team, the sales team focussed on sectors they were already marketing Liverpool to, offering a 'taster' of the city through a conference.

This has led to some fantastic events being attracted to Liverpool on a number of levels – Waterfront Expo and the International Forest Products Transport Symposium; both international events are just a few examples of how working creatively alongside other partners that are already promoting the city, gets results.

To link in with our environmental pledge we decided 'less was more'. Throughout the whole pre-opening campaign we aimed to keep waste and paper products to a minimum. Press and media packs were online or on USB sticks. Information available in the brochure could be found on our website, online photographic stores and an extranet system allowing clients to access important documents online – such as contracts - without any printing being involved.

Client feedback has been fantastic and our marketing of our unique green approach to business has enabled us to attract top clients such as The Body Shop, (their products are environmentally friendly), Liberal Democrats (their policies focus on environmental issues), and British Wind Energy Association (who are focussed on sustainable energy). We are bidding to host the European Wind Energy Association congress in 2010.

4) Timeline Objectives and Targets:

Following the identification of the marketing challenges faced and the clear campaign objectives set the following steps were then taken.

- 1) Identification of key target markets
- 2) A marketing strategy formulated to support the achievement of the sales targets within the identified target markets.

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- 3) Sales and marketing activity agreed; a delivery timetable created to ensure all involved knew where responsibilities lay.
- 4) Delivery of creative and timetable of events.
- 5) Identification of key milestones for media activity.
- 6) Review Results

Reviews and Results

Non financial

Press and media coverage. A total of 572 articles in the media across local / national / international press – equating to £15.5 million worth of advertising spend (using CIPR industry calculator).

We are recognised as an architecturally significant building qualifying for this year's RIBA award.

As a purpose built arena and convention centre we are recognised not only for our location and unique flexibility for events, but as a state of art venue globally for both design, functionality and practice.

We are recognised as a best practice venue for environmental design and internal processes; a benchmark for new and existing business. This has resulted in the opportunities to present on our environmental credentials alone, across the world, at both industry and non industry events

We work together with the Tourist board on developing the Ambassador Programme and are recognised as one of two best practice destinations in the UK.

We attend and continue to attend a variety of trade exhibitions, meetings, industry events and advisory panels across the world to promote and raise awareness of ACC and Liverpool.

To increase Liverpool's opportunities, ACC Liverpool were instrumental in the development of the Liverpool Bidding Partnership (LBP), a partnership between ACC Liverpool, the Tourist Board and Liverpool Hoteliers Association.

Financial Results

To date securing 21 international conferences and 194 events (for year ending March 2009) with an estimated economic impact of £184 million (using Visit Britain delegate spend calculator); achieving current firm sales for our first of £4.1million with 6 months to go.

51 events for 2009/2010

24 events for 2010/2011

Firm events booked through to 2014