

Inspiring A New Approach: World Parkinson Congress 2010 and The Glasgow Model

ICCA Best Marketing Award 2011: Glasgow



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1. Setting the Scene

The World Parkinson Congress (WPC) was created to provide an international forum for the latest scientific discoveries, medical practices and care initiatives related to Parkinson's disease.

Its strength lies in bringing physicians, scientists, nurses, rehab professionals, care partners and people with Parkinson's disease together, to create a worldwide dialogue that will help expedite the discovery of a cure and best treatment practices for this devastating disease.

The first WPC was held in Washington DC in 2006 and was a huge success.

In line with its mission to create a true international forum, organisers set their sights on the UK as the destination for their next congress with an aim to reach new audiences across Europe.



The competition to host WPC in the UK was tough and Glasgow had to develop an approach which would stand out amongst our competitors when WPC came to make their selection.

Hosting WPC would present a big challenge for any city – delivering a successful, well attended meeting in Glasgow would be quite a feat when the event was new, not yet established in Europe and featured a diverse delegate base, different to most medical conferences.

The fact that the WPC is delivered by the World Parkinson Coalition Inc, which has no membership base, was an additional challenge to ensure major attendance.

At the selection stage, WPC Congress Organiser Eli Pollard was impressed by the team at Glasgow City Marketing Bureau (GCMB) and the Scottish Exhibition + Conference Centre (SECC). Eli had an exceptional vision and belief that the congress would be a great success. We were there to help from the start, enthused by Eli's passion and commitment to raising the profile of Parkinson's around the world.

To realise the vision and to deliver a WPC that Eli and the Parkinson's community would be proud of, forming a strong partnership approach and aligning ourselves with WPC's objectives would be essential.

We considered it our collective duty to further build the WPC brand for the future by creating a hugely successful conference that was outstanding at all levels – from a content point of view, right down to participant experience, relevance and connections to the local community.

To achieve this we developed a truly collaborative approach that, for the first time, would see the client, city and venue become true stakeholders in the success of the conference.

2. The Challenge

- This was the first time WPC would take place outside the US, essentially building the event from scratch.
- The Congress was not established – it was only the second ever Congress to take place and it had been four years since the first event.
- WPC has an unusual and varied delegate profile – physicians, scientists, nurses, rehab professionals, care partners and people with Parkinson's disease.
- No event history in Europe.
- No existing databases.
- Potential US delegates had little knowledge of Glasgow.
- Current economic climate.

3. Objectives

- To secure attendance of 2,700 delegates at WPC 2010.
- To ensure delegate diversity with representation from over 50 countries.
- To ensure delegate representation from the entire Parkinson's community including physicians, scientists, nurses, rehab professionals, care partners and people with Parkinson's disease.
- To raise awareness of Parkinson's disease globally.
- To position Glasgow as a trusted and easy to work with destination for conference organisers looking to venture outside of the US for the first time, building on Glasgow's experience of supporting US based organisers inexperienced in delivering conferences outside the US.

4. Strategy for Meeting Objectives

To overcome the challenges and meet objectives, we identified the need to:

- Build a strong working partnership between WPC, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, the SECC and the PCO.
- Understand what the WPC leadership wanted to deliver for WPC and their strategy, aims and audiences.
- Develop assets which would build delegate numbers, customised for WPC audiences.
- Harness existing WPC networks and distribution channels.
- Develop new channels and opportunities for delegate build using our connections with the local media and academic, scientific and medical communities.
- Add value through marketing and PR expertise, to reach new audiences for WPC.
- Engage city partners to understand the needs and requirements of people living with Parkinson's and to adapt their services and support to suit.

5. Creative and Innovative Campaign Ideas

We would have to take a 360° marketing approach if we were going to reach across all target audiences and not just deliver, but exceed delegate numbers. We developed a series of creative solutions to directly address the challenges we were facing, which would not otherwise have been deliverable by WPC.

5.1 Inspirational Pre Event Film

The film we created was a first of its kind for all involved. The aim was to bolster delegate build and create pre event buzz in the months leading up to WPC 2010, as well as introduce new audiences from Europe to the congress.

5.2 The Bespoke WPC 2010 iPhone App

Our bespoke iPhone app was a creative solution to showcase the visitor experience that Glasgow could offer delegates from its many visitor attractions and excellent shopping to its hotels, restaurants and nightlife.

By embracing new media for the first time, we were able to offer delegates an easy to use tool that they could access conveniently



through their own smartphone or laptop. This would be useful in enticing delegates ahead of WPC and would also help them to navigate the city during the congress.

Offering real time discounts, which included special deals for city hotels and restaurants, gave delegates even more motivation to travel and was another added value element that only Glasgow, working together as a city, could deliver. The overall result was an iPhone app that:

- Enhanced the destination appeal and showed prospective delegates what the city could offer.
- Provided valuable and practical destination support to delegates.
- Offered great value via real time discounts and offers across Glasgow businesses.
- Reached target audiences via digital platforms including Facebook and Twitter.

5.3 Engaging the City – Complementing Glasgow Service with Style

Our ability to facilitate training for front of house staff was another first for WPC and has set the bar high for future meetings. Training staff to deal with the needs and requests of those living with Parkinson's was important to WPC and required a tailored customer service programme to be developed.



Our city initiative, Glasgow Service with Style, has a mission to offer a world class visitor experience. The trainings and briefings would mean that long after WPC was over, the city would benefit from better trained staff that would help us achieve our Glasgow Service with Style mission. To ensure the best delegate experience, we:

- Delivered training sessions for over 100 hotel and venue staff.
- Arranged pre congress briefings for Glasgow Taxis, hospitality partners and other transport providers across the city.
- Created an opportunity to improve levels of customer service across the city with staff trained to meet the needs of those living with Parkinson's.

5.4 PR and Media

Our close relationships with local media and the academic, scientific and medical communities ensured we could take WPC to audiences that they would not otherwise have been able to reach.

It was important that we took a strategic and creative approach, harnessing all media channels, and identifying a news hook that would resonate with the audiences we were looking to target.

Activity included case studies featuring individuals living with Parkinson's in Scotland, bringing a human interest angle to the WPC, whilst the business community was reached through our economic value message. To deliver our PR and media strategy, we:



- Worked in partnership with WPC to maximise coverage and target key audiences.
- Distributed iPhone app launch press release to Scottish and MICE media.
- Targeted activity across traditional, digital and social media channels.

5.5 Bursaries

“Attending the WPC 2010 was the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. It gave me the opportunity to meet people who are travelling a similar journey and listen to the most incredible experiences and ideas. When I returned home, I volunteered to help organise Australia's first national conference for people with Young Onset PD and it was a great success. The generous support from the city of Glasgow to fund my stay was the turning point in my ability to confidently move forward with my journey, and I am indebted to you and your team.”
– WPC 2010, international bursary recipient.

Being able to deliver delegate diversity was a key objective for WPC. With WPC able to secure bursaries for a number of UK and other European delegates, GCMB was able to complement this and extend the reach of delegate sponsorship to those travelling from across the globe. GCMB sponsored bursaries achieved the following:

- Enabled 20 people from five countries to attend WPC who would otherwise be excluded by financial constraints.

“The second WPC was a true highlight in my life which I will never forget and I am so thankful to all the organisations that helped me to get there and have that experience. Thank you for helping me fly – literally and spiritually.”

– WPC 2010, international bursary recipient.

5.6 City Wide Delegate Welcome

Glasgow is renowned for its friendly welcome and from the moment the delegates arrived to the moment they left, we wanted them to leave with a positive lasting impression of the city.

6. Key Steps May 2009 to September 2010 Activity

We implemented our creative and innovative campaign ideas ensuring that activity was timely in order to achieve maximum impact and reach.

- Eli Pollard of WPC attended site visit where GCMB presented creative and innovative campaign ideas to reach across all target audiences.
- Assisted Eli in partnering with a Professional Conference Organiser - GCMB managed the tender process that resulted in Congrex being appointed.
- GCMB initiated a meeting between WPC and Greater Glasgow Hoteliers Association to develop front of house staff training to meet the needs of people living with Parkinson's.
- GCMB developed an Inspirational Pre Event Film concept and identified key spokespeople representing each sector of the Parkinson's community to endorse WPC.
- GCMB secured dates for front of house staff training workshops and ensured hotels had the resources needed to deliver for WPC.
- GCMB delivered a strategic launch of the Inspirational Pre Event Film, which reached audiences via You Tube, through media engagement and WPC networks.
- Bursary funding was secured through GCMB, enabling delegates with financial constraints to attend WPC.
- Pioneering training workshops were delivered to over 100 front-of-house hotel and venue staff.
- A series of PR activities were delivered to target key audiences including:
 - ▶ A press release announcing the launch of the innovative iPhone app was distributed to trade, local and Parkinson's media as well as delegates.
 - ▶ A press release was distributed to the academic community in Scotland to drive delegate attendance.
 - ▶ Working with Eli and the UK Parkinson's community, a series of case studies were developed and released to local Scottish media to raise awareness of WPC and drive attendance.
 - ▶ GCMB distributed a press release to stakeholders and the wider business community, announcing the positive economic impact of WPC to Glasgow.

7. Results

- **Objective:** To secure attendance of 2,700 delegates at the WPC 2010.

- **Result:** WPC 2010 attracted 3,025 delegates to the city – exceeding targets by 12%.

- **Objective:** To ensure delegate diversity with delegate representation from over 50 countries.

- **Result:** Delegates represented 70 countries – a 40% increase on WPC 2006.



- **Objective:** To ensure delegate representation from the entire Parkinson's community, including clinicians, researchers, carers and people living with Parkinson's.

- **Result:** Delegates from the entire Parkinson's community were represented and comprised:

- ▶ 1,690 clinicians & researchers;
- ▶ 550 people with Parkinson's & care partners;
- ▶ 626 rehab specialists and advocates;
- ▶ 159 press and accompanying persons.

- **Objective:** To position the city as a trusted destination for conference organisers looking to venture outside the US for the first time.

- **Result:** The success of WPC 2010 proves that US conference organisers looking to venture into Europe can be confident of bringing their meeting to Glasgow.

“The city of Glasgow was welcoming to us from the very beginning and amazingly helpful with the idea of promoting the meeting. Glasgow is a wonderful city for having a meeting. It was the right size for our congress – we didn’t get lost as we would have perhaps in a bigger city.”

– Eli Pollard, congress manager at the World Parkinson Congress.

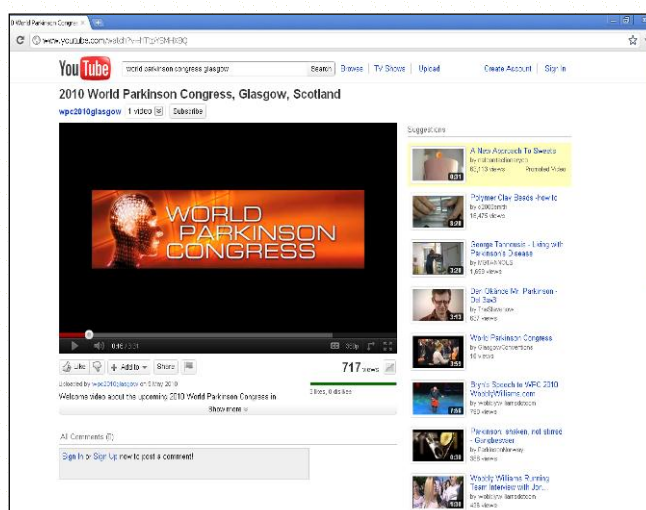
- WPC brought in £4.6 million to the local economy.

7.1 Added Value Results

- The Inspirational Pre Event film received over 700 views on YouTube and created a pre-event buzz.

- 12% of delegates downloaded the app, which featured 700 city businesses.

- WPC was promoted via local university networks with the strategic PR campaign including



placement of case studies and WPC key personnel profiles in regional press.

- Training sessions were delivered to over 100 hotel and venue staff. This was a pioneering initiative which left a lasting legacy on the city, as staff are now trained to meet the needs of those living with Parkinson's.
- GCMB granted bursaries that enabled 20 people from five countries to attend the WPC, providing them with access to life changing knowledge from best treatment options, quality of life and care provision, and the latest scientific research from around the world.

“The taxi driver knew about WPC and when I went through immigration at the airport they knew about WPC too – the word had certainly got around.”
– Dr Stanley Fahn, co-chair of WPC 2010

“GCMB and the SECC – together with the people of Glasgow – really packages that welcome to the delegates, which is fantastic.”
Rob Harrison,
regional managing director, Congrex.

8. Key Learnings for ICCA members

- **Embrace social media** – the power of social media cannot be underestimated and was a great way to reach many of WPC's audience groups. It allowed us to create a pre-event buzz, a sense of community and enhanced the delegate experience whilst benefiting our city partners.



- **Create A Lasting Legacy** – assisting in city-wide training for hospitality staff meant that long after the congress had gone, Glasgow would continue to benefit from staff better trained to meet the needs of those living with Parkinson's.
- **Be Welcoming** – so many people comment that Glasgow is unique in its welcome. As well as it being in our nature, much of this comes from the relationship we have with our city partners and our ability to engage them in conference activity.
- **Build Lasting Partnerships** – we were able to build a strong relationship, allowing us to deliver a successful and memorable conference that was truly tailored to WPC.
- **Learn and Innovate** – the marketing support to drive delegates was expanded to include practical financial support from both venue and city. For the first time client, venue and city now work together as active stakeholders in the success of a conference. The Glasgow Model was born.