



IELA REGIONAL TALK #9 - AFRICA



Winning Confidence Back is a Team effort of the whole value chain and a joint responsibility

Collaboration and a United Voice are key in the Advocacy work that is needed to be done.

Geneva, Switzerland – July 10th 2020

Being among one of the first economies to be shut down and now one of the last to be activated, IELA RELOAD invited with great interest a panel discussion from Africa to give their insight on the situation in their region in the event and exhibition industry.

Moderated by IELA member, **Jacqui Nel**, EF GSM South Africa, together with guest moderator **Gary Corin**, Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery UK Managing Director, the panel consisted of prominent players from the industry:

- **Glenton De Kock**, SA Events Council and co-host of the session
- **Craig Newman**, UFI Outgoing President
- **Justin Hawes**, IFES President and Scan Display Solutions Managing Director
- **Corne Koch**, Cape Town & Western Cape Convention Bureau, Head of Convention Bureau
- **Craig Barrington**, Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) General Manager Facilities & Operations



Jacqui Nel opened the session with **Glenton de Kock** who explained that the effect of COVID-19 primarily raised the need for collaboration. Representing the **South African Events Council** in this discussion, he emphasised that the **advocacy role** of an official body like themselves gave the industry the opportunity to **“speak as one voice”** and respond to the **government’s framework** set up in the four areas of health, safety, economic impact and equity. A success can be marked with the authorisation of gatherings with up to 50 people and **Glenton de Kock** “calls on everybody within the sector to work with us” in order to advance the situation for the exhibition and events industry. **Glenton de Kock** emphasised that the regulation allowing business meetings for 50 people is still too small for real effect and **encourages efforts together to open greater capacity and that the sector demonstrate that they can open safely and responsibly.**

As guest moderator, **Gary Corin** briefly gave an overview of the COVID-19 situation in figures in South Africa: 206.000 positive cases in total (1.7% death rate), 69.000 cases in the Western Cape with an epicentre in Cape Town. He introduced **Corne Koch** based in Cape Town who reiterated the importance of advocacy work to show that events have lasting benefits which extend further than purely during the show dates. Hybrid events are more frequent but her opinion is that **face-to-face must come back** and the challenge of **presenting solutions to the government** is the primary task. She emphasised how there is a **need for statistics** as “more accurate data given to governments, better the case”. The idea of establishing one voice represented by the South Africa Events Council was greatly welcomed.

Craig Newman detailed how the **Johannesburg Expo Centre** was very quickly turned into a rolling **isolation facility** and that the capacity will soon grow to 1.000 beds in total to cater to demand as the Department of Health predicts a pandemic peak in August/September. He expressed his admiration for the work done by the government and spoke of close collaboration being the key to getting action done. This facility runs until December 2020 so it appears that **exhibitions will not open until the beginning of 2021.** **Craig Barrington** from **Cape Town International Convention Centre** explained how the **Department of Health** has set up a **field hospital** in the one building, with 862 beds, where CTICC is providing food, hygiene, cleaning services, etc. This allowed **50% of his staff to return to work.** **Craig Barrington** then outlined that he has the advantage of having two separate buildings so it is possible for him to schedule business events within the prescribed restrictions, in the other building securely. He pointed out that at that very moment the Event Safety Council was hosting its meeting on the premises.

For **Craig Newman** it is clear that the event and exhibition industry has its work cut out to show the business value it brings. **National tourism** is often seen purely from the leisure side and not from a **business perspective.** He pointed out that few people in the public sector really understand the contribution of the event and exhibition industry to the economy. Advocacy efforts and information exchange has been intensified, in particular following the appointment of a new Minister of Tourism to whom this is a new subject.

Gary Corin addressed the subject of **how to build confidence in this crisis** and pointed out that **compliance to regulations** are always at the **forefront of the job in this industry.** He himself contracted COVID-19 in early days and this has given him a “deeper appreciation” on **how to address events in the African environment.** Without the application of precautions, there will be no events. Post-COVID events will be different. He mentioned how shows in Europe and China have taken place with online registration and safe entry to halls which demonstrates that **confidence can be won back.** Expert partners will be valuable in succeeding this and it will require extra effort as **“Good partnerships involve a lot of listening”.** Encouraged by the news of show re-openings being possible, **Jacqui Nel** summed up by saying that **“staying close to our partners is key to going forward”.**

Corne Koch defined **accessibility** as a major factor in opening up shows as **borders have to be opened**. She sees small, regional and domestic shows being made possible and then to develop on that. Saving lives and livelihood remain the perspective on which to concentrate. **Craig Barrington** mentioned that it does seem that organisers are struggling to make delegate numbers, and that maybe this could be due to delegates fearing being exposed to the virus. He went on to say, that with social distancing, the occupancy capabilities for venues can reduce as much as 60% which will result in clients requiring larger venues in the future.

Justin Hawes outlined in his view the key aspects in business to be addressed to confront the shock of COVID-19 and its consequences. The top priority was to **look after staff and deliver at all times transparency on the future and how it looks**. It was of equal importance to **maintain an office for client enquiries** in order to keep a presence on the market. His personal experience was that he learned a lot from **intensifying his contact with all his suppliers** who became important partners. These factors made it then possible to keep the **business alive, bring in new ideas and engage with clients**. His golden rule is to avoid becoming “overwhelmed in difficult times” and “be as positive as possible... block out the negative as much as possible”.

To conclude the discussion, **Gary Corin** asked for thoughts on 2021 and the speakers were unanimous in supporting the statement of Craig Newman “**COVID-19 will not beat us...there’s a light at the end of the tunnel**”. **Corne Koch** advised us not to lose hope and **promote the need for and value of meetings**, **Justin Hawes** prioritised **actions to build confidence**, **Craig Barrington** reassured us that **the industry will bounce back** and **Glenton de Kock** confirmed that “**a highly regulated industry can lead the way to recovery**”.

- Full Replay available: <https://youtu.be/Qy5eOyBirpM>

Early May, we began **IELA RELOAD**, the association’s **recovery programme** based on 2 main pillars: **weekly regional talks (IELA TALKS)** and ten **RECOVERY TALKS** as empowering resources for navigating through the crisis:

At our **REGIONAL TALKS** we invite worldwide leading exhibition organisers, venues and associations to discuss **How to Win Confidence Back in our industry**.





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About IELA:

The **International Exhibition Logistics Association** is the global industry network enhancing the professionalism of the transportation logistics and freight handling segments of the exhibition & event industry. IELA works with venue owners, organisers and national associations educating, training and sharing expertise for safe and secure operations around the world. The quality brand IELA is currently represented by 172 members and 31 affiliates in 56 countries.

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