



Executive Assistant Network
2009 ANNUAL CONGRESS

SYDNEY

19 & 20 March 2009

The Renaissance EA - EMPOWERED MASTER OF YOUR OWN DESTINY

Executive Assistant Network's

Sydney 2009 Congress Report

Our thanks to our gracious conference sponsors and supporters



2009 Congress & Exhibition

Background

The 2009 Sydney Annual Congress was held on 19 & 20 March 2009 within the Crystal Palace venues at Luna Park.

The decision was made to utilise these venues for the third year running for a number of reasons, namely the suitability of the meeting spaces, the unique nature of the meeting spaces and the effect this has on learning, the adequacy of catering facilities, the availability of suitable space for the exhibition, proximity to the city and, of course, the support received from Luna Park.

The theme for the Congress this year was 'The Renaissance EA – Empowered Master of Your Own Destiny'. This was the follow up to the 2008 event, essentially stage two, with the 2008 event being named 'The Renaissance EA – Manager Without Portfolio'.

Whilst the 2008 event focussed on the technical knowledge, management theory and business acumen EAs need to acquire if they are to fully understand the ins and outs of their businesses, and therefore be able to better support their bosses by understanding the challenges they face on a daily basis, the 2009 conference took a much more personal look at what it takes to be a successful manager within modern business. Self awareness and critical self, an understanding of how one's role fits within the broader picture, a vision for the future both professionally and personally and a true sense of one's worth – essentially the event was designed to help senior EAs enhance their own personal strengths and provide them with the vision and empowerment to achieve the success they are looking for.

Learning is obviously a major reason for attending a conference. But it is never the only reason, which is why we always ensure we get the correct balance to include networking within a fun environment. From the Gala Dinner to the Exhibition, we want to ensure that outside of the formal 'training and development' sessions, attendees are stimulated and entertained in a host of different ways.

What follows is the feedback and summary of the 2009 event and our evaluation on the outcomes of our various objectives.

Thank you to all of those who took part in the event over the two days. The feedback we received was by most event standards pretty incredible so we hoped you enjoyed being a part of the event and look forward to working with you again in the future.

2009 Congress Feedback Summary

Based on the feedback we received from attendees, the EAN Annual Congress in Sydney in March this year was an enormous success.

Whilst we will never rest on our laurels and will endeavour to ensure our next events here and interstate are even better, we are delighted that so many attendees benefitted from attending the congress. Never before have received so many collective hugs from people exiting a conference – although we suspect that had a lot to do with the closing speech from Catherine DeVrye which was exceptionally moving and motivating.

We've included some quotes from delegates around this article so you can see what some of the 2009 attendees thought of their experience!

On the most important question we posed to attendees in our post event survey, 'The Degree to Which You Believe The Congress Program Met or Exceeded Your Expectations' we received an overall score of 4.24 out of a possible maximum of 5 – essentially an 85% approval rating.

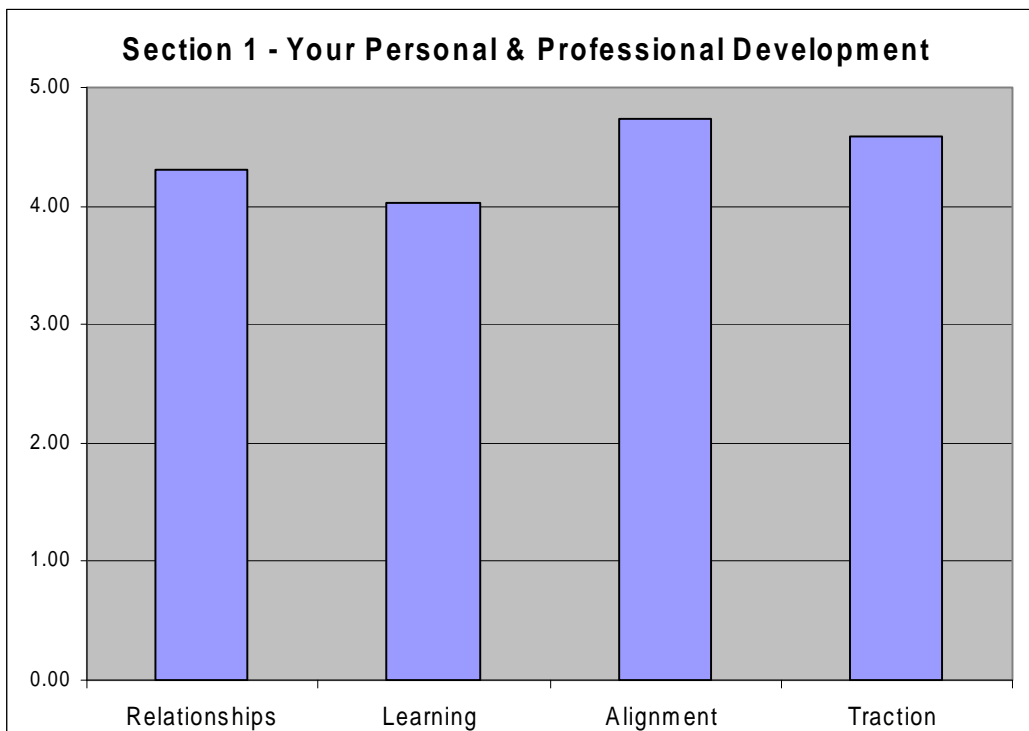
On the next most important question which related to how people rated the level of debate and discussion relative to their own level of experience, again the average rating was excellent, sitting at 4.12 out of a possible maximum of 5 – an 82% approval rating.

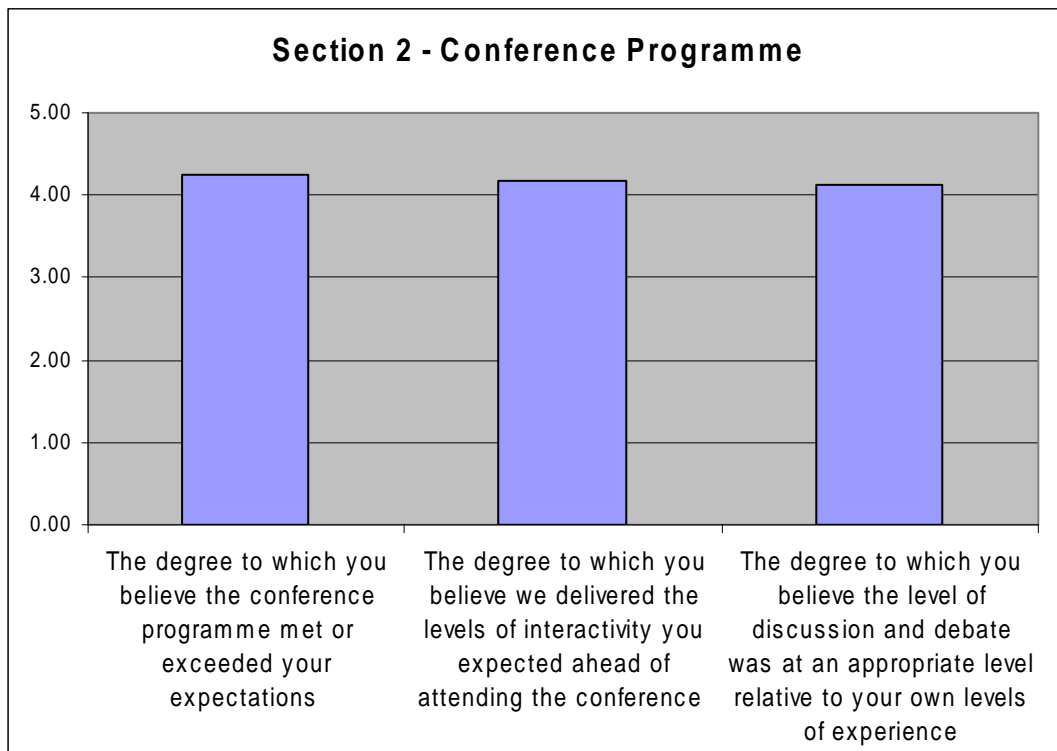


The best yet! Looking forward to next year!
Rachel Stafford-Gaffney



I have brought back to my Managers a step by step guide to the conference and the impact it has had on me, and therefore will have on our working relationships. I will now ask the big questions, and not take personally reactions and or direction. Katrena and the Team are truly fantastic and I believe their passion for what they do. It transcends other EA events.
Vive Black





We had a number of session highlights including the professional keynote speakers kindly provided by Global Speakers. The conference opening Keynote was by world-famous presenter Amanda Gore. Amanda received a 96% rating based on an average of her scores for Content and Presentation. Our final afternoon sessions included two Keynotes, Anders Sorman Nilsson and Catherine DeVrye, again both internationally acclaimed speakers. Both of these rated exceptionally well getting average scores of 90% and 94% respectively.

Following on from her sensational presentation last year, one of our members, Narrelle Matthey, at the time EA to the President & CEO of GE Money, scored the highest of our EAs. She received an 86% rating as average for her scores for Content and Presentation for her session entitled 'Bridging the gap between technical business knowledge and soft skills – developing your corporate intuition or sixth sense'.

Following closely on Narrelle's heels was Jodie Palmer, EA to the CEO at ING Australia. Jodie managed to persuade her senior executives to give her a budget to make a professionally shot video featuring interviews with many of the most senior Executives at ING. There's nothing like hearing it from the horse's mouth(s) and it is clear attendees loved being the first to view the finished video as they gave Jodie (and her video) an 84% rating.

Conferences can either be made or destroyed dependent on the skills of the moderators. This year we stepped outside our usual approach and sought

Quite simply: I got my EA Mojo back.
Felicity BruceSmith



Excellent, it is the best EA conference around, the one and only to attend. I have attended most other EA conferences and seminars only to be disappointed. EAN have created the most professional and informative presentations that are a must for every EA. Thank you.
Trish Coltan

two highly acclaimed business consultants as chairpersons and moderators. Colin James from Altmore International was chair for the plenary session on day one and he was simply sensational. He framed the topics perfectly, guided and directed the panels with aplomb and had researched extensively the changing role of the EA with several organisations so was full of great anecdotes and stories he used to help illustrate key points of discussion. Colin received an 87% rating from attendees.



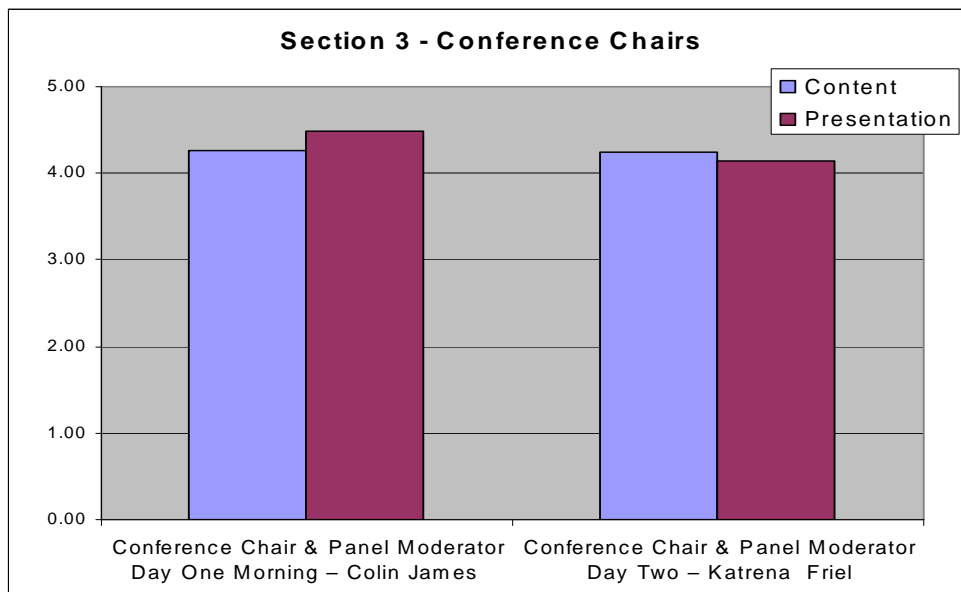
Thank you so much, loved the whole conference and will definitely be recommending it to my work colleagues for next year!
Hailey Napper

Katrena Friel not only presented at the conference but also chaired all of day two and moderated all the panels on day two – quite some feat. We chose Katrena from BSi Learning after meeting with her to discuss options for the congress and our soon to be formed EAN Training Academy. As a result of that meeting we elected to partner with BSI in the delivery of our half day training courses and Katrena is now Principal Consultant for EAN Training Academy.



This was my first EAN Congress and I returned to the office on the Monday feeling empowered and enthusiastic! I need to get this 'fix' a lot more often!
Valerie Pontikakos

At the congress she was witty, sharp and always on track – and only a couple of times irreverent. But, most importantly, she validated our decision to use her as the principal consultant for the Academy due to her very clear understanding of the role of the EA and the challenges you all face on a daily basis. She pushed, she cajoled and at times even badgered, but she did so with a clear understanding of what she was trying to achieve. We are really looking forward to developing a number of new initiatives with her that will help all of you in your roles. She received a rating of 82% for her two presentations and 84% as chair of day two.



As always, our Panel sessions were highlights for a number of people because they enable delegates to share from the experiences of so many other EAs and executives. This year we had 6 panels featuring a total of 8 executives and 14 EAs. From the comments we received it is clear that these were yet again highlights for most, especially those featuring the executives.

I highly recommend that you attend the next conference, you and your organisation will benefit and you will enjoy the privilege of sharing the room with equally highly professional peers, whom you can bounce ideas with and build your network of support. Make sure you don't miss out on an exceptional opportunity.

Suzette Viljoen

No event of this scale would be without its low points or without differences of opinions among attendees. We didn't score a perfect 5 on everything and we certainly received some comments on improvements we can make.

One speaker unfortunately received a much lower rating than all others, something we are looking into to try and understand exactly why the session didn't work – perhaps being pitched at the wrong level or assuming too much or too little prior knowledge of the area. We shall see.

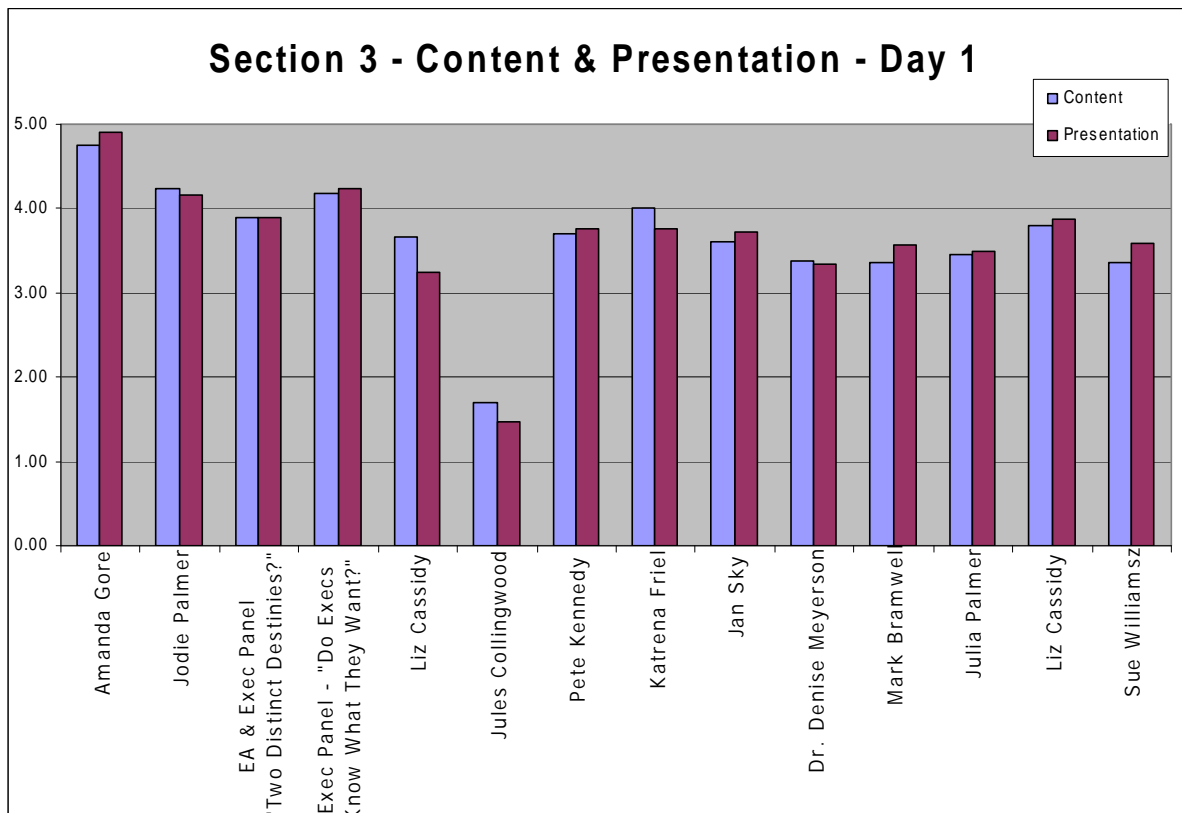


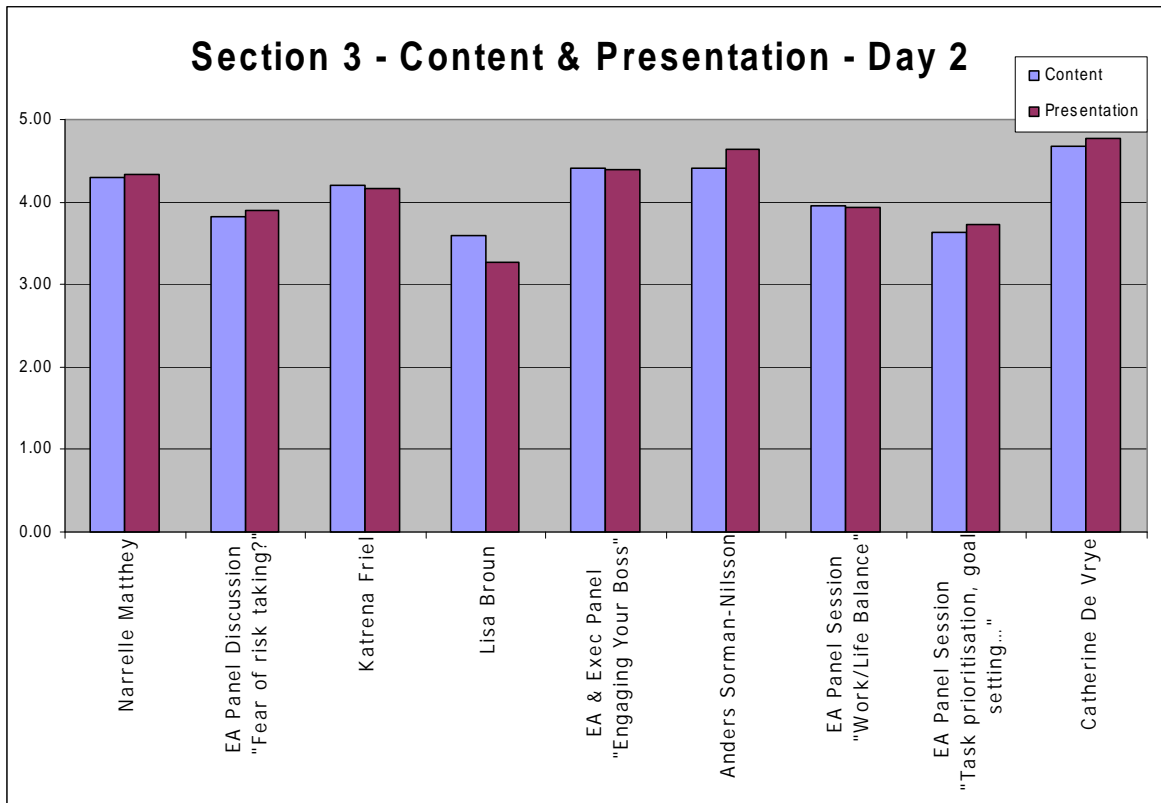
Most of the other speakers, however, performed above average to well, the lowest, apart from the presenter mentioned above, receiving an average rating for Content and Presentation of 67%.

I absolutely loved the keynote speakers, Amanda Gore, Anders Sorman-Nilsson, and Catherine DeVrye. Very entertaining, motivating and inspiring!

Meg Johnson

As with last year, not all attendees loved the panels as much as others. We received suggestions to remove these completely from a couple of people whilst another person suggested we just have less of them and make them more in-depth.

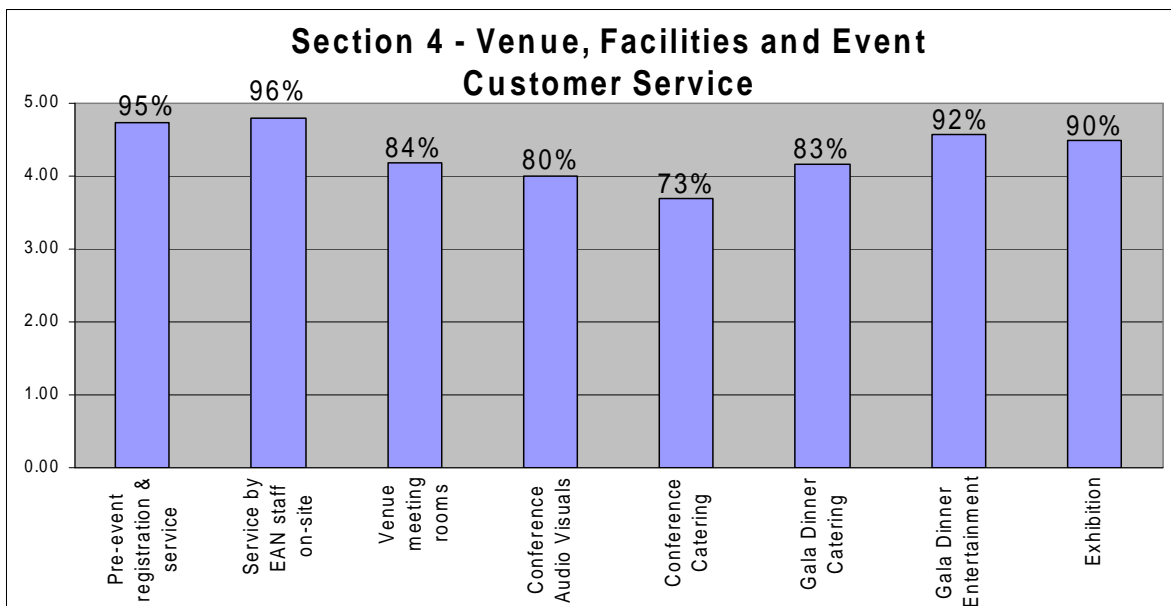




We also received some constructive criticism about other aspects of the event ranging from the AV to the food and whilst many times these were in stark contrast to the comments made by other attendees, we do not have a policy of ignoring negative comments if they are in contrast to the views of the majority. So, we will be looking at every aspect of the congress and will be trying to ensure we can improve on every aspect for every attendee.

In terms of the technical components of the event, overall, almost all of these elements were rated well by attendees, but again we do see areas for improvement and have some great ideas from attendees to ensure this occurs.

The networking opportunities are a great chance to interact with EAs at a senior level who bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise to the table. Come to the congress with an open mind and thirst for wanting to enhance your skills, develop new contacts and you will be surprised at what you take back to your workplace and start implementing without realising.
Rebecca Gitsham



The Gala Dinner was, for us, a great highlight of the event as this is our one chance to actually relax and enjoy time conversing with attendees, speakers and guests. This year's gala dinner was a laugh-a-minute thrill ride featuring a Dame Edna impersonator as MC, Vince Sorrenti as our (official other) comic entertainment, the EAN Gospel Choir as arranged by Almost Famous for vocal entertainment (also an official comic entertainment slot – take a look at some of the photos) with world class music sets in between and after the formalities by Almost Famous featuring Bernie Segedin.

There is so much more to an EA than people can see or know, Executive Assistant Network is pure genius and I will be sharing my knowledge gained from them.

Megan Mulcahy

As you can see, not a night lacking in 'stuff', so we are pleased attendees appreciated and enjoyed the full program – it was quite a task pulling it all together.



The dinner was also a bit of a hit because of the room design and theming. Being located right on the edge of Sydney Harbour we wanted to maintain a connection with the ocean and achieved this with sensational water features including live fish as the centrepieces for each table plus a fantastic underwater ocean scene backdrop for the stage.

On a final note, we would again like to thank all the incredible speakers who gave their time to help make this event such a success, especially all those busy executives and consultants who obviously believe our EAs are worth it – which in itself must be re-affirming for them. We would also once again like to take time to list out and thank all the sponsors who helped make the Annual Congress in Sydney possible – we truly would not be able to do what we do without the support of our sponsors so we are very thankful for their support:



Luna Park
Our wonderful hosts and venue sponsors



Scene Change
For providing flawless AV



FCm Travel Solutions
Our National Platinum Education Sponsors and National Platinum Network Sponsors



Backdrops Fantastic
For providing the sensational stage backdrop for the gala dinner



Trapdoor Productions
For videoing key elements of the congress, dinner and exhibition



Angelfish Aquarium Design
For providing the totally stunning table centre-pieces



Global Speakers
For working with us to find such sensational and totally appropriate speakers in Amanda Gore, Anders Sorman-Nilsson and Catherine DeVrye



Oneill Photographics
For the third year running taking so many awesome pictures of the congress, dinner and exhibition

2009 EAN Expo Feedback Summary

This year the exhibition included 43 exhibitors, which was quite a feat given the current economic climate. Again we were in the Crystal Palace Ballroom at Luna Park but with more stands than last year we also had a middle aisle. This helped to ensure a much busier and more intimate environment.

As always, the feedback from congress delegates and expo visitors was exceptionally positive in respect of the variety of stands, the relevance of exhibitors and the benefit to attendees in being at the event to meet such companies.

We are always amazed at how many EAs just happen to need something right at the time of visiting the exhibition and that they find a solution to their need at one of the exhibition stands. We know a number of exhibitors were asked to quote or tender on certain projects or were simply given work by EAs in attendance at the expo which is exceptionally gratifying.

We have yet to conduct a formal review with exhibitors, as often gauging the results from exhibiting at such an event can take several months, if not longer. But the anecdotal feedback has been positive so hopefully, even in this time of global financial crisis and an official recession, expo attendees are still transacting with the exhibitors.

In addition to the 120 or so EA delegates, guests and speakers at the congress, plus all the other consultants and executive speakers and guests, we also attracted a substantial number of visitors to the event. But numbers were down on expectations, a factor of the market which definitely hit congress delegate numbers and, we suspect, visitor numbers. Overall, however, we are still happy with the total number of quality senior decision makers or decision influencers each exhibitor was able to meet.

The choice of venue in being at Luna Park remains a matter of conjecture for a few people but to date we have resisted moving the event from Luna Park for a number of reasons – other than it's suitability as listed above.

We are sometimes asked whether we believe Luna Park is an inappropriate venue given it's locale being so far from the centre of the city CBD. The argument goes that if it was easier for people to drop by to see the Expo they would.

Whilst we have made no firm decisions as yet regarding a future venue, our thinking on these points is as follows:

1. Quite often locale is used by people as nothing more than an excuse for not attending an event. After all, if you really want to attend something and see value in attending, surely you would find time irrespective of the locale – unless it is incredibly inaccessible

This experience has made me even more determined to be the best professional I can be.

Stephanie Lorens



It was so great to be understood and to understand others. Thank you very much.

Violetta Kostovski

I've added to my network some very pleasant, switched on EAs/Masters of the Universe/Executive General Managers. Fantastic event! Well done!

Suzanne Palmer

This was the first external EA Networking event that I've attended and I was very impressed by the calibre of presentations and the content of the programme. Thank you all for your hard work to bring about such a positive, reaffirming experience for the EA community.

Lynne Scanlan-Lamb

2. There really are no suitable cost effective venues within the Sydney CBD meaning any venue chosen would be equally as far away from the CBD centre
3. We have strived to ensure the exhibition attracts quality visitors as opposed to those with nothing more than idle or industry curiosity. We believe our real objective should be to find the means to increase the number of quality attendees year on year as opposed to making it easier for those with no real propensity to buy to attend
4. History – the combined event incorporating the conference and exhibition is well known within the EA circles as the one that is on at Luna Park
5. It has always been our intention to keep the expo unique and boutique – we believe this benefits everyone, from delegate to exhibitor to exhibition visitor. Our target this year was for a maximum of 50 exhibitors and we ended up with 43. Some of these took larger than anticipated stands so we really would only have had space for a couple more stands. If we maintain our numbers at this level we will be able to ensure greater exclusivity for each of the exhibitors with less of their competitors in attendance. Luna Park is an ideal venue if we intend to do this.

Whilst these are our thoughts at present, we will obviously be guided by industry feedback and the size and scope of the event will form a part of our survey plans.

Thank you to all those exhibitors who took part in the event. We hope you found it beneficial and we will be in touch again soon to get your formal feedback.

