



MICE planning MEANS PRECISION



Sunaina Chatterjee

Sunaina Chatterjee, Chief Executive Officer, iCON Planners, and winner of best MICE operator at the India Travel Awards East 2014, talks about organisational goals

What is the USP of the company?

iCON Planners is a full-fledged incentive and conference planning company. We have all the essential tools of the trade with competent staff. With multi location offices in India and two representative offices in USA and Dubai and requisite means of communication we have bridged the location specific requirement of national and international conferences.

We have preferred destination channel partners outside India to take care of our logistics outside India. With a total of 40 paid staff to take care of essentials in conferences, trade and field staff of around 50 people on project basis, we are a serious contender to match with. We also have an in-house web and design team to furnish real time designs to our conference clients for their conference collateral design.

What are the demands of large and small corporate groups?

Demands vary from client to client, however value of money spent and experience matters to all. Corporate groups or MICE groups for internal teams look for challenging itineraries

and programmes. They are open to customisation and flexible as compared to clients of bigger corporates who demand traditional programmes but with something to add on as an experience or a WOW factor.

All are open to newer destinations, newer brands of hotels, a power packed programme and itinerary to remember. Large corporate groups have more challenges with regards to the services as with an increased group size it becomes difficult to provide seamless services. For example, we finished doing an incentive programme of awards night in Singapore of approximately 800 pax in November 2015. We had to be on our toes 24 x 7 to deliver a flawless programme and thankfully the team did manage very well. Small corporate on the other hand demands more personalised attention.

Is there frequent use of technology?

Cutting response time and efficiency in work makes us inclined towards our goal of technological driven services. We have an online payment option as well as mobile app. We have conference registration and Hotel RFP platforms



as well. Google for business environment connects all our offices 24 X 7 from anywhere any location.

Anything special you offer to MICE groups?

We offer site inspection depending upon the group size, as well as freebies from respective tourism boards. Creativity and ideas in events for bigger groups, from set up to itinerary and programme flows, we offer seamless services from inception to conclusion of the programme as well dedicated OPC for that particular project. We also have a team which we call as NPD (New Product Development), which researches and gets newer destinations and offers for the corporate. We also create conferences for the corporate which is a niche business as far as our current MICE industry. We give them support with regards to both as a knowledge partner as well as logistic partner.

What special deals you offer to MICE agents?

Our channel partners get PLB (Profit Linked Bonus) and share all the consequent deals we get from airlines and hotels as promotional fares and prices. This includes upgrades, seats,

hotel room upgrades to important clients, night extensions, value-add like special meals on sight as per occasion or even on board celebration. For bigger groups we can offer branding at all major areas of visibility. For our channel partners we often work as an extended office for them. We do not overshadow their importance or promote our own brand to their client. We respect their privacy vis a vis their clients. We also organise training programmes for them for their staff for better understanding of the products.

What are your plans for 2016?

The financial year 2016 looks very promising with a lot of European conferences coming in our kitty along with a great demand of American congresses. We would be partnering with some educational institutions as well for the commencement of our own medical conferences. From April 2016, we opened our new vertical "Wedding Planners". Looking into the huge untapped market of weddings and judging our reach in outbound destination, we are entering into wedding planning. We have collaborated with a couple of destination management companies to conduct weddings in exotic locales.

Anything else you would like to share?

The service industry is going into flux as of today. Traditional travel agents are now coming into MICE fold as ticketing and hotel booking are going commission less and online portals are eating into their traditional bread and butter earnings. There is no set service charge formula among the fraternity for their services. The MICE segment has grown in exponential rate whereas the know-how of the MICE still remains rudiment. We need more knowledge partners and association to educate upcoming travel agents into the MICE domain.



Traditional travel agents are now coming into the MICE fold as ticketing and hotel booking are going commission less and online portals are eating into their traditional bread and butter earnings

