



PREPARING MEETING PROFESSIONALS FOR THE FUTURE

Building Influence, One NMID at a Time

For the second year in a row, MPI Foundation Canada (MPIFC) is providing major funding for National Meetings Industry Day (NMID), to further its development as an “influence summit” for meeting professionals across Canada.

While MPI chapters and clubs around the world host education and networking events for their members, NMID gives the eight Canadian chapters a united voice to audiences outside the meetings industry. The purpose is to influence business and professional communities across the country and build broader recognition of the value of meetings and events.

An important aspect of NMID is the annual Influence Award, now in its second year. “The idea is to recognize and thank organizations and individuals—not necessarily MPI members—who have made a significant contribution to the meetings industry in the past year,” says Claire Smith, CMP, NMID 2007 project manager.

“Last year, for example, the BC Chapter recognized Canada Customs for its role in helping people with cross-border travel,” says Smith. “This year, the Ottawa Chapter is recognizing the local entrepreneur who helped refinance and refocus the Canadian Tulip Festival.”

Another way that NMID builds influence is through a series of local panel discussions and keynote presentations. Content is brought together in a single white paper that captures emerging industry issues, how they’re affecting the industry in different communities and regions, and what steps might be taken to address them.

While the basic format for NMID is relatively cohesive across the country, says Smith, “the power of the event is in its local relevance.” The panels in each chapter focus on issues of immediate importance discussed by respected local experts.

In 2007, the looming labour shortage became a favourite topic for local panels. “Broad concern for this issue increases the possibility that MPI will be able to use it as a way to build bridges with other organizations and other fields,” says Smith.

The bridge-building goes two ways: While NMID discussions might provide meeting professionals with ideas about new labour pools, invited guests might begin to see meetings as vehicles for recruiting and retaining staff.

A key message, says Smith, is that “we can be part of the solution.”

The focus on solutions extends beyond the actual NMID meetings. The annual white paper carries the local discussions forward and serves as a stepping stone for further action. Last year’s white paper focused on the economic impact of meetings and events, helping to prepare the ground for the Canadian industry’s first-ever economic impact study, which is now under way.