



The common camel, synonymous with the desert, could be banished under new legislation

The health and safety of convention delegates is as critical today as the choice of venue. Risk expert John Hooker argues you need an event professional to guide you through an increasingly regulated and legislated minefield

and try to raise their game.

"In this new legislated and regulated landscape, if they have not already done so, associations should prepare a set of guidelines under the heading: Managing Risk."

As an international association, what are the questions you need to ask of a location or venue, your transport providers, your supply chain?

International associations can no longer rely on traditional methods for choosing convention venues. Unless they have a procurement strategy in place that evaluates suppliers against pre-agreed criteria they could find themselves wearing a multi-million euro law suit.

Local operators fear their livelihood could be under threat from this outside legislation which might also contradict the ethos of fair trade and sustainability in the destination.

To reduce the risk of litigation, associations should immediately institute a three point examination of their potential suppliers.

Tests should cover:

- Financial stability

will just pass on that responsibility to them and they are left holding the baby."

Diogo Assis, managing director of TLC – Events in Portugal agrees there is now a greater need than ever to look at risks and put plans in place. Last summer his company organised a barbecue in a public garden in downtown Lisbon for a major conference of global attendees.

"We had to spend more time with the city authorities, emergency services and suppliers to ensure that each knew who was responsible for each element, than we did in planning the party," he recalls. "We had to ensure that each supplier had the competencies, licences, insurance and skill sets to perform their allocated tasks."

Even more ludicrous is the banishment of the camel in Morocco. "The market in Morocco has traditional levels of cover, which the Moroccan government and law have considered suitable for the international market," explains Essaid Faiq, Managing Director of Exclusively Morocco.

"Certain typical activities, such as camel

New legislation means you can no longer afford blissful ignorance when it comes to risk assessment matters



Dare you risk it?

For in-house association organisers, life has just got a whole lot tougher. New legislation on corporate manslaughter could apply as much to associations as to corporations. It means that the convention organiser could be sued for the death of a delegate if due diligence has not been taken.

The problem is that there is no single piece of international law which covers all possible incidents.

Legislation that came into being in April 2008 in the United Kingdom, has caused the meetings industry there to take it seriously. The rest of the world regards it as simply being a U.K. 'export'.

That could be a terrible mistake.

The act says:

An organisation is guilty of an offence, if the way in which its activities are managed or organised

- (a) causes a person's death and
- (b) amounts to a **gross breach** of a **relevant duty of care** owed by the organisation to the deceased but only if the way in which its activities



John Hooker
AddingValue Consulting

"Suppliers have a concern that clients will just pass on the responsibility to them and they are left holding the baby"

are managed or organised by its **senior management** is a substantial element in the breach.

By senior management it is meant:

'Persons who play a significant role in making decisions about how the whole or a substantial part of the organisation's activities are managed or organised.'

According to John Hooker's risk management agency, AddingValue Consulting, "associations, their PCO departments, AMCs and even DMCs need to seriously look at the way they do things

- Skill sets of the suppliers' personnel
- Suppliers' policies on risk assessment, crisis management and their own procurement strategies.

Equally, freelance and part-time staff must be appropriately positioned for testing. You need the chef in the kitchen and the mechanic in the garage.

All this is going to mean more work for in-house PCOs. If the legislation spreads, the association event team will need to focus on evaluating the risk on every element of the event and ensuring it is minimised (as it probably can never be eradicated).

An association may not have the brand values of a corporation but its members are being perceived and considered more and more as stakeholders and shareholders, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry.

For too long it has been assumed that responsibility for attendees' welfare rests elsewhere than with the person putting the event together. "That can no longer be the case," asserts John Hooker, "as the industry has to take a responsible and professional approach.

"Suppliers have a concern that clients

"We had to ensure that each supplier had the competencies, licences, insurance and skill sets to perform their allocated tasks" — Diogo Assis

riding, do not need licences to operate or possess insurance cover. The camel is synonymous with the desert but is in danger of being omitted from programmes, which will be a shame."

How is the rest of the world taking to the trend?

"European clients do not have this on their radar," reports Hooker, "but it will come.

"Talk to New York and they are hyper about it but very U.S.-centric with little global understanding, I would suggest. Talk to the Far East and they grapple with the fact that some things are not licensed, so how can you prove liability when someone is crushed by an elephant or drowns in an outrigger on the Andaman Sea?" **ami**

(This article does not purport to offer legal advice. Readers should always consult a professional.)