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Published: 29/01/2010

TLC presents DMC business model of the future

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Portuguese destination management company TLC has been given an operational overhaul

Portuguese destination management company TLC has been given an operational overhaul by its MD, Diogo Assis, who believes competitors will be quick to follow suit.

Assis said: "At the end of 2009 we invested in a lot of areas that DMCs wouldn't normally. We invested in good procurement policies, risk management, technology and corporate social responsibility. These are things which should have been done years ago."

Assis says the developments come in reaction to the changing commercial landscape and the move towards transparency. "This all started with service level agreements," he said. "We've been asked to sign them by our clients but how can we without being confident? We are now making sure suppliers are financially sound, that they have insurance in place. We evaluate suppliers from a risk management point of view as well – how would they respond if there was a possible fire or a crisis?"

Risk assessment is also extended to freelance staff who must participate in a training programme in order to be added to a preferred supplier list. "We've also had to invest in budget management," says Assis. "In one year 25 per cent of our clients have changed from a price per person model to a management fee. It's really good as it shows they trust us."

One of the biggest areas of investment made by TLC has been €250k in technology, he adds. "We've designed software which means we no longer have to send big proposals by email. Clients have an access area on the website where they can view the proposal and make a virtual site inspection of each venue. We sent film crews in to all the venues, hotels and restaurants to create 30-second videos so you get a great feeling for what's on offer. I don't know any other DMC doing that and we've already had two clients say 'we don't need to go on site; we can make a decision based on this without spending money and time'."

In addition, TLC has achieved carbon zero status for its own business activities, neutralising by planting trees in Lisbon and clients are given the opportunity of doing the same for their events.

Assis said: "I think the investment has already paid off; we've increased the ratio of confirmation. 2010 looks set to be a much better year than 2009. This first quarter we've contracted more than 6,000 people from the UK with a 1,500 person medical congress and couple of other big events. We're already working with 80 per cent of big event management agencies in the UK and have just won another this month, so it looks very promising."

