

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE

Many issues must be taken into account when bidding for an association conference: the rotation schedule, the guidelines, the local network, and, of course, the unique opportunities to achieve the goals of the association.

Furthermore, there are logistics such as the venue, its hotels, and the overall accessibility. These can be thought of as dis-satisfiers: if they are not up to standard, you will lose the bid.

Moreover, there is one additional and important aspect - one that is often ignored, yet can mean the difference between losing and winning - CULTURE. I would like to share a little of my knowledge with you .

Collective Programming of the Mind

Culture is an interesting phenomenon. It can be described as a collective mindset that distinguishes different groups of people. Culture is the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular group. It can be specific to countries, organisations or a profession.

Context

Culture is everything you have learned without realising it, because this is “the standard”. The way you were raised, the neighbourhood in which you were brought up, the education you were given, the company you work for, and the friends you have met. They all made who you are now without you realising it. All of these “customs” define the way you think, feel and act. They make you interested in one subject and bored by another. These customs inform your decisions and reactions. They differentiate you and your family, you and your fellow countrymen, and you and your colleagues. How incredibly interesting!

Sampling another culture can be enriching, if you are open to it. It is the reason why I love to travel the world. And ... it can be a pitfall!

Culture in Events

Discussions about “culture” in the context of conferences and events are apt to focus on the days of the week to start the conference, what types and amounts of food to serve, with or without alcohol, etc.

For example, Dutch luncheons with sandwiches, “kroketten” and buttermilk tend not to be popular with non-Dutch attendees.....

Obviously culture is so much more than food! It is the way we agree on goals and how to achieve them, how we organise our meetings, and who to involve in our activities. It is the way we interact with our peers and management, the way we engage with our participants and they with each other. Our culture also defines how we communicate in general.

Being Dutch, I know people can find us blunt, bold and direct. Yet for us, it is merely a way of making sure we are all clearly aiming for the same targets. We do not want to be rude (well okay, most of us don’t want to be)!

Start well prepared!

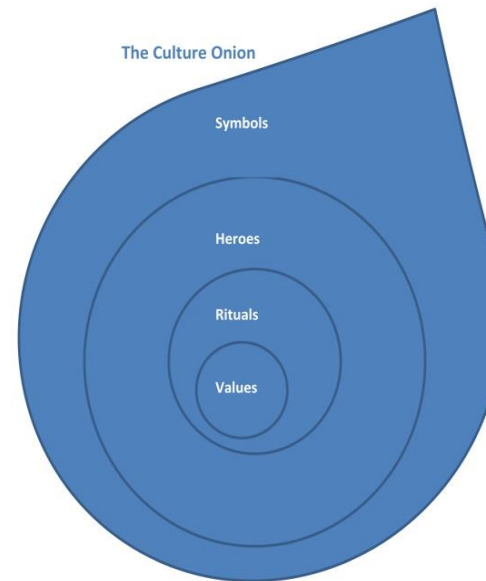
Before you start preparing your bid, you need to be well aware of the international organisation's culture. Questions like "What is the organisation's function?", "What is really important to the board?" are extremely important and might not feature in the organisation's guidelines. Its own culture influences its decision making in more ways than you might think.

Many people in our industry do not consider this aspect. Ignore at your peril, because how do you know what is going to influence the decision making process when it is not (only) the guidelines?

Cultural Onions

The "culture" of an organisation can be thought of like an onion. There are layers of symbols, role models, and rituals around values. Needless to say, the values in the centre are the least visible - they are well protected by the outer layers.

Symbols and the role models (or heroes) can be easily identified, you can see them, hear them, and sometimes feel them. The difficulty starts with the central area where the unwritten "rules" are situated. If you are an



outsider they are difficult – if not impossible – to recognize and it will take time and effort to an outsider to find out.

Wish to learn more?

Would you like to know more about the influence of culture and how to work with it? Come to Delft on 7 June 2018, to hear about this important subject in my newest training session: [Successful bidding for international conferences!](#) (Dutch only). If you would like a session to be presented in English, please contact me via my website (address beneath).

June 7th, 2018
Delft Art Centre, Rotterdamseweg 205, Delft
The Netherlands

Good luck and enjoy our cultural differences that enhance life!

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Ingrid Rip
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