

Case study

World Seed Congress



NAME: World Seed Congress 2007

TYPE: Trading Congress

NO. ON ORGANISING TEAM: 1

FAX: 800 delegates and partners

BUDGET: Realistic

WHAT YOU DID: Conference Innovators, one of New Zealand's leading conference-organising companies, had a unique challenge on their hands when they took on the World Seed Congress held in Christchurch in May 2007. After four years in the planning, the organising team excelled in delivering an incredibly successful event. The 700 plus representatives of the International Seed Federation (ISF) required a platform for successful trading over a three day period. The congress involved a continuous series of trading meetings where seed industry representatives from all over the world could do business in a setting conducive to face-to-face negotiations. The organisers also set out to showcase the best of the New Zealand seed and grain industry. This took place in a variety of ways throughout, with the inimitable stamp of New Zealand on every aspect of the congress. From the visual extravaganzas of the opening ceremony to the Taste of New Zealand welcome party, the gala dinner finale and the exquisite native floral arrangements, the international delegates delighted in New Zealand flavours, fashions, culture and rich agricultural heritage.

SPECIAL TOUCHES: To aid the flow of trading, congress participants were fully catered for over the three days. Two coffee machines were operating on the trading floor ensuring espresso-coffee was on offer throughout the day, as well as a selection of cakes, pastries and biscuits. Lunch stations with an easy to eat menu of finger foods and sandwiches were stationed in the foyer over a three hour period to cater for different trading schedules.

Noting the feedback received from previous congresses, organisers arranged for the congress programmes to include appointment slots, giving participants a convenient way to schedule their own trading activities alongside the general programme of events.

To further showcase New Zealand's rich grain and seed heritage and wow congress participants Patricia Proctor's beautiful native floral carpets were on show throughout the convention centre using native seeds and seed pods to brilliantly reflect the unique New Zealand bush and again draw attention to New Zealand's rich grain and seed heritage.

CHALLENGES: Facilitating a trading congress of this type and size presented a brand new challenge for Conference Innovators. They soon realised the requirement for 200 specially-designed trading tables for the convention centre would be a priority to organise. Creating a memorable opening ceremony and making an impression on such a well-travelled international group was always going to be a major accomplishment. Each year the hosting country puts on an impressive display reflecting their cultural heritage in grand and exotic locations. Expectations were high to say the least.

TOP: Creative Plaza Taste of New Zealand also around.
MIDDLE: Dinner at the Christchurch Convention Centre.
ABOVE: Christchurch Convention Centre trading.

On the final day of trading another major challenge lay ahead for the organising team: transforming the convention centre from trading floor to glitzy gala dinner venue in three hours. This was an amazing organisational feat - and not one for the faint hearted!

Not to mention the welcome party. Accompanied by 150 partners, the congress traders were looking forward to having 'un Kiwi' style, as well as doing business. The welcome party on the first evening needed to keep the congress buzz alive and continue to show the best of New Zealand.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES: Conference Innovators met the requirement for 200 specially designed trading tables by having them all designed and made locally. After an involved tendering process, Ashburton Joinery produced the tables. They were then placed strategically around the room to accommodate the 700-plus traders. The result perfectly accommodated the trading business. The acoustics of the convention centre, the tables and their arrangement and the high-quality catering created a quiet, comfortable setting producing the best business outcomes and high praise from participants.

Working alongside the dedicated and creative team at ThemePro, Conference Innovators succeeded in putting on a sensational Kiwi extravaganza for the opening ceremony, wow'ing the audience and exceeding the high expectations. A multi-faceted production including multimedia displays, a powerful Haka performance, a dynamic fashion show, and moving musical interludes told the story of New Zealand's cultural and agricultural heritage. Actors dressed as archetypal South Island farmers complete with Swandri (iconic New Zealand wool) shirts and hats helped set the scene while Frankie Stevens, one of the country's top performers was the perfect MC for the event. Alongside a children's choir, dressed in mini Swandris, he melted hearts with his rendition of Island in the Sun.

The ability to turn the convention centre around for the gala dinner in the record time of three hours reflected the cohesion and dedication of the local Christchurch convention suppliers says Megan O'Brien, Director of Conference Innovators.

"It really is a tribute to the wonderful local suppliers we have here in Christchurch, ThemePro, VBase and Displayworks, who work so well together and can pull something like this off."

CLIENT'S COMMENTS:

"They [Conference Innovators] did an outstanding job for us. Their attention to detail was excellent and there simply weren't any issues or problems for delegates to deal with."

- Chris Morlock, World Seed Congress Convenor



ABOVE: fashion parade at welcome event.