

Motorola's online path to success

With its customer conference increasing fivefold in size, Motorola needed a large venue that would allow networking. Barcelona proved the perfect choice. **By Stephanie Roberts**

For four years, Wave Marketing Communications has been working with telecoms giant Motorola. This year, their task was the biggest yet – to organise a customer conference five times as big as its 1996 equivalent.

"The Motorola event has grown from 120 delegates four years ago, to an attendance of 550," says Wave director Tony Barton. "This year, the brief was to find an exciting, five star city with an international airport."

After considering Paris, Madrid and Vienna, Wave suggested Barcelona. "Spain is an important market for Motorola and is also a prestigious location," says Barton.

The venue chosen was the new Catalonia Palace of Congresses. "It is large enough and directly linked with the Hotel Rey Juan Carlos I, allowing some delegates to stay there," says Wave director Marc Balhetchet.

With the venue booked, the next challenge was finding a simple way to register the delegates, who were coming from all over the world. Both companies were keen to try on-line registration and approached Eventbookings.com for assistance.

"Motorola had put together an event site and we came in with a delegate registration section," says Eventbookings.com director Phillip Haines. "Delegates sent us all their relevant details and were able to book placements on the workshops too," he adds.

Motorola marketing director, GSM Systems Ian MacGregor was impressed with

this form of registration. "It made sense that we use technology to its highest forms, when we and our customers work in the technology sector," he says.

Delegates arrived from Sunday evening to Monday morning and were accommodated in the Hotel Rey Juan Carlos I and the Inter-Continental and Hilton properties. While all three were suitable, the split presented Wave with a challenge – to ensure delegates would get a chance to network.

"The event kicked off with a lunch on the Monday, which gave delegates a chance to meet. Plenary sessions followed that afternoon, with keynote speakers from Motorola and its partner Cisco," says Barton.

"Motorola didn't want to hit them with too much on their first day, so they had a chance to check out the exhibition on the future in telecoms, plus the opportunity to attend the workshops and network there," he adds.

Adhering to its brief to make a 550-delegate event feel more like a relaxed, 150-delegate meeting, Wave decided against a formal gala dinner that night, opting instead to arrange further networking opportunities.

"They did have a dinner, but were entertained afterwards with trapeze artists and high-wire acts, culminating in a fireworks display," says Barton. "This gave delegates a chance to meet and talk," he adds.

The second day of the event was similar to the first: a general session employing multi-



Catalan nights: the Hotel Rey Juan Carlos I



Fresh faces: Motorola's customer conference was the first large-scale event to be staged at the Catalonia Palace of Congresses in Barcelona



Light show: venue facilities were first-class



Global network: Motorola used online registration for its conference

Balhetchet. "The group was almost entirely male and no partners attended, so the event had to remain sophisticated and yet mix formal with informal," he adds.

The second evening's event took place in the gardens between the Hotel Rey Juan Carlos I and the conference venue. "Delegates were offered a round-the-world dining experience in the gardens, with each food stall offering different elements of entertainment," says Barton. "To top that, Kid

Creole and the Coconuts played, who were tremendous. Some delegates then continued partying in downtown Barcelona," he adds.

The final day of the event featured keynote speakers, who spoke on the future of telecoms. Workshops then followed before the conference rounded off with lunch.

The Motorola conference was the first major event to be held at the Catalonia Palace of Congresses and, while the general impression of those involved was positive,

The most important aspect was that all the delegates were able to network

Ian MacGregor,
marketing manager,
GSM systems,
Motorola

both Motorola and Wave felt that the venue could improve in certain areas. "The palace is fantastically spacious, but it is so new there are bound to be teething problems," says MacGregor. "These didn't worry our customers, but left the management feeling a little fraught at times," he adds.

Barton agrees with this view, but points out that the Barcelona venue did provide technical support when problems occurred, enabling solutions to be found. "With new venues you do take an element of risk," he says. "In every other way, the palace was superb and will become a prestigious venue. It has an excellent auditorium, it is next door to a good hotel and only 20 minutes from the airport," he says.

Delegate feedback from the event has been positive so far, according to MacGregor. "The most important aspect was that the delegates were all able to network," he says. "Our customers are very well informed, so it was also important to us for the event to be successful from an educational point of view," he adds. □

Fact File

Company: Motorola
Event: annual customer conference
Group size: 550
Date: 8-10 May 2000
Agency: Wave Marketing Communications
Destination: Barcelona
Venue: Catalonia Palace of Congresses
Estimated budget: £1m