

The AACB Staff Scholarships – Benefits & Opinion

10 June 2008

The 2008 Vin Barron IMEX prize for AACB staff is such an amazing opportunity because it provided a unique environment for experiencing the global market of events, an invaluable networking forum, and a terrific personal profile opportunity to get my name out into the industry.

IMEX is the essential worldwide exhibition for meetings and incentive travel. This year 3,500 exhibitors attended from 150 countries representing national and regional tourist offices, major hotel groups, airlines, destination management companies, service providers, trade associations and more. Over 3,600 hosted buyers from 58 world markets visited IMEX 2008, contributing to a total of 8,700 visitors for the show's busiest three days ever.

My first impression of IMEX was mind boggling; the sheer size of this tradeshow was nothing like any of the shows I had previously experienced or even imagined. From the moment I walked into the registration booth I could see hundreds of visitors, exhibitors and staff already in the mood for a good show. I knew from the first moment I stepped in that this was no small show and that I had to brace myself and do my very best to try and check the competition and their efforts to promote themselves to the international market.

I had the chance to visit the booths from competitors such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Austria, UK, Spain, China, United Emirates and USA. The one thing that blew my mind was that between Spain and USA booth space, you could have easily fit the entire AEE show. Add another five of the big booths and you've got AIME. The efforts and investment put in behind each booth design, concept, collateral and staffs is simply incredible.

I met so many key people in the industry; I learnt so much and experienced destination marketing at its best. *I strongly recommend all bureau staff to start seriously thinking about being nominated and applying for the Staff Scholarship 2008, or next year the 2009 Vin Barron IMEX Prize for AACB staff.* Don't miss out on these opportunities, besides all of the above you get an all paid trip (thanks to Qantas and AACB), and professional development all in one go.

I would like to acknowledge Jon Hutchison AM and Lyn Lewis-Smith of SCVB for their support and confidence on me to win this prize. Ray Bloom, Paul Flackett, Tom Hulton and Dale Hudson from the IMEX team 2008 for their hospitality and attention during my time in Germany. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Anthea Somerville from Qantas for her support, the return flights from Sydney to Frankfurt and her encouraging words and her positive feedback regarding my presentation. Last but not least AACB's Board of Directors for their continued efforts in bringing this great opportunity to the staff of their bureau, and for being behind great initiatives which I consider as a great investment for Australia's future in the meeting industry.

With best wishes,

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