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## **COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES WITH TAKING AN ORGANIZATION GLOBAL: A CASE STUDY FEATURING MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL (MPI)**

**Abstract.** *Many professional associations, organizations and corporations are looking to expand into global markets, as is the case with Meeting Professionals International (MPI). When targeting new members outside of the headquarter country of the organization, leaders and staff members often ignore communication and cultural differences as they look to quickly grow the organization. This study explored this growing issue and details the differences in communication styles and preferences between the MPI members of the United States and Europe. Significant variances are described, as well as, implications and recommendations to MPI and other organizations consider going global.*

**Keywords:** *global organizations; communication strategy; cultural communication; meetings industry.*

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## КОМУНІКАЦІЙНІ ВИКЛИКИ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ В УМОВАХ ГЛОБАЛІЗАЦІЇ: НА ПРИКЛАДІ РОЗГЛЯДУ MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL (MPI)

*Анотація.* Багато професійних асоціацій, організацій та корпорацій прагнуть розширити свою діяльність в глобальних ринках, як і у випадку з Meeting Professionals International (MPI). При пошуку нових членів за межами штаб-квартири країни організації, керівники та співробітники часто ігнорують особливості комунікації та культурні відмінності – те, як вони виглядають, щоб пришвидшити розвиток організації. Це дослідження поширювало питання і деталі відмінностей в стилях комунікації і переваг між членами MPI в Сполучених Штатах і Європі. Значні відхилення описані, а також, наслідки та рекомендації MPI та інших організацій виходять на глобальний рівень.

*Ключові слова:* глобальні організації, стратегії комунікації, культурні зв'язки, сфера організації зустрічей.

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## КОММУНИКАЦИОННЫЕ ВЫЗОВЫ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ В УСЛОВИЯХ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ РАССМОТРЕНИЯ MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL (MPI)

*Аннотация:* Многие бизнес ассоциации, организации и корпорации стремятся расширить свою деятельность на глобальных рынках, как и в случае с Meeting Professionals International (MPI). При ориентации на новых членов за пределами штаб-квартиры страны организации, руководители и сотрудники часто игнорируют особенности общения и культурные различия – то, как они выглядят, чтобы ускорить развитие организации. Это исследование создало проблему и показало детали различия в стилях коммуникации и предпочтений между членами MPI в Соединенных Штатах и Европе. Значительные различия описаны, а также, последствия и рекомендации MPI и других организаций выходят на глобальный уровень.

*Ключевые слова:* глобальные организации, стратегии коммуникации, культурные связи, сфера организации встреч.

### INTRODUCTION

Those professionals working in the global meetings and hospitality industry need to regularly communicate effectively with one another. The strength of their relationship is often built on the basis of formal and non-formal communications and ability to establish trust in their business relationships. The exchange of information plays a very critical role in their success and communication allows for this interchange to occur. In order to form these bonds, a favorable environment is required to make necessary communication exchanges. Many times meeting and hospitality professionals meet through global professional organization events or forums. Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is a global organization that links meeting professionals to hospitality sales and marketing professionals to co-create business events around the world. Often in these interactions, the notion of culture is ignored when communicating between professionals in different parts of the world.

With over 20,000 members world-wide, MPI links professionals that are located in over 20 countries located on six continents. This professional an association was founded in the United States in 1972 and its headquarters are in Dallas (Texas). With its 40 years of tradition, the organization attempts to form a medium for exchanging experience, to establish standards and best

practice in the meeting industry and, most importantly, create local, regional, national and international groups to participate in meaning exchange and discussion. However, the organization has struggled with his globalization strategy and communicating to and with members around the world.

The organization operates on the basis of two structures: international charge and chapter focus. The international focus looks to provide events and opportunities for members to connect at major events. The association elects a board of directions to oversee the eighty professional staff employees in charge of the association's correct functioning. The core of the association's global operations is centered on creating networking and social functions and providing education and training to the membership. The second structure is the local regional MPI chapters. Globally, MPI has 71 chapters and clubs. These smaller structures play the key role in the context of MPI's functioning, as they bring together members in closer proximity to one another and encourage exchange.

MPI membership is made up of primary professionals in North America and Europe. The American model of communicating and engaging with a business counterpart differs in numerous aspects from its European counterpart. The nature of this style also reflects certain cultural tensions between North America and Europe. According to MPI's statute, the organization is aimed at eliminating differences between cultures and serving as a bridge facilitating mutual understanding for members in the meetings and hospitality industry.

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences in the perception of the communication conducted by MPI as a global organization with its European and North American members. This project exposes the existing cultural and value differences between American and European members by looking at the MPI organization's communication style and evaluating it if is effective to both segments of the global membership. The results provide insight to global organizations looking to better engagement their members and better understanding cultural communication differences.

The working hypothesis of this study assumes that Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is a global organisation operating in the meetings industry. The study looks specifically at if the communication taking place within the organisation is effective and if it is efficient, as well as, whether it helps achieve the assumed goals. The majority of communication observed within the organisation takes place between the persons officially representing MPI, i.e. its professional personnel, and the voluntary members of the 71 chapters worldwide. The authors are particularly interested in communication taking place between MPI and its North America members (due to the pro-American nature of the association) and between MPI and its European members (due to Europe's strong expansion in this field).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Foundations of social communication*

The analysis of the foundations of social communication should start from drawing the outline of the communication situation and space to be characterised. In the discussed organisation, there are at least three levels of communication to be analysed in the context of the selected theories. Within MPI, we can observe: Interpersonal communication: direct contact (person – person), indirect contact (person – secondary media – person), suspended contact (person – text); Communication in the organisation and Intercultural communication.

At this point, it is important to stress significant differences between communication manifestations, such as real time communication (in most cases with the use of the Internet), face-to-face communication or structural communication, i.e. communication happening in two dimensions. Firstly, there is the vertical communication which takes place among the professional staff of the MPI in accordance with the organisational chart. Secondly, there is the horizontal communication between members at respective chapters. The exchange of information and communication are in this case of key importance for the operation of many chapters, both in North America and Europe.

The architecture of communication in both cases is based on the organisational scheme. On the one hand, communication takes place within MPI and among its professional staff, serving the purpose of facilitating the everyday operation of the association to maintain the satisfaction of its members who then continue to provide their support, involvement and activity to MPI. On the other hand, there is the communication crucial to the level of satisfaction, i.e. exchanging opinions, sharing knowledge and mutual consultations between members. This type of communication ensues both between members and staff of respective branch offices. Information exchange is the task of presidents and vice-presidents for education, communication or membership.

Furthermore, the 21st century brought with it a unique freedom of speech, hitherto unprecedented at such a scale. In consequence, there are also informal forms of communication within the MPI network which should not be forgotten. They are particularly important from the point of view of the organisation's mission based on the community model which enables its members to achieve success. One of the factors exercising great influence on this aspect is the formation of the network society. Due to the Internet, social status and to a large extent cultural differences start to vanish.

On the basis of specified communication architecture, theories regarding the foundations of social communication in an organisation have been selected. Below, the following models will be presented and characterised together with the code forms, contexts and relation systems specified to American - European style of communication:

- Roman Jakobson's model and H.D. Lasswell's model
- Richard R. Gesteland's model and G. Hofstede and G.J. Hofstede's model

Roman Jakobson's theory and model were created in 1960; upon creating the model, its author focused above all on the meaning of the communication structure. According to J. Fiske, that model [Fiske, 1990] is a double one. He [Jakobson] starts by modelling the constitutive factors in an act of communication. These are the six factors that must be present for communication to be possible. He then models the functions that this act of communication performs for each factor.

Apart from all the factors shaping the act of communication as such, Jakobson specifies also their functions which are tailored to the type of the communication process. The factor model together with the functions looks as follows: (Table 1.)

*Table 1*

**Factors and their communication functions in Roman Jakobson's model**

	<b>CONTEXT</b> (referential function)	
<b>SENDER</b>	<b>MESSAGE</b> (poetic function)	<b>RECEIVER</b>
emotive function	<b>CONTACT</b> (phatic function)	conative function
	<b>CODE</b> (metalingual function)	

*Source: Prepared on the basis of Roman Jakobson's model*

A derivative model, mentioned due to its frequent appearance, is a simplified version of the Jakobson's model presented by Harold D. Lasswell. Lasswell has given us another widely quoted early model. His, though, is specifically one of mass communication. [Lasswell H. D., 1948] He argues that to understand the processes of mass communication we need to study each of the stages in his model:

*Who – says what – in which channel – to whom – with what effect?*

These two models describes the links between American and European meetings and events industry society and will be used in the conducted research.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in a three-step, mixed method process: (1) purposeful interviews, (2) review of secondary sources and (3) random survey. The initial interviews were conducted as a pilot study for use in the creation a survey instrument. In addition, insight gathered from the analysis of secondary sources was used.

Quantitative research is used in order to obtain information on the size and frequency of the studied phenomenon. The research conducted has also the nature of a descriptive study, where the objects of description are the discussed population, phenomena and the elements of qualitative research as it explains some motives, attitudes and preferences of the respondents. [Berelson B., 1952]

### Selection of Subjects

During the first phase of the study, the presidents of respective MPI chapters in Europe were interviewed. These twelve of seventy presidents represented over 2,200 MPI members in Europe. They were to identify the problems faced by the European MPI members on an everyday basis. Due to MPI's global nature, its aspirations to create international standards, its operation as a platform for exchanging ideas on specific issues or the location of its chief offices, i.e. the headquarters in Dallas, USA and the European branch in Luxembourg, it was decided to conduct the analysis based on the geographical location of respondents. This information, in addition to, the insight gleaned from the secondary sources lead to the next phase of the project. The survey stratified random sample of 1,000 professional MPI members worldwide, with special division into members from Northern America (500 respondents) and Europe (also 500 respondents). Managing organizations is not only complicated but also full of unpredictable problems. The present world shows an amazing variety of cultures, both in terms of values and in terms of practices. [...] Most cultures have ancient roots, despite major changes. [...] Understanding how we acquired our cultures raises issues about how to shape our future. [Hofstede, 2008]

### Instrument Design

Having interviewed all the European presidents, the author sent a survey consisting of four questions regarding the issues of organisation's nature and communication problems (two questions per topic, formed in such a way that the respondents could indicate both positive and negative aspects of MPI which at the same time helped strengthen the message and cross-check the answers). The four questions focused on geographic marketing, regional orientation, membership activities, and product marketing.

The result of the pilot study lead to several questions being design around the number of planners and suppliers, product promotion, membership cost, benefits for members, cultural differences in Europe, formal procedures regarding chapter operations, procedures regarding becoming a member, globalisation, organisation size, language of communication, communication channels, frequency, complexity of information, amount of information. Additionally, questions regarding MPI as an organisation touched on the following issues: globalisation, degree and speed of development, level of bureaucracy, dynamism, organisation's friendliness, organisation's complexity degree. The questionnaire prepared for the study was sent electronically and the study participants were required to fill in the form independently and send it back. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-seven questions, eleven of which were open-ended and sixteen objective questions.

### Data Collection

Data was collected on-line and using paper surveys at key industry events. Reaching MPI members in North America and Europe proved to be a very challenging. The questionnaire, prepared in English, was submitted to 71 North America and European presidents of respective chapters who supported the project and disseminated it to their local or regional members. Such a large number of replies returned through the online application was possible thanks to the support of respective MPI chapters on both continents.

The online questionnaire was launched in July 1, 2010 and closed on December 31, 2010. The above actions were additionally supported by a cover letter and, importantly, by an information

campaign on social portals. Between July and December 2010 the research team published new information at least four times a month through such social tools as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or vimeo. In the discussed period of six months the online questionnaire was opened 1746 times by potential respondents and 700 people replied correctly to all the questions.

In addition to the questionnaire online, the form was printed and distributed during the MPI meetings held during that period, including: World Education Congress 2010 – Chapter Leaders Forum in Vancouver on 24-27 July 2010, Chapter Business Summit 2010 in Dallas on 23-26 September 2010, and the EIBTM 2010 in Barcelona on 30 November – 2 December 2010. In total, thanks to the abovementioned conferences and trade shows, 300 replies were collected and included in the collective summary.

One of the author's goals was to obtain 1,000 total surveys: 500 replies from MPI members whose area of operation and activity lies in Northern America and 500 replies filed by those MPI members who identify their membership in the association with Europe. This division was selected in order to determine the representative group on the basis of whose results it would be possible to define the type of communication we are faced with at MPI and to determine its nature.

Based on the pilot questions, research problems were established as presented at the start of this dissertation and divided into groups. They pertain to:

- Characteristics of communication between MPI and its members,
- Specificity of operation and activity in terms of geographical region,
- Nature of the association and membership issues,
- Marketing actions pertaining to MPI products.

#### Data Analysis Techniques

During the whole process of research several methods of data analysis were used. Firstly author summarized all the conversations based on personal interviews. Later during the pilot study paper questionnaire were used and anonymous survey were conducted during two chapter leaders meetings plus online answers using regular text files.

Finally the quantitative pieces were implemented into online questionnaire system Amplex (SPSS modul based software) which is a dedicated tool to conduct global, interactive research. In addition to this paper feedbacks were collected during Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress. All the data sets were entered into SPSS for data analyses. Frequency analysis was used to showcase the demographic distributions of respondents who joined the survey. The mean ratings of all the perceptual items, both QOL attributes and cultural hospitality items, were computed and tabled. Independent samples t-test was employed to compare both the QOL attributes and cultural hospitality items between different demographic groups. Correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between respondents' overall QOL satisfaction with the cultural hospitality items.

## **RESULTS**

### *Demographics*

#### Male vs. Female

The global meetings industry is perceived as directly connected with hospitality; hospitality is directly related to services where the majority of employees are women. Analysing this issue is not the purpose of the conducted study; however, the subject to women's activity in the meetings industry has already been taken up on numerous occasions and by various organisations. In the conducted study, the results regarding the second question confirm this trend. 61% of the respondents are female and 39% male.

Table 2

**Analysis of the studied population by sex**

Gender	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
North America	710	290	1000	71%	29%	100%
Europe	510	490	1000	51%	49%	100%
Total	610	390	1000	61%	39%	100%

Source: Own study

Table 3

**Analysis of effectiveness and efficiency of communication between MPI and its members by demographic and age**

Analysis of effectiveness and efficiency of communication between MPI and its members by demographics and age	North America	Europa	Total	18-35	36 >	Total
	Definitely Yes	13%	2%	8%	10%	6%
Yes	60%	29%	45%	43%	48%	45%
No	18%	30%	24%	24%	25%	24%
Definitely No	4%	34%	19%	21%	16%	19%
Don't know	5%	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%

Source: Own study

The characteristics of the respondents' sex is also very important in terms of their professional positions. The most important differences between the respondents can be observed in case of senior executives: females 68%, males 32%; Significant differences are also visible in case of middle management: females 76%, males 24%.

**Age**

Another question pertained to the age group. Due to the fact that both in hospitality and in the meetings industry generally there are more people below 50, four age groups were created to be selected by the respondents. The first group encompassed people between 18 and 25; it constitutes 20% of all respondents. Another group, making up 29%, are people between 26 and 35. The largest group among the respondents are people between 36 and 50; they constitute 38% of the total number. People above 50 formed the smallest group (13%).

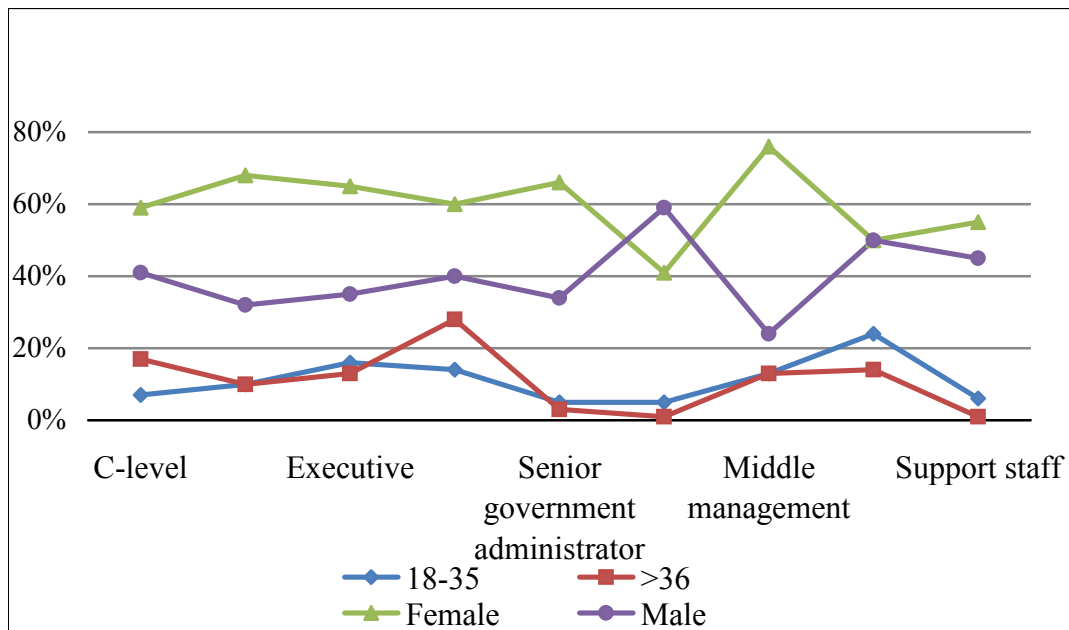
Table 4

**Analysis of the studied population by age**

Age	North America	Europe	Total
18-25	11%	29%	20%
26-35	34%	25%	29%
36-50	40%	36%	38%
50<	16%	10%	13%

Source: Own study

This characteristic presents age segmentation and clearly shows that over 87% of all respondents are below 50. We can therefore already claim that the dynamic changes, numerous access channels, multimedia communication or meeting expectations are elements particularly close to people of that age today. However, the study group will be subject to an even more detailed analysis of needs and requirements in the following questions. Importantly, we can already boldly claim that despite the distance separating the members of the analysed group we should be able to avoid significant and very directly age-related generation gaps. More precisely, we should not analyse such gaps as particularly significant which should to a point simplify that part of the analysis.



**Chart 1. Analysis of the professional positions in the studied population by gender and age**

*Source: Own study*

#### Title

At the top of the corporate hierarchy there is the C-Level Executive (in MPI terminology), i.e. a person holding the post of CEO, CFO, etc. Among the respondents, this group takes up 12% of the total. The other professional positions were established as follows: Senior Executive 11%,

Executive 14%, Senior Management 21%, Senior Government Administrator 4%, Mid-Level Government Administrator 3%, Middle Management 13%, Professional Staff 19%, Support Staff 3%. Upon analysing the professional position of the respondents we can note two groups whose members took part in the study in the greatest numbers. These are senior management with 21% Professional Staff with 19%. This shows that the group gladly sharing its opinion consists of people working in the private sector, often providing the final recommendation as well as people dealing with servicing the operations of the given institution on the everyday basis, i.e. operatives. (Chart 1)

*Table 5*

#### **Professional position of the respondents by sex, age and origin**

Professional position	18-35	>36	Female	Male	North America	Europa	Total
C-level	7%	17%	59%	41%	65%	35%	12%
Senior executive	10%	10%	68%	32%	72%	28%	11%



<b>Professional position</b>	<b>18-35</b>	<b>&gt;36</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>Europa</b>	<b>Total</b>
Executive	16%	13%	65%	35%	67%	33%	14%
Senior management	14%	28%	60%	40%	59%	41%	21%
Senior government administrator	5%	3%	66%	34%	64%	38%	4%
Mid-level government administrator	5%	1%	41%	59%	44%	56%	3%
Middle management	13%	13%	76%	24%	41%	59%	13%
Professional staff	24%	14%	50%	50%	16%	84%	19%
Support staff	6%	1%	55%	45%	36%	64%	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Own study*

The characteristic divide between North American and European members is visible also in the example of the question regarding the professional position. The main noticeable differences can be observed in the example of such professional positions as: Senior Executives (North America 15%, Europe 6%), Executives (North America 19%, Europe 9%) and the most visible Professional Staff (North America 6%, Europe 32%).

*Table 6*

**Analysis of communication between MPI and its members by geographical regions**

<b>Analysis of communication between MPI and its members by geographical regions</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>Europe</b>
Very well adapted to specific professional positions	8%	10%	6%
Very well adapted to specific member groups	16%	21%	12%
Satisfies members' needs	57%	57%	57%
Too focused on selected groups with specific professional positions	11%	6%	16%
Too focused on specific member groups	8%	5%	10%

*Source: Own study*

Upon discussing professional positions we can notice that the meetings industry is a field where women compete with men irrespective of religious, cultural or ethnic reasons. The discussed data shows very clearly that it is women who form the management core in many organisations and who without complexes steer and manage institutions responsible for the global development of the meetings industry.

The aspect of professional cultures should also be mentioned here. Both the division/hierarchy and the style of functioning within a given institution vary widely between North America and Europe. What we mean here is not only the communication style or model as discussed in the previous chapter but also the dimensions of the professional cultures. A North American holding the post of sales director (according to the MPI American model assigned to the “senior management” category) operates totally different than his European counterpart. The American model is characterised by strict rules focused on achieving specific goals and it does not always remember the human or cultural aspect; it is consequently a model which in case of Europe and, say, hotel management does not work as well as its authors would have liked. This means that hotel operation systems created in the USA are not fully effective after their transplantation to Europe. Focus on practical activities and subsequent application of experience in everyday actions is the key in the meetings industry. Professional position of a sales director is one of the main ones in the service industry (of which the meetings industry forms a part) and, more importantly, authors dealing both theoretically and practically with organisation functioning confirm that practice has the crucial role to play here.

Table 7

**Analysis of MPI’s communication process by member origin**

<b>Analysis of MPI’s communication process by member origin</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>Europe</b>
North America	75%	69%	81%
EMEA	16%	20%	11%
Asia	1%	20%	11%
All regions equally	8%	9%	7%

*Source: Own study*

These results show that for the majority of respondents MPI communicates in a positive manner and satisfies its member needs which in turn should partly result in the MPI’s members satisfaction with the its functioning as institution to which they belong.

As regards communication with its members, MPI is transforming at the moment and improves both communication channels and the substantive foundations of its activity. North American and European members agreed again on the subject of communication. Both groups (57% in all) stated that MPI’s communication satisfied its members’ needs. However, there are visible cultural differences between MPI’s members. Europeans tend to complain about MPI’s messages being too detailed while their North American counterparts think that the communication is to a large extent very well adapted.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Upon analysing the received replies we can conclude that a correctly and professionally prepared membership application form is one of the key steps on the road to becoming a member of an international organisation. This picture shows that both the procedure and the membership application form are typically adapted to the potential candidates from North America who perceive them as user-friendly and experience no problems on their account.

The respondents stated that the communication style must be improved through paying particular attention to the following aspects:

- the role played by Europe both in the association and in the global meetings industry,
- communication frequency and decreasing the amount of information sent by e-mail,
- personalising messages and sending them to a specific group of receivers instead of mass communication,
- forming precise and reliable messages which are not too complicated.

Such summary of the above question seems to be the key for the whole study. Collected suggestions explicitly indicate the direction in which organisations rooted in American culture and aspiring to become global associations should evolve. This pertains to those operating both in the meetings industry and in other fields.

It is visible in the conclusion that cultural tensions are clearly visible. MPI's assumptions and mission clearly state that the aforementioned cultural tensions, if present at all, should be eliminated. Even though communication is really being individualised due to the regional preferences, e.g. on account of the number of US members, due to numerous restrictions this study cannot confirm it in a clear and explicit manner.

Over the last couple of years, the organisation underwent a significant transformation ranging from staff issues to the global development and expansion strategy.

Through his numerous contacts within the association, the author managed to get MPI's consent to conducting the study which, although controversial, was also helpful to the organisation as such. The result highlighting differences in perceiving the communication conducted by MPI as a global organisation with its European and North American members may constitute a basis for further changes within the association.

Both due to its nature and form the study should have been conducted on a larger sample, but the number of respondents is high anyway compared to the average number of responses obtained by MPI in case of its internal surveys. In this case, over 1,700 people read the questions and correct forms were received from 1,000 of them. The study was then closed due to the prior assumptions. It should also be noted that chapters from all over the world got involved in gathering data. Over 70 local communities distributed information on the survey and took the study into consideration. Furthermore, over 300 people asked to be sent the study results after its completion.

The author analysed over 1,000 reply forms received from MPI members, paying particular attention to the opinions voiced by the association's North American and European members. Cultural microclashes visible after the result analysis showed differences arising from the perception of messages directed by MPI to its members. All in all, however, it should be indicated that despite numerous drawbacks the respondents assess communication rather positively than negatively. In spite of different approach to culture, business and interpersonal cooperation people ultimately reach and understanding and work together for MPI irrespective of their geographical location. MPI members become local leaders in their fields, which shows the strength of the association.

This summary should also show the most important results from the perspective of sex, age, position and geographical location. The fact that as many as 57% North American and 57% European respondents find MPI's communication to be satisfying its members needs is a valuable piece of information. Another interesting fact (in terms of continental divide) is that according to European respondents (81%) MPI devotes the most of its attention to North America. Respondents from both continents surprisingly agreed on the professional position of MPI members. 52% North American members and 66% European members find that there are not enough planners within MPI. Data summary shows how communication between MPI and its members is perceived. Its effectiveness and efficiency is assessed differently on the two continents where MPI's members are based.

These are crucial results if we divide them into responses submitted by respondents from various continents and analyse the geographical aspect of the study. Another factor according to which the collected data should be presented is the respondents' age. The whole studied group was

divided into two subgroups of 18-35 and 36+. The study pertained, among others, to communication effectiveness. Older MPI members (>36) think that the size of an organisation influences its communication effectiveness to a lesser extent. On the other hand, as many as 31% respondents said that the size of an organisation is of no importance to communication which is yet another significant signal for a transforming association. Stability, professionalism and, most importantly, good and effective communication are not directly dependent on the number of members in a given association but on its functioning. In other words, effective communication does not depend on the size of the organisation but only on its efficient functioning.

MPI's communication effectiveness and efficiency is assessed very similarly by persons both below and over 35 years of age. Both positive and negative opinions are expressed by similar numbers of respondents which means that generation-wise MPI members have similar impressions despite the geographic differences and that their observations pertain to the same activities.

An important element to be considered is the membership category and professional position. This part of the summary should be started with the study results showing that MPI is not fully convincing in its communication and that it fails to reach persons professionally dealing with organising meetings for government institutions in an appropriate manner. Government agencies, organisations or consulting bodies or often meeting planners. However, the study proved that MPI does not reach that group to a sufficient degree.

Our summary should also involve the crucial result in division by sex. According to the study it seems that the membership application procedure is much easier for women than men. The difference is visible already in the example of the discussed group of 1,000 members and may constitute a basis for a more in-depth analysis and, ultimately, simplifying the procedure and adapting it to the expectations of respective sexes.

MPI as an association correctly selects information regarding its organisation and statutory activities which may prove to be a very valuable detail from MPI's perspective in the context of shaping its communication strategy. Messages regarding promotion and marketing actions connected to MPI's products and meetings contain the right amount of information in the opinion of the majority of respondents. It is already the second positive reply regarding the factual content of messages sent. Although almost 40% respondents find the information too detailed, the general opinion is positive. It means that the association pays attention to education and that its members are interested in the opportunities for further professional development.

Summing up the results received in the study we can state that global activity of an organisation operating in the meetings industry must be founded on an in-depth cultural analysis and that communication, in particular in the discussed field, must be very personalised and contain information expected by the given target group. The results show that in order to achieve success or at least pursue it, a global organisation must adapt its communication on many levels. Apart from the various geographical regions or sex differences discussed before it is also necessary to bear in mind membership categories. International organisations have different member groups but in terms in communication it is important to reach all of them and not to distinguish any given group, unless it is one of the assumptions for the organisation's global operation.

In order to function correctly, a global organisation must be based on equal and fair communication especially in terms of geographical regions which may bring the desired results in the long term. On the other hand, organisations operating in the meetings industry are a form of binder between various cultures. While taking into consideration the differences among its members, an association can serve as a go-between, issue opinions and at the same time create a platform for discussions and exchanging experience.

The 21st century is a period when global organisations operating on membership basis look for various methods to earn funds ensuring them the possibility of proper functioning and further development. MPI also addresses a wide product offer to its members and tries to satisfy their educational needs. 95% replies proving a positive promotion of the association's products can be a source of optimism. Naturally, there is always some room for improvement but the result obtained shows that MPI's activities are well received.

In some aspects Europe wants to subordinate itself; this opportunity should not be missed. Members from key European chapters do not want to permit vertical communication and chiefly focus on horizontal communication. Due to the nature of the association, MPI should facilitate it but the American model is imposed all too often. European centres, i.e. chapters, promote horizontal exchange of opinions and knowledge and this is their main source of satisfaction.

The author assumes also that some problems which got omitted could show deeper dysfunctions. The general positive response shows, however, that despite the effects of globalisation processes Europe is not afraid since the history of meetings for various reasons is particularly rich here.

On the other hand, MPI as an association indicates the chances and opportunities for a sustainable globalisation, but America will fight for exporting services and importing business customers. Consequently, balance should be ensured, in particular in view of the global crisis which strongly hit the meetings industry.

Despite using American styles of collaboration and communication MPI is a very progressive association; not all global organisations make such exchange of information possible. At the same time it shows that in modern organisations it is very difficult to create a permanent structure and structures of rather fluid nature are more effective. Such situation is caused by the mixing statuses, sexes, ages and professional positions. Members must get used to creating a new culture or subculture arising from the nature of the given organisation.

MPI as an organisation in pursuit of success must represent a new quality and professionalism and form a modern platform for exchanging information. The integration of the European Union, globalisation and consolidation of various areas within the meetings industry support this phenomenon; the new communication space should be created on the basis of such activities. Information collected through conducting the theoretical and empirical analysis has growth potential and to a certain extent shows an organisational phenomenon. It results from the fact that MPI reconciles personal, cultural and organisational requirements and has been functioning for over 40 years at that.

Meetings and travelling form one whole which on the one hand is a timeless product and on the other a creation of sorts which takes into consideration the globalisation, culture interchange ability or timeless problems. The answer to the timeless question on how to communicate in order to achieve success is probably the explanation that it is a true feat to find the right balance satisfying all the participants of the communication process. That is why it is important to build the model of communication which helps and support organizational activities [Lasswell H. D., 1948] Such a system will help us define the variables, i.e. whether effective communication is communication reaching its target effectively or communication which achieves its goals irrespective of the costs.

Together with its global expansion, MPI has been disseminating American organisation patterns. It does not adapt to local conditions but imposes its own. Through a sort of colonisation the Americans try to introduce US standards as more pragmatic. The European culture sees the American colonisation attempts and agrees to its selected aspects but it does not what to surrender its own standing point. [Rifikin, 2005] In other words, Europe accepts the actions of MPI headquarters but wishes to retain its own vision.

Conflicts occur between the expansion of America, where MPI headquarters is located, and the resistance of the lower-level chapters which develop dynamically particularly in the subjective world. It is important that the differences in the communication sphere can be presented and it should be remembered that cultural differences will continue to show.

How do globalisation processes clash with socio-economic reality? The starting point is to ask ourselves if they really show and whether consequently MPI is a well-functioning organisation; since from MPI's point of view, culture is a resource. This means that there is no open conflict.

It is also important to verify whether the organisation's communication with its members is effective, whether the messages are appropriately tailored to their receivers and whether Meeting Professionals International (MPI) communicates taking into consideration the cultural differences among its members, thus confirming its global nature.

Such a determination of goals formulates the approach which will constitute the basis for answering the following research questions:

- Does MPI communicate effectively with its members?
- Are the messages sent appropriately tailored to their receivers?
- Does MPI communicate, taking into consideration the cultural differences among its members?

The analysis will focus in particular on the differences in cultural perceptions between group members located in the North America and Europe. The description of its results will be the key research element and will show the actual functioning of the organisation. Furthermore, types of messages will be described which are preferred by the members of the given community together with the characteristics and the frequency of their communication.

After characterising the study group which was conducted on the basis of the selected replies to the first seven questions, the proper part of the study ensued, covering twenty problem questions commencing with another question. The nature of the association and the membership issues were one of the elements to which the author paid particular attention. Any association operating on the membership basis depends in all its actions *inter alia* on the resources obtained from its members. This means that the members constitute the basis for proper and efficient operation of the given organisation and that they should determine the association's development direction.

Before we start discussing the element of the population studied, attention should be paid to the communication structure and dynamics. There are two separate yet mutually penetrating structures within MPI, through which communication takes place. Firstly, there is the hard core of the professional staff at Meeting Professionals International; it is currently a group of ca. 80 people. Within that communication network, messages are sent chiefly vertically as it plays the most important role in day-to-day management of the organisation. The organisational scheme of that structure has already been presented in the previous pages; MPI operates on its basis. The other communication systems we have to highlight are the association members, acting on voluntary basis. In this case, horizontal communication can be observed. Key information exchange, sharing knowledge and analysing problems regarding the whole organisation take place between the members organised in respective chapters. The former structure works for the latter and the functioning of the whole organisation depends on the nature of communication in the former and its professionalism. However, the real life understood as exchanging opinions, analysing problems and arriving at mutual conclusions happens in the latter system and has the nature of horizontal communication.

The results divide in a detailed manner all respondents into two almost equal groups encompassing those from North America (51%) and Europe (49%). The division into two groups by continent was of key importance for the study since this very element is significant for the functioning of the meetings industry. American foundations and know-how as well as the fact of constructing the industry for dozens of years is put up against European culture. In this case, Europe is presented as a unified and consistent body facing the American power. Europeans are shown as a strong group which we will subject to analysis.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

### Limitations and Future Research

Research conducted among members of top industry association is a great baseline to start working closely with the other bodies. Meetings and events industry is enough young industry to make comparisons and summaries. Absolutely there is a need to improve communication style but one of the limitations that researchers can come across is rather closed group. It is really difficult to run the research among hospitality professionals because they are stick to each other and not willing to share their opinions about the bodies they are part of.

Authors have a plan to run the similar research among members of other associations which are focused on destination marketing, incentive travel or congresses. Apart from particular pieces

which will be focus on few areas there is a need and possibility to summarized all results and prepare a bigger report.

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