



# Forums of Enterprise: The Value of Industry Trade Shows and Conferences



BY PHILIP DAWSON

*The agora and forum were the town meeting places of the ancient Greeks and Romans, where ideas and learning were discussed, friendships and business relationships formed, and where the news of the day was exchanged. Maritime Leisure Group CEO, Jürgen Scharkosi is an avid proponent of today's commercial trade shows and conferences as the modern global forums of progress in various international communities of scientific, humanitarian, industrial and commercial endeavour including passenger shipping.*

**T**he trade show exhibitor or visitor and the conference speaker or delegate to Cruise + Ferry, Seatrade or ShipPax Information's new Onboard Ferry Shipping Conference has the opportunity to actively participate in a true forum of the world-wide passenger shipping industry. The value of this is to have the opportunity to present your own viewpoints, products and services, to learn and to discuss what others are offering, to make new acquaintances and maintain existing contacts. There is the opportunity perhaps to come home after that very special handshake on which you will build your next ship, sign a contract or open up a new business opportunity. The show and conference organisers need to keep pace with the industry and its needs, and progress in the related information and communications technologies, event facilities, travel and hospitality, as well as the cultural and tourism options sought by delegates, their attending spouses and guests.

The pro-forma of the modern multi-functional industry trade show and conference such as Seatrade or Cruise + Ferry probably traces its origins to the medical profession as the primal organisers of such extensive and diverse gatherings to serve its large professional associations. Early Conferences in the shipping industry were of a regulatory nature. The North Atlantic Passenger Conference, for instance, was organised in the 1880s to establish standard trans-Atlantic routes to be used

by its member steamship companies, as well as to maintain various standards of fair trading practice among them. The Conference conducted its business in New York, as this was the one port served by all its members. Today's industry exhibitions and conferences are forums of a general commercial and business nature. Thanks to readily available and comparatively inexpensive air travel, these attract world-wide audiences of industry people and interested observers, who can reach the venue from anywhere on the globe within 24 hours.

Trade shows and conferences are becoming an increasingly important part of the industry, where there is ever the need to stay abreast of the latest trends and developments and to become familiar with new products and services. These events have long been a key part of Maritime Leisure Group's business development, both as observers and participants in the leading trade shows and conferences, and as developers and hosts of their own events. As described in our company profile feature page 10, The Miami Hotel and Catering Association's 1990 conference in Miami was a watershed event for the company, where Jürgen Scharkosi was able to secure the Marine Hotel Association's recognition and support of Institute of Maritime Hotel Management, as the Academy was then officially named. The business contract and scholarship sponsoring that followed secured the Academy's world-wide standing as the first of its kind to offer hotel service and management education specifi-

*Delegates attending a plenary session of Ferry Shipping Conference 03 aboard PEARL OF SCANDINAVIA in April 2003.*



*Photo: Mike Louagie*

cally for the cruise and passenger shipping industry. Within the following year, the Academy at Salzburg was training hotel management staff for five leading American-based cruise lines.

In June 1991 Maritime Hotel Management organised their own Cruise Ship Congress at Schloss Klassheim in Salzburg as a human resources conference. This served to showcase the company's activities and services to passenger shipping, and to bring together other industry people with an interest in human resources, training and service aspects of passenger shipping. The event was held biennially through the remainder of the decade, until in 2001 it was moved to London as a companion offering to the LLP Events-run Cruise + Ferry show and conference. Held in a separate pavilion as Maritime Hotel, with a dedicated shuttle service to and from the Cruise + Ferry main event at Olympia, this is being run on the basis of a strategic alliance between LLP Events and the show's organisers, Informa UK Ltd. The idea of bringing these two events together was first discussed informally between Jürgen Scharkosi and Patrick Hitchen of LLP at Cruise + Ferry 1999.

Maritime Hotel brings a new dimension to Cruise + Ferry, for the first time extending its coverage of the industry to the all-important aspects of maritime hotel management and broadening its coverage of the human factor and service aspects of passenger shipping. This supports the initiative of Cruise + Ferry's organisers to make the event a one-stop resource for the passenger shipping industry. In addition to bringing its own conference agendas to London, Maritime Hotel is also a showcase for related products and services, including, hotel and housekeeping supplies,

uniforms and clothing, entertainment and gaming systems, interior design and furnishings, signage and passenger information systems.

## Recognition of excellence

Cruise + Ferry 2001 also introduced a highly prestigious awards programme, recognising outstanding achievement in design, technology, safety, training, environmental protection, hotel operations, product and service. The panel of judges was headed by Patrick Hitchen, and included among others, Klas Brogren of ShipPax Information and Maritime Leisure's Jürgen Scharkosi. The awards were presented at a gala dinner held during Cruise + Ferry at London's Lancaster Hotel. The event also served to provide an important social occasion to the show and conference, as well as to generate a significant press and media focus, both within industry circles and in the public news media.

Trade show and conference organisers have to continue developing their own offerings to reflect industry trends and directions, as well as to sustain visitor and delegate patronage. If the industry is buoyant with exciting new developments, then these events must reflect the same spirit of innovativeness and creativity as an appropriate forum for showcasing its progressiveness. At times when the industry may have less to show that is new or different, then the conference organisers must look to the event itself to offer more that is stimulating and interesting.

Informa, LLP and Maritime Leisure continue to pursue new initiatives to increase the attraction and effectiveness of their forums, and to gain the greatest benefits from modern information technologies. "People don't just want 'chalk and talk' any more,"

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*Members of the EUSA (European Union Shipowners Association) gather for an information meeting aboard PEARL OF SCANDINAVIA in Oslo. From left to right are, Len Roueche, CEO, IMTA-Interferry; John Crummie, MD, DFDS UK; Carl-Otto Dahlberg, MD, Stena RoRo; Bo-Lennart Thorbjörnsson, MD, BOLT Consulting; Klas Brogren, MD, ShipPax Information; Sten-Crister Forsberg, MD, Destination Gotland; Michel Maraval, MD, Brittany Ferries; Sven Pihl Olsen, Passenger Director, DFDS; Gunnar Östin, MD, Svenska Rederi AB Öresund; Erik Østergaard, Director Ship Management, Scandlines; and Alfons Guinier, Secretary General, ECSA.*



explains Informa UK Ltd's Patrick Hitchen, "they are looking to participate directly in an interactive experience." In a bid to make the conference sessions more interactive and lively, speakers at Cruise + Ferry 2003 are being encouraged to shorten their presentations and to increase the opportunity for active dialogue with their audiences, and session chairs are asked to solicit open discussion from delegates.

## E-participation

Informa, LLP and Maritime Leisure are also looking to conferencing of the future, including e-conferencing, where delegates may choose to participate by way of the Internet or other multimedia teleconferencing techniques. The Cruise + Ferry web site is already well established as a valuable resource for the conferences, serving as a comprehensive guide to the show's exhibitors and conference's participants and delegates. With over 30,000 unique visits per year the [www.cruiseferryex.com](http://www.cruiseferryex.com) site offers exhibitors a valuable opportunity to provide their own product or service descriptions, along with links to other web sites of their own choosing. New innovations for 2003 allow exhibitors to register their participants and order exhibitor badges in advance through the Internet. E-vites have also been introduced as a tool for exhibitors to invite their key clients and prospects quickly and effectively by way of e-mail invitations.

The passenger shipping industry trade show and conference business itself is also expanding and becoming increasingly competitive. The key players are LLP Events/Informa and Seatrade, both of which are solidly backed by their own publishing interests. Cruise + Ferry is supported by the LLP (Lloyd's List Publications) magazines, *Cruise International* and *Ferryworld*. Seatrade's flagship Cruise Shipping Con-

vention, held in March every year at Miami, is likewise supported by *Seatrade* magazine. This company has diversified greatly, adding its *Seatrade Europe*, *Nor Shipping* and other regional events around the world, as well as introducing a number of new guides, registers and other publications. Seatrade also operates its own Awards programmes and events, and have diversified into a number of other activities including training and various online services.

## Onboard conference

This year ShipPax Information and BOLT Consulting introduced their own Ferry Shipping Conference Onboard, held aboard the ferry PEARL OF SCANDINAVIA on a round-trip voyage from Copenhagen to Oslo in early April 2003. ShipPax's Klas Brogren explains that this conference was organised on an initiative to stimulate new areas of discussion within the shipping industry itself and to foster a greater intermodal forum for exchanging knowledge and ideas with other sectors of the transport industry. Speakers were invited from the aviation industry to discuss the successes of LFA (Low Fare Airlines) and the possibilities of applying similar approaches in ferry shipping, the merits of business class versus the tourist approach and to talk about the airport operators and what can be adapted from their commercial, food-and beverage and retail services to the ship terminal and onboard amenities of the vessel itself. Other sessions looked at what can be learned about Brand identity from the automotive industry, and at adopting the Mövenpick restaurant approach to food and beverage services aboard ferries.

The ShipPax event is likewise backed by the company's own highly-respected publications, and now provides a platform for presenting the annual ShipPax awards programme. Delegate response to this new conference was beyond expectation. Holding the event aboard ship also has the advantage of asserting an environment that encourages greater social contact among delegates, as shipmates and fellow passengers too.

**"Holding the event aboard ship also has the advantage of asserting an environment that encourages greater social contact among delegates."**

*The Kavalierhaus Schloss Klessheim in Salzburg, where the Academy was founded and their forums were held through the 1990s. Maritime Leisure still holds various gatherings and other events in this charming historic building.*



Photo: Klas Brogren

## Maritime Hotel

Following its success in 2001, Maritime Hotel is being repeated and expanded at Cruise + Ferry this year. Apart from the overall commercial prosperity of the conference itself, the event was directly instrumental in netting Maritime Leisure a prestigious licencing

agreement with Wulhan Marine College in China. Following the London show and conference, a delegation from China representing both the college at Wulhan and the national government's educational department, visited Maritime Hotel Academy in Salzburg. There an agreement was reached for the establishment of a new Maritime Academy to be founded as part of the Wulhan Marine College on a franchise basis with Maritime Leisure. Specialising in shipboard passenger service training, hotel and river ship management, the new institution was created on an impressive scale, with an investment of USD1.5 billion for construction of facilities and purchase of equipment alone. The arrangement has the double-edged advantage of offering the new institution already-developed and well-proven educational programmes, while giving Maritime Leisure greater global presence of their own activities. This in turn opens doors to other emerging human resources and training opportunities in India and the Philippines.

For the exhibitor participating in a trade show or exhibition, there are the expenses of booking a stand, renting the necessary furniture and fixtures and bringing one's own materials and personnel to the event venue. For the conference speaker there is the considerable investment in time and effort to prepare a presentation, along with the necessary illustrations and other graphic material. Depending on where the exhibition and conference is being held in relation to where you live, there are the inevitable travel and lodging expenses, as well as the concern of time taken from one's normal work, whether attending as exhibitor, delegate or merely as a visitor. Yet once you have decided which events best suit your own interests and needs, the value of participating or merely attending as a visitor can be immense.

Apart from the show and conference themselves, there is the opportunity to meet other industry people more informally or socially at related venues such as sponsors' or exhibitors' receptions and parties, or at a gala event such as the Cruise + Ferry Awards dinner or the ShipPax awards presentation. As the saying goes, "schmoose or loose." Cities such as London and Miami, where these gatherings take place also offer opportunities to dine, attend theatre or sporting events with prospective clients, industry colleagues, newfound acquaintances or old friends. All of these offer abundant opportunities for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints and the creation of new business opportunities.

If you are planning to participate in or merely to attend any of these forums, be sure to tuck a good supply of business cards inside your toga - If you have something specific to offer, bring your brochures, samples and other materials, and be prepared to present your product at the drop of a hat, as Jürgen Scharkosi did for the Institute of Maritime Hotel Management in Miami, and again most recently with Wulhan Marine College.

Something great may happen on your day at the Forum. 



*Delegates from China's Wulhan Marine College and their national government's educational department gather in the Marble hall at Klessheim during their visit to Salzburg to negotiate the licencing agreement with the Maritime Hotel Academy.*



*Maritime Leisure Group's eye-catching stand at Cruise + Ferry's Maritime Hotel pavilion in London.*



*Maritime Hotel Academy's Chairman Jürgen Scharkosi concludes contract formalities on and the exchange of legal documents and a sincere firm handshake with Quiao Chung Shi, Director and Vice President of China Changjiang Shipping Corporation and Dong Jia Xing, President of the Wulhan Marine College.*