Crowne Plaza® Hotels & Resorts, part of InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG®) is the fourth largest hotel brand in the world and one of the fastest growing. With nearly 400 hotels in more than 65 countries worldwide, the brand is located primarily in major getaway cities, urban and suburban locations. The brand’s portfolio has seen significant growth, doubling in size since 2003 with 96 hotels in the global pipeline, of which 50% are due to open in Greater China in the next three to five years*.

Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts has been a recognised and reputable meetings hotel brand for the last 30 years with its signature meetings programme. As well as comprehensive meetings and event facilities, the brand also offers the Crowne Plaza Sleep Advantage®, 24 hour business services and fully-equipped fitness centres, ensuring guests can work productively, connect with colleagues, and re-energize in order to perform at the top of their game.

With over 4,600 hotels and 679,000 rooms, in nearly 100 countries and territories, IHG is one of the world’s leading hotel companies, with a rich heritage and broad portfolio of nine brands including InterContinental Hotels & Resorts®, Holiday Inn Hotels & Resorts® and Holiday Inn Express Hotels®. IHG’s broad family of brands meets the needs of guests, whatever the occasion – whether an overnight getaway, a business trip, a family celebration or a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

As part of the IHG family of brands, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts participates in IHG’s guest loyalty programme, IHG® Rewards Club. This is the industry’s first and largest guest loyalty programme with over 76 million members worldwide and in 2013, IHG was the first hotel group to offer free internet in all hotels to all loyalty programme members, globally.**

For more information on Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts visit
www.ihg.com/crowneplaza

Connect with us on Twitter:
www.twitter.com/crowneplaza

or Facebook:
www.Facebook.com/crowneplaza

---

* All numbers are correct as of 30 September 2013

** This started from July 2013 for all Elite members and will extend to all members during 2014
What we are seeing today is that ‘real’ and tangible experiences are becoming overlaid with virtual ones. This is not blurring or replacing the ‘real’ experience; it is enhancing it and making it richer as the array of virtual options for keeping in touch has led to an unparalleled flexibility for modern business. This begs the question of how and where are we meeting and is there any difference to the outcome of a meeting if it’s over a coffee or a video call?

At Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts we have spent time listening to our guests and understanding their evolving needs. With nearly 400 hotels in more than 65 countries and as a recognised and reputable meetings hotel brand for the last 30 years, we are experts in planning and executing meetings. Leading the industry with our signature meetings programme, we have three initiatives across the brand that help our meeting planners reach their goals: the Crowne Plaza Meetings Director, two-hour response guarantee to all requests-for-proposal and a daily meeting debrief.

To better understand how business professionals are using both virtual and face-to-face meetings in today’s modern business world, we conducted a global research study that surveyed more than 2,000 business men and women from five major markets around the world - USA, UK, United Arab Emirates (the UAE), India and China. In addition to asking about their overall meetings experiences, we wanted to learn more about their habits, expectations and preferences as well as understand the possible economic benefits of meeting face-to-face.

The results of this new, global research* show that the number of virtual meetings have more than doubled in the past 5-10 years in a bid to save time and money. While virtual meetings have an important role to play, business men and women believe that by investing in more face-to-face meetings they can increase revenues by up to 24%.

Throughout this report, you’ll find insights on meetings from global research as well as expert advice from business psychologist Hazel Carter-Showell on maximising success by using the right meetings, in the right way and at the right time.


**Janis Cannon**  
Global Vice President, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts

* TNS Global research, August 2013. 2,170 respondents were questioned across UK, USA, India, China and the UAE

The Crowne Plaza ‘Business Meetings in a Modern World’ report has been created in association with business psychologist and meetings expert Hazel Carter-Showell.

Hazel is a founding Director of CarterCorson, a UK based firm of business psychologists providing leadership development, assessment and coaching in the public and private sectors. With 18 years of experience in executive recruitment, development and management consultancy, Hazel is a graduate in business and psychology, Fellow of the CIPD with postgraduate qualifications in management learning and an expert in human behaviour at work.
VIRTUAL & FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Business men and women are busier than ever. According to our research, the number of business meetings we’re having – whether virtually or face-to-face – have risen by 63% and 43% respectively over the course of the last 5-10 years. The business community in India feels this most, observing an increase by 80% in virtual meetings, while the UAE has seen the biggest increase in face-to-face meetings by 55%.

There are a number of factors driving the growth of virtual meetings over face-to-face. Not surprisingly distance was the biggest factor (34%), followed by time (24%) and cost (20%), with the main advantage of virtual over face-to-face meetings being greater efficiency of time.

A recent study commissioned by IHG to identify the main trends set to shape travel, ‘The New Kinship Economy: From travel experiences to travel relationships’, found that ten years ago virtual travel was limited – meetings meant seeing people in the same location rather than via video chat. Travel information, even if retrieved from the web, was usually in printed form.

What we’re seeing today, however, is that ‘real’ and tangible experiences are becoming overlaid with virtual ones. This is not blurring or replacing the ‘real’ experience; it is enhancing it and making it richer. So as guests increasingly use digital

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to offering a wide range of conference and meetings services for up to 250 delegates, the Crowne Plaza London St James boasts Europe’s first ever Telepresence public room facility. The Telepresence facility delivers life-like, high definition virtual meeting facilities with superior audio, video and environmental qualities to provide a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face meetings.

www.london.crowneplaza.com
tools to personalise their experiences, identifying their individual needs and responding to them becomes more challenging for the local hotel team*.

In turn, according to Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts’ research, when it comes to building long term trust and ensuring strong client relationships, face-to-face meetings are considered better than virtual meetings by the vast majority of those surveyed (81%). The ability to be able to “read the room” through non-verbal cues such as body language and eye contact was considered key by 50% of respondents.

Face-to-face meetings are perceived to encourage greater involvement from attendees (two thirds of those questioned globally list this as the biggest advantage of a face-to-face meeting), with less chance of misinterpretation (64%) and a greater opportunity to build trust (63%).

Small talk is recognised as a good business meeting tool; the average meeting starts with approximately 7.5 minutes of light-hearted conversation. However, those in the West spend less time on small talk than their eastern counterparts (UK & USA average 6 minutes vs. India 9 minutes, China 7.5 minutes and the UAE 9.5 minutes). They spend time discussing the weather as opposed to news and current affairs, which is the main topic of conversation in China (64%), India (59%) and the UAE (49%).

Using humour to build a relationship is also considered important in the UK (61%), India (54%), China (50%) and the UAE (50%), but less so in the USA (40%).

* ‘The New Kinship Economy: From travel experiences to travel relationships’

“Skin to skin contact, such as a handshake, releases oxytocin which can create a feeling of contentment and security. It also generates trust, which research has shown to be behind many profitable companies.”

Hazel Carter-Showell
Business Psychologist and body language expert
The impact of not arranging enough face-to-face meetings with your business partners can be costly; just over 40% of business men and women surveyed believed they had lost a contract, deal or client, or not secured revenue, simply because they didn’t have enough face-to-face meetings. These people estimated the average amount of yearly revenue they’d lost was 24% - a significant loss, for any business.

Choosing when to meet your business partners is also an important consideration. In order to secure a positive outcome from a face-to-face meeting, all countries showed a clear preference for meeting early in the week – either Monday or Tuesday. Similarly, there’s a clear preference across all countries for meetings to take place in the morning.

“Getting the right time and day is crucial. Tuesday morning is the optimum time for a successful meeting in the UK and USA, while Monday mornings are considered the best time of the week for productive meetings in China, India and the UAE.”
“Given equal products or services, customers will choose a trusted supplier and trust is built through having genuine rapport. Therefore meeting in person is vital to winning business. Similarly, meeting the team that will deliver the services you are buying gives real confidence. The value of establishing trust and confidence with your business circles cannot be underestimated, particularly in an economy where no one wants to spend anything unless they are certain of the return on investment.”

Hazel Carter-Showell
Business Psychologist and body language expert

DID YOU KNOW?

- On average, all business men and women felt that the ideal number of attendees for a face-to-face meeting is seven people.

- When away from a business location, nearly a third of business men and women had been on a conference call in their sitting room, with the next most common locations being in a car (22%), train (13%) and even in bed (12%).

- With over a third of people taking conference calls on the sofa or their bed, perhaps it’s not surprising that on average just over 10% of conference call participants have taken the call whilst wearing their pyjamas (12%) or even just boxer shorts (11%)*.

* Source: Results for survey participants in UK, USA, India and China, but excluding the UAE
SOCIAL MEDIA:
A CRUCIAL BUSINESS TOOL?

The rise of social media has created a wealth of opportunities to research existing and potential business connections – but are business men and women really using the internet to their advantage?

Over half (53%) of professionals across all regions agree that connecting with a business partner via any social media channel can help them build a more personal, trusted and stronger working relationship. Interestingly, despite being known as the social networking channel for professionals, LinkedIn actually comes second to Facebook as one of the most popular sites for building trust with business partners. Facebook appears as a top three choice for all countries and the number one answer for the UK – although LinkedIn is the number one choice in the USA.

The benefits of engaging with business partners through social media is not just restricted to those people with whom we already have an existing relationship. Social media has established itself as a useful tool for researching a new business partner, with nearly half of all business men and women having successfully built trust with other professionals through social media before meeting face-to-face. Respondents in China (85%), India (68%) and the UAE (48%) are the most likely to have prepared for a meeting in this way, although this drops in other countries to just 19% in the UK and 16% in the USA.

DID YOU KNOW?

IHG is the first and only hotel group to offer free internet in all hotels to all loyalty programme members, globally – whether they stay the night or come in for a coffee or an impromptu meeting. This started from July 2013 for all IHG Rewards Club Elite members and will extend to all members during 2014.

“Facebook is one of the most popular sites for building trust”
It’s important to remember how cultural differences impact social media usage across different countries. Whilst social media is used to the same effect across all countries, different channels are popular in different areas. Whilst Twitter is used by 28% of professionals across all countries, micro-blogging channel Weibo and social channel WeChat are most popular in China, used by 60% and 64% respectively.

WHAT THE EXPERT SAYS

“Most people would check peer review sites before booking a holiday, so it makes sense to check social media profiles before deciding whether to connect with someone for business purposes. When using social media to build a relationship, a great starting point is sites that use recommendations from others such as LinkedIn or Facebook (92% of people surveyed said they would trust a recommendation from someone they know according to Nielsen 2012). Once you have made a connection, try to use social media with video – such as Skype – to give you as many social cues as possible and help build rapport.”

Hazel Carter-Showell
Business Psychologist and body language expert

TOP TIPS

• LinkedIn is a well-established social channel for professionals, but don’t underestimate the power of Facebook for business purposes as well. LinkedIn actually comes second to Facebook as the most popular site for building trust with business partners. China is an exception to this, with Weibo and WeChat being the most commonly used platforms.

• Men are 10% more likely than women to believe connecting on social media can help develop a more trusted and stronger working relationship.

Which of the following have you done?
(when building trust with a business partner/client/associate/supplier via social media)

- Looked at Facebook page: 48%
- Connected on LinkedIn: 42%
- WeChat: 40%
- Via Weibo: 31%
- Followed/engaged on Twitter: 28%
- Via Yammer: 10%
- Other: 9%
- None of these: 4%
THE EYES HAVE IT – THE POWER OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

A key advantage of face-to-face meetings is that all the visual clues we need to avoid misunderstandings are available. Non-verbal communication accounts for 93% of how others interpret meaning - what we say is not as influential as how we say it*. Understanding how to read body language can give meeting attendants an added advantage and help to achieve a successful result. In the research, an overwhelming majority of respondents – 96% on average – say they had correctly predicted a positive outcome from a face-to-face meeting based on non-verbal cues, with the most predictable being good eye contact.

Being well-dressed for business meetings continues to be a big consideration for making the right impression, with younger generations continuing to see it as an important factor. Almost 40% of those under 34 ranked ‘being well dressed’ in the top

* Mehrabian, Albert (1972) ‘Nonverbal Communication’
three of non-verbal communications to get right. Other factors included good eye contact, smiling and leaning towards the person speaking in order to demonstrate interest and engagement.

It may seem unconventional, but talking over the boss as a tactic of being heard or noticed in a meeting is well practiced by nearly a fifth of business men and women between 25-34 years old across the world, but only 7% of those over forty-five years old. This shows a shift in behaviour between the generations. This is particularly prevalent in China with 41% of local business men and women saying they use it as a way to be heard or noticed.

**TOP TIPS**

- The results showed that many business men and women don’t perceive a ‘strong handshake’ to be as important. However, we shouldn’t underestimate the good impression that a strong handshake can make, both at the start and end of a meeting. It can be a sign of strength and confidence and help establish trust between attendees.

- We can tell a smile is genuine because it reaches the eyes. The muscles by our mouths are under conscious control, but the muscles that crinkle the eyes and pull down the centre of the eye brows are only activated when we smile genuinely.

- Develop a ‘signature style’ – be authentically yourself, it’ll help you stand out for the right reasons.

*What the Expert Says*

“You can tell a meeting has gone well through micro gestures and expressions – are they leaning towards you, smiling or nodding more, making good eye contact and asking questions about you or your services? This signals increased rapport and interest. They may also start to mirror your body language, which can increase the likelihood of two people reaching agreement from 12.5% to 67%* - hard results from soft skills.”

**Hazel Carter-Showell**
Business Psychologist and body language expert

Ensuring meeting surroundings are comfortable and free from distractions is vital. In fact, having the right meeting facilities and atmosphere was viewed as important by 82% of all respondents. Creating the perfect environment is about getting the details right. Comfortable chairs (53%) and comfortable room temperature (59%) were two of the most important factors, whilst refreshments (47%), a tidy room (45%) and location (47%) should also be priorities for ensuring the right environment for productive meetings.

To ensure the right environment and optimum surroundings for a productive and successful meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts has introduced a series of key initiatives to aid meeting planners in their journey to success. This includes the Crowne Plaza Meetings Director, a highly trained event professional and dedicated point of contact who works with meeting planners to make sure that events are a success from start to finish.

Location and ease of travel to the meeting for attendees is high on the agenda, especially for the UK (56%), USA (54%) and the UAE (47%) who all rated it as one of the top three concerns for executing a successful meeting.
Over a quarter of business men and women in China felt a brightly coloured room was important, whilst just under a third of respondents in India felt neutrally coloured rooms were more productive.

It’s important to be aware of what constitutes acceptable behaviour within a professional meeting environment. Simple things can be a big annoyance – for example, ‘a lack of clear agenda’ was voted the top nuisance that may discourage a business partner from working with someone in the future. Similarly, ‘a lack of a clear conclusion’ is also a big annoyance and features in the top three complaints from all countries, highlighting the importance of structure and clear conclusion and agreement on next steps.

The overwhelming majority (68%) of business men and women admitted that a lack of knowledge about IT or meeting room facilities can dampen their confidence, which perhaps explains why just under 40% of business men and women in all countries said a meeting facilitator is important for successful face-to-face meetings.

As a Crowne Plaza Meetings Director I work very closely with meeting planners to make sure I understand and meet all of their needs and expectations. Each guest has different needs and requirements, and it is very important to get everything right, so that they can focus on running their meeting and leave the details to me. Whether it’s making a specific IT operating system available, taking A/V out of a room altogether or planning an attendee’s birthday celebration at the last minute, we strive to deliver seamless service that helps make our guests’ meetings and events a success.

Keith Allen, Crowne Plaza Meetings Director at Crowne Plaza Costa Mesa Orange County Hotel

“Comfort is vital. If a room is so cold that participants need to use energy to keep warm, for example, this leaves a lot less energy for concentration, inspiration and focus. A lack of clear agenda and conclusion may indicate a lack of professionalism and regard for time. How annoying this is can depend on personality. Some people are time-focused and like to get things done; they want closure and structure. Others prefer spontaneity and leaving discussions open. The challenge is to know your audience and to achieve balance.”

Hazel Carter-Showell
Business Psychologist and body language expert
Hazel Carter-Showell summarises key findings and gives her top tips for successful meetings:

1. **Invest time at the start of a business relationship**

   Put greater importance on face-to-face meetings at the start of a business relationship – the more time you spend in a colleague’s company the quicker you can build a strong and confident relationship based on trust.

2. **Connect before you meet**

   Nearly half (47%) of business men and women build trust before meeting via social channels. Use social media to research a business partner before meeting – you may have a mutual connection or share a business relationship with another colleague, which will help you establish a rapport when you meet. Also be sure to look into how your business partner uses social media culturally and if Facebook would be better than LinkedIn, or perhaps even Weibo if it is a contact in China.
3. Meet in the morning
All countries agreed the morning was the optimum time to meet in order to have a successful meeting, ideally either on a Monday or Tuesday. People usually have more energy in the late morning as body temperature starts to rise just before we wake and continues to rise through the morning as concentration and alertness gradually improve. So aim to meet late morning if possible. Also, a meeting will be most productive if there is time afterwards to act on the actions agreed.

4. Know the signs
Look out for signals of discomfort with what’s been said. These tend to be ‘freeze, flight or fight’ response – such as reduction in movements, leaning away or jaw-clenching. To calm ourselves, we need to generate serotonin through biting lips, clasping, fingers, rubbing head or neck – these are pacifiers, our adult equivalent of sucking our thumb.

5. Be smart with your mobile phone
Mobile phones and laptops are common accessories at meetings, but be careful of how and when they’re used – just over two thirds of people said colleagues checking their phones were a big nuisance in meetings.

6. Location, location...
Choose meeting locations wisely. People may perceive your choice of venue as being reflective of the importance you place on the relationship. Two of the most frequently given factors for success in a business meeting were comfortable chairs (53%) and temperature (59%). To be comfortable is to be free from distractions - and then we are able to focus on the task at hand and engage properly with the people around us.

“Choose meeting locations wisely. People may perceive your choice of venue as being reflective of the importance you place on the relationship.”
With nearly 400 hotels in more than 65 countries, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts are located in major urban centres, gateway cities and resort destinations worldwide. The brand is focused on providing services and features that enable guests to enhance their productivity, giving them a performance edge to drive their career success.

Whether in a meeting room, over the phone or on the golf course, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts understands the needs of meeting planners and attendees and delivers the right tools and services to ensure that each meeting is a success. The brand delivers a series of key initiatives to aid meeting planners in their journey to success: the Crowne Plaza Meetings Director, a trained and certified planner who serves as the single point-of-contact throughout the planning process and during the actual on-site meeting; a two-hour response guarantee to all requests-for-proposal; and a daily meeting debrief.

The Crowne Plaza Meetings Director is a dedicated point of contact who works with meeting planners to make sure that events are a success from start to finish. As a highly trained events professional, they provide proactive advice, thoughtful and creative suggestions as well an itemised account of each day’s expenditures to help Meetings Planners track costs and manage their budget.

The research was carried out by TNS Global in August 2013. 2,170 respondents were questioned across UK, USA, India, China and the UAE.