

# AMBITIOUS GOALS ARE THE MOST MOTIVATING ONES

**IZABELA HELBIN, KRAKOW FESTIVAL OFFICE DIRECTOR**  
*ICE Krakow*

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**Q: What does it take to be a meetings star winner?**

First of all, I am proud, but also surprised - positively surprised, of course, since as far as I know, no venue in history had received the Meetings Star Award two years in a row! This is something out of ordinary...and we managed to do it! This is why I am proud - my team has been keeping the operations of the venue at the highest level for at least two years now, and I would like to remind you that ICE Kraków officially opened in October 2014. The award for our venue, as well as for Kraków, means that we are a significant player on the market. We have a complete infrastructure, technical facilities, professional companies, excellent access with a developing airport, and we are relatively cheap as well. Poland is a safe location, sought after by our potential clients. This is why we are also developing a unique initiative bringing together representatives of restaurants, hotels, transportation services, contractors, Krakow Convention Bureau and other venues in our city. The KRAKÓW NETWORK project aims at creating a true network for collaboration, as well as exchange of business contacts and experience. Thanks to the project, we can shape the market and set the direction of its development. Being a star of the meetings industry is also a pure and unadulterated joy. I learned about the award from my team, who just rushed into my office and brought me the news. I regret that nobody recorded my initial reaction!

**Q: What are your biggest challenges?**

I have always said that our operations should be innovative and our events safe for their participants. The market is very competitive, with many multi-functional venues opening in Poland - they can potentially become our competitors, which is why we keep following the market and constantly innovating. There are many perfect locations in the world, but somehow we manage to attract more and more prestigious events to Krakow. This year we will be organising the UNESCO meeting and next year we will also organise the annual meeting of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network together with Katowice. There are clients who appreciate our venue, our team and our city - and they want to come back. Our goal is to maintain the highest level in Poland. We are the leaders of the domestic market, I am quite sure of it, and in Krakow we make up a kind of a meeting industry ecosystem - this was also the big idea of our new spot - ICE Kraków is an ecosystem, and we invite everyone to join in. However, we are not resting on our laurels and, as of now, we will start implementing our new sales strategy, and the communication strategy implemented since mid-2016 is already bringing some significant results. So, the biggest challenge? Maintaining the leading position in 2017-2020! It is an ambitious goal, sure - but such goals are the most motivating ones!

**Q: How do you use social media?**

I certainly do not want to brag, but I can say that we have mastered the art of using Social Media. We have already received several distinctions and awards for our SM activities. Even before opening, we knew that we had to show everyone how to do it well. The meetings industry in Poland missed the boom for social media, but today I can see other venues in Poland following our example - live broadcasts from events on Facebook,

A graduate of the Krakow University of Economics (Administration and Marketing programme, majoring in Business Administration), Izabela also studied Journalism and Media Communication at the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication of the Jagiellonian University, as well as European Studies at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. A cultural manager, producer, co-producer and coordinator of many international cultural and TV projects, she is a jury member of the prestigious EFFIE Awards competition, holds a seat on the Expert Council THINKTANK and lectures at the Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University. Since January 1, 2011, she has also been the Director of the Krakow Festival Office.



educational materials, Twitter (something we are focusing on right now) and...Instagram! This is the cherry on top; we are the first venue in the world with a sales folder on Instagram. @ice-krakowFOLDER is a marketing masterpiece, a sales tool for our team (as we know the whole world is moving towards mobile), but also a way for us to extend the contact of our guests with ICE Kraków (over 250,000 guests visited the venue in 2016 during 180 events) - there are photographs, films, technical details and descriptions, with everything provided in two languages. This is something unique in the meetings industry.

**Q: How do you best motivate your staff?**

The Krakow Festival Office, operator of the venue, is a large team. We are responsible for carrying out some of the largest cultural events in Krakow (Krakow Film Music Festival, Sacrum Profanum, Misteria Paschalia, Opera Rara and many others). We are also in charge of the Krakow Film Commission and the official network of city information points - InfoKraków. Therefore, our motivation system needs to work on many levels, since the activities of ICE Kraków are tied in with other activities of the Office. Because of that, I have the opportunity to motivate our employees not only financially, but also at an emotional level. Apart from that...ICE Kraków is like a family. We are a cutting-edge venue focused on organising cultural and business events, but... we simply like each other! Maintaining a great atmosphere is also one of the most crucial elements in motivating our people.

**Q: Which other hotels do you admire?**

As I mentioned earlier, we carefully observe and follow the market. SwissTech CC in Lausanne is very impressive, but we did not have an opportunity to compete yet. For many years, we have been admiring HARPA Reykjavik and treating them as a benchmark - despite their "difficult" location on the European map they are doing great! We have also been observing the Parc des Expositions of the Porte de Versailles with growing interest - the concept blew our minds and showed us where the industry is heading. However, I am also well aware that many venues - in Poland and abroad - treat ICE Kraków as their benchmark. This is great news, but also a great responsibility. We just know we have to do everything we can to remain on top. New markets are awaiting, and we are ready for them.