

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely The Hague, featuring a long sandy beach, a pier extending into the sea, and a lighthouse. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text 'WHITEPAPER' and 'HOW TO DEFINE (YOUR) LEGACY' is overlaid in white on the top half of the image.

WHITEPAPER

HOW TO DEFINE (YOUR) LEGACY

◆ The Impact
The Conference
The **Hague.**

What is legacy?



leg-a-cy

noun (plural leg-a-cies)

2. the **long-lasting impact** of particular events, actions, etc. that took place in the past, or of a person's life

Oxford Languages



HOW TO DEFINE (YOUR) LEGACY

Executive summary

What is legacy? It is clear that it is many different things to many different people and organisations. It is focused and discussed by people from across the industry on at trade shows, conferences, in print and online.

For some, legacy is overused, talked about too much and is overtaking the language of our industry.

However, legacy is also the ultimate goal of so many businesses, associations and individuals wishing to achieve some long-term impact and make their mark.

Like every other destination, here at The Hague “legacy” has become a part of our everyday vernacular but we wanted to ensure we were using it properly and not just throwing it around as a word to try and help sales or drive interest.

With this in mind, we set out to explore the meaning of legacy. What does it mean to our audiences and how can we, as The International City of Peace & Justice and a leading destination for global association events, support our clients achieve their legacy.

The results speak for themselves but for us the most important takeaway is that legacy is not and cannot be about the destination or driven by the destination - it is about the organisations coming to the destinations with their own goals, needs and desires.

It was overwhelmingly clear that destinations facilitate events, providing incredible location - often with highly relevant local stakeholder support and specialisms. However, for legacy to truly be achieved it must lie at the heart of an organisations, mission and strategy. Only then can it filter through to event based legacy programmes.

We welcome any feedback and thoughts you have and hope you find the information, research, results and our opinions of interest.

Bas Schot

Head of Convention Bureau

What is legacy?



Method

Although many articles, opinions and ideas on the subject of legacy exist across the wider business events industry it was our desire to focus on the international association sector. We wanted to understand what legacy means to the individuals bringing together membership organisations from around the world for conferences and events that include networking, learning and far more.

The research to create this paper was split into two distinct parts:

Qualitative

We brought together a group of 11 association industry professionals for a 90-minute online workshop. During the workshop we explored the concept of legacy as a wider group as well as splitting into smaller subgroups to discuss specific topics.

The workshop was facilitated by an independent association professional with international experience as both a PCO (professional conference organiser) and AMC (association management consultant).

The attendees included:

- ◆ An in-house PCO running a large legal association conference
- ◆ An in-house association manager
- ◆ An agency PCO running international association events across multiple sectors
- ◆ An agency AMC/PCO running associations and association events across multiple sectors
- ◆ An agency AMC/PCO running associations and association events with a specialism in the healthcare sector
- ◆ Representatives from two of The Hague most substantial venues
- ◆ One destination representative

Watching but not partaking in the discussion was The Hague's marketing manager and independent PR consultant.

Quantitative

Following the qualitative discussion, a series of questions were drafted reflecting the key points and outcomes of the workshop. Using an independent survey tool these were distributed to an external database of association and business event professionals. The database had a bias of contacts working in house at associations organising international events.

We received 70 responses with the following breakdown:

- ◆ 64% in house associations
- ◆ 10% association PCO/agency
- ◆ 13% corporate
- ◆ 2% charity
- ◆ 11% other

What is legacy?

From a broad perspective this means that 74% of the respondents are actively working across association events and therefore highly relevant to the research.

Overall the respondents covered a diverse geography with 16 countries spread across four continents

Austria	3%
Belgium	14%
Czech Republic	1%
France	9%
Germany	7%
Hong Kong	1%
Ireland	1%
Italia	1%
Luxembourg	3%
Malta	1%
Norway	1%
South Africa	1%
Switzerland	3%
The Netherlands	8%
UK	30%
United States	16%

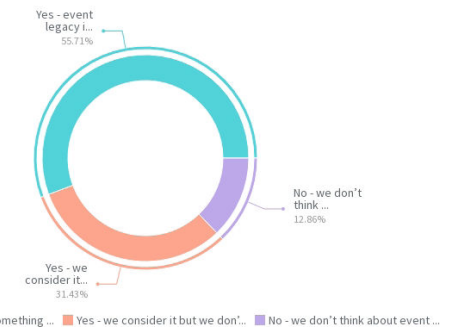
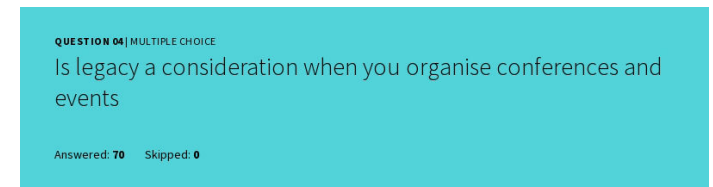
Respondents experience of legacy

Though the core goal of the research was to understand different definitions of legacy and frame it within the parameters of association events, it was vital to start by understanding to what extent the respondents were focusing on legacy throughout their work. As such they were asked whether legacy (whatever their personal definition) is a consideration when organising their events:

- ◆ 56%: Yes - event legacy is something we actively aim to achieve
- ◆ 31%: Yes - we consider it but we don't actively do anything about it
- ◆ 13%: No - we don't think about event legacy at all

Whilst those actively aiming to achieve legacy remained constant across all organisation types; those not thinking about event legacy at all was considerably lower amongst the in-house associations and association PCO/agency respondents (9%), rather than the remaining organisation types (22%).

The combination of in-house associations and association PCO/agency respondents who are either actively aiming to achieve legacy or considering it (even if not currently actively working on it) made up 67% of the respondents, providing a significant base level



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Yes - event legacy is something we actively aim to achieve	39	55.71 %
Yes - we consider it but we don't actively do anything about it	22	31.43 %
No - we don't think about event legacy at all	9	12.86 %

figure 1

of responses for the rest of the research.

Note - for the sake of brevity - throughout the rest of the paper, the combination of in-house associations and association PCO/agency respondents will be referred to as association focused respondents.

Legacy sits at the heart of every association

The question “what is legacy” will be something we will return to throughout this report. However, the key takeaway from both the workshop and survey responses was the fact that legacy is not destination driven but organisation driven.

As pointed out by one respondent in the workshop - who described himself as a legacy sceptic: “Why should it be the associations, responsibility to leave a local legacy?”

Positive activities within destinations have now been undertaken by delegates for more than 20 years, however even a cursory glance can see that they don’t usually leave a long term legacy. They are beneficial in the short term but rarely last for years to come. Should they be undertaken? Yes - but it doesn’t have to be the association event delegates doing it. Should it be called Legacy: Probably Not. Should it be called CSR? Absolutely!

By their nature, associations are legacy organisations - they exist to provide long-term value to their members and the communities that are served by their members. As one participant pointed out: “why should a healthcare association focus on leaving a legacy in the destination that goes beyond

their healthcare specialism? Sure they can do some good, do some CSR stuff - but a legacy must relate back to the association’s own goals.”

These opinions were backed up by the survey, which showed the association focused respondents working to achieve a legacy or considering it prioritised:

- ◆ Alignment with the overall aims of the organisation - (30%)

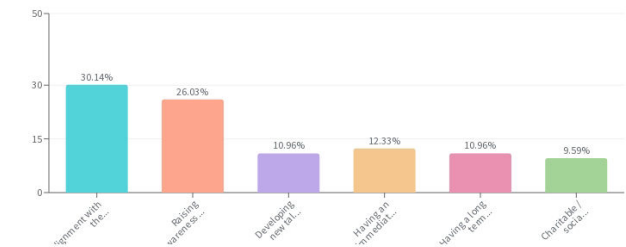
Followed by:

- ◆ Raising awareness / education on a particular subject (26%)

Conversely, having an immediate direct impact on the destination was only a focus for 12% and charitable and social good only 10%.

The workshop did also raise the point that some organisations see the development of talent (education) as being a key metric and marker for a successful legacy. It could however again be argued that this links back to the goals of an association, particularly as so many associations are profession, career and job role focused. This opinion was reflected

QUESTION 07 | MULTIPLE CHOICE
 What does your event legacy focus on?
 Answered: 29 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Alignment with the overall aims of the organisation	22	30.14 %
Raising awareness / education on a particular subject	19	26.03 %
Developing new talent	8	10.96 %
Having an immediate direct impact on the destination	9	12.33 %
Having a long term impact on the destination	8	10.96 %
Charitable / social good unrelated to the organisation or destination	7	9.59 %

figure 2

in the survey with 11% of association focused respondents working to achieve a legacy or considering it agreeing.

The role of the destination

As the responses show, legacy shouldn't be created by a destination looking for reasons to bring a particular event to a particular city.

Instead, destinations should facilitate the organisations' desire to deliver a legacy related to the goals of the association. This was repeated several times during the workshop and backed up in the survey where only 22% of association focused respondents working to achieve a legacy or considering it said the destination should provide project recommendations.

Far more important were other areas (78%) of practical support which were broken down to include:

- ◆ Funding / investment - 22%
- ◆ Training / Education - 10%
- ◆ Staffing and Resources - 20%

Most vital amongst these other practical areas of support though was the importance of network development through "Introductions to relevant stakeholders" - 25%, which shows how much the associations value the unique knowledge that destinations bring to the event planning process.

This was also reflected in the workshop discussions where key feedback from the venues was that they can work collaboratively with the destination and association event planners. Specifically, they can help deliver the necessary infrastructure required not just for event success but also more abstract requirements that might be considered days, weeks, months or even years after an event.

But, what is legacy?

The results clearly show that the organisers and their organisations value legacy related to their own messages and goals far above all else - particularly local unrelated activations.

However, we return to the question of what legacy is. Clearly, association organisers want their event legacy to reflect their organisation but there is some confusion between direct impact and long-term legacy.

As one member of the workshop panel pointed out: "We can measure the immediate effect and direct impact of a meeting on the delegates using well refined event ROI methodology. Legacy though is about being able to define dreams and look back on them in years to come and see an impact."

Another member of the workshop panel said: "It is not for the delegates to leave a legacy in the destination - it is for the destination to create a legacy for the delegates."

He went on to say that the legal event he is bringing to The Hague is not about improving the destination's status as the global leader in peace and justice (and by extension the law). Instead, the destination's status and depth of knowledge will benefit the delegates, who will take that back to their geographic origins and

improve legal practices there. In this example it is clear that the destination is not the beneficiary of the legacy activity but instead the catalyst for long-term global impact.

This sentiment was echoed by another workshop attendee who stated that “legacy goes beyond geographic borders. An event should not be about putting money and delegate

spend into a specific destination - instead the destination exists to reflect the goals of the organisation, attract, engage and ultimately develop future leaders.”

The survey respondents provided a wealth of narrative thoughts and opinions on what legacy is and what it means to them, which are reflected in figure 3.

What legacy to choose?

Returning to the clear fact that legacy should be organisationally driven rather than a destination sell and “add on”. It is interesting to consider how those organisations currently aiming to achieve an event legacy select and identify what their legacy should look like.

Amongst the workshop attendees there was considerable debate about the difference between outcome and legacy. In particular, the discussion ventured into the fact that for associations, legacy is not just about events activation but long-term communication and advocacy from associations across all of their activity - both internally and externally.

Key narrative responses in the survey include mentions of:

- ◆ Scientific value
- ◆ Scientific discovery
- ◆ Community feedback
- ◆ Awareness generation
- ◆ Societal need
- ◆ Organisational goals
- ◆ Strategic plan
- ◆ Mission statement

Both these and the workshop discussion clearly show that legacy goals are challenging, far reaching and high-impact. And they are



figure 3

What is legacy?



The challenge of measurement

certainly not something that is likely to be achieved in the space of a single event.

Consequently, all too often when it comes to events and a desire for legacy there is a focus on highly specific defined and easily measurable outcomes. These are vital metrics and targets when it comes to defining an event and a return on event investment. However, they do not represent a legacy, which might for example (taken from the list on page 9) be the eradication of a particular disease or a permanent solution to clean energy. Realising such significant achievements could take decades. Breaking them into smaller elements purely to provide legacy for one event is a seemingly impossible task and we should therefore instead be focusing on those other positive measurable outcomes that can in turn add incremental value to the overarching strategic goals.

Legacy by the very definition on page 3 of this report is long-lasting, which makes accurate measurement a challenge. When we think of some of the long-term strategic goals of associations and place them into the smart goal headings we can immediately see that “time-based” is probably our biggest measurement challenge.

S - specific
M - measurable
A - attainable
R - relevant
T - time based

What is long-term and long-lasting when it comes to legacy? Should we be looking at a week, a month, a year, a decade... perhaps even a century. To the Mayfly a week represents 700% of its life time - for the average human that would be more than 550 years. Modern homes are constructed to last 25-50 years in many places - yet there are examples of 2,000 year+ structures all over the world.

It is therefore no surprise that 40% of the association focused respondents working to achieve a legacy don't currently measure the impact or find it too difficult.

A further 33% use surveys of event attendees, whilst 14% base success on event attendance levels. However, we can clearly see that these two groups would not actually be measuring long-term legacy - instead they are focused on event outcomes and ROI. These are both worthy measurements to take - but they are not about legacy..

During the workshop the subject of measurement was discussed but again the limitations were recognised. It was however made very clear by several participants that measurement is only possible if clear goals are set in the first place. KPIs and long-term strategic plans should be created at an organisational level. These feed into the event strategy and therefore any event legacy programme, which can be reflected on over time.

Even with overarching strategic goals in place, long-term measurement can be a challenge. This was pointed out by one workshop participant as being particularly true where legacy is focused on the education of individuals. Success here might only be achieved through incremental changes that can be too small to measure but over years add value and knowledge to not just one person but a whole sector - and that in time creates a global impact.

What is legacy?

The simple truth is that goals and targets must be set - but for associations with lofty and long-term goals it is perhaps our children or grandchildren who might see their success. Relating that back to one specific event in one specific destination many years in the past will be almost impossible.

The importance of legacy

Legacy is being taken into consideration more by some organisations than others. However, how important is it even to those working on it and thinking about it?

For those association focussed respondents who do consider the legacy of their events, on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being most important) legacy is a high priority, with 62% rating it an 8 or above (27% gave it a 10/10).

Amongst those actively working on achieving a legacy programme 62% consider it to be part of their overall event strategy, working on it from the very beginning of the process. A further 17% consider it at destination selection stage and the same number when planning logistics.

It is of interest to understand why 34% of association focused respondents are thinking about / considering event legacy but don't currently actively pursue it and a further 9% do not consider event legacy at all.

In both groups it is no surprise to see that lack of budget is a significant factor (27%). This is particularly understandable at a time of significant global financial instability.



However, for those not doing anything at all, not knowing where to start is an equally (27%) substantial barrier to legacy work.

Lack of time is a similar challenge for both at 20% and 18% respectively.

Amongst these same respondents we then looked at where they would go to seek support on defining and achieving an event legacy and it was here that the role of the destination is important.

20% would approach industry associations, whilst a further 18% would seek advice from the destination. It is no surprise in the modern digitally connected world that internet search also ranks high at 15%, closely followed by academics with 12%.

Conclusion and key messages

Ultimately, we should start by remembering that association events are an incredibly powerful tool to bring people together and bring about global change. They are a catalyst for future success and must always be considered so. The destinations facilitate this by creating the perfect physical place for people to gather.

It is clear that legacy must not be destination led but in most cases the destination must be on hand to guide, provide tools and resources - perhaps even financial support to ensure success.

The creation and subsequent success of an event legacy programme must start at the top of an Association, with organisational goals, aspirations and plans. Once these are in place elements can filter down, they can be broken into manageable pieces and focused on as a part of individual event strategy. However, whether they should be described as event legacy is a big question as it is clear that one event over a finite period of time is unlikely to achieve long-term legacy. Instead, the events create significant outcomes and steps on an association's journey towards their eventual legacy.

In essence, the event creates the outcomes that feed the association's legacy and the destination's role is to facilitate this process. They do this by providing the too-busy event planner and association executives with the tools and resources they need to achieve more than their immediate desire to deliver the event.

As controversial as this might sound, moving forward as an industry we should not be driving the legacy discussion. Instead, we should be asking the questions about what more we can do to support the legacy discussions within associations. We should be providing them with the tools to make their own decisions - which sometimes might not be to include a legacy programme in their events at all.

Painting walls and tidying a city are admirable and positive ways to help an event achieve its corporate social responsibility goals but they are not a true legacy. As a global industry we can be a part of the change but first of all we need to recognise our place as a partner and supporter - then do everything we can to help achieve the long-term success that will deliver global change for our descendants.

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