

# The harder it gets to be heard, the harder you need to work!

*QUICK TALK: Ozgul Ozkan Yavuz, General Manager, Istanbul Convention Bureau*

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## **Q: What trends do you think we will see in meetings and events in your city in the next 12 months?**

More engagement and greater cooperation between buyers and suppliers than ever before. Unfortunately, with the recent events that happened/are happening all around the world, our industry nowadays has a new 'normal'. Not just in our city, but in all major cities, we all have more responsibilities.

Immediate reactions will be needed and more solutions to be adopted by suppliers and destination representatives from CVBs at venues along with a need to commit to even greater cooperation. We also need to be more engaged with the local authorities as well as local industry partners to be able to act as a team and send the correct message. Maybe we can call the next 12 months the 'recovery period' for our

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industry...

**Q: How is your city positioned as a meeting destination today and what are its positive attributes that are often overlooked?**

Cities like Istanbul, which has a long history dating back 8,500 years, are more likely to be recognized as an 'Historical City'. Istanbul is not only a UNESCO World Heritage Site but also a modern city and has become a hub for contemporary artistic developments and creative industries. This was the main reason why we have launched our re-positioning campaign – '**A Tale of Two Cities**'. To sum it up; the aim was to demonstrate the breadth and variety of Istanbul, old and new, while highlighting the city's high-tech modern infrastructure juxtaposed against its monumental history to metaphorically reflect 'A Tale of Two Cities'.

However, we are still aware that the modern part of the city is often overlooked. For instance, we always highlight that we have historical unusual venues as well as high-tech modern venues for meeting planners, as we know that the first thing that comes to their minds is historical palaces, cisterns or mansions... To be able to shift perceptions, we keep our message clear and consistent.

**Q: How hard is it to get the message out about all that your city has to offer?**

A bit challenging when you have a lot to say! This is the main challenge for big cities like Istanbul, because there are so many aspects that you want to send across and on top of this there is always something new to say, always. I believe the harder it gets to be heard, the harder you need to work! And this is what we do; keep updating the target that already knows the city and make sure to give as much info as possible to the target that does not know what the city has to offer for meetings.

**Q: How do you see the relationship between the meetings industry and the tourism industry?**

A close relationship. My background is in the tourism industry, where I spent almost 20 years in the Ministry in different roles, and I believe there is a direct relationship between the tourism industry and the meeting industry. The tourism industry showcases all aspects of a destination and the meeting industry generates tourism. Istanbul became a city of arts, culture, festivals and international events. Many years of promoting Istanbul effectively also impacted Istanbul's position as a meeting destination. Of course we cannot say it's not only about promotion but also the investments that have been made for Istanbul, such as convention facilities, hotels, new transportation facilities etc. Tourism and meeting industries are tools for development and a better life.

**Q: Tell us something that might surprise meeting planners about your city?**

Well, I would say that Istanbul is the capital of diversity and opportunities, so there might be a lot of things to be surprised about, but in my personal opinion the number of universities in the city, which is 53, always surprises planners. Istanbul is a hub of learning and innovation and this is one of the main reasons that the city is growing rapidly in every way. An historical city with a modern outlook – as mentioned earlier: A Tale of Two Cities...

**Q: Can content marketing drive meeting planners to your destination?**

Yes, indeed! I believe in the effectiveness of content marketing for destinations as well as other brands. Currently the trend is shifting more to experience marketing, but we always need content. It's a powerful way to describe your destination's capabilities, or in other words, its story, in a creative way to the planners. As Istanbul CVB, we have been working on a new marketing strategy for the last 6-8 months and we are collecting video testimonials from the association directors/organisers during their congress in Istanbul. Meeting planners hear about what Istanbul has to offer them from their colleagues, not from us. With this we are spreading their experience to others. We have received really positive feedback from our colleagues as well as planners. Thus, I believe this is a good example for content marketing which shows that it works to drive meeting planners to our destination.



*Istanbul Convention Bureau*