

Convening association and meeting professionals

I was fortunate to attend the biggest education and networking event of the Illinois, Chicago-based Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) called “Convening Leaders”. Over 5,000 delegates from associations and the meeting industry in 36 countries, mostly from the US, participated in the annual event held on January 8 to 11 in Austin, Texas.

PCMA is the definitive authority in education, business networking and community engagement for leaders in the global meetings, convention and business events industry. With more than 6,500 members and 50,000 customers, PCMA drives innovation through risk-taking, research and data-driven decision-making.

The conference at the Austin Convention Center featured numerous simultaneous and plenary sessions, each providing unique learning experiences filled with inspirational presentations, real-world case studies, peer exchange and access to leading solution providers. The conference theme, “Designing Collaboration,” updated the attendees on trends and evolving behavior in which activity design and collaboration intersect. The sessions focused on how education helps innovate, inspire and connect people.

The sessions that I enjoyed the most were the thought leadership series and the so-called Main Stage plenaries which featured speakers who shared their insights on topics like collaborative economy and the meaning of trust in the digital age, the third industrial revolution—powering a greener more global economy, making ideas happen and achieving the extraordinary. Then there was “Braindates”, an innovative platform that helps you find like-minded people to meet one-on-one and share knowledge in a structured way so you get more tangible results from networking.

The convergence of association executives and meeting professionals in one conference provided opportunities for both sides to explore cooperation and collaboration in enhancing how meetings, conferences and exhibitions are undertaken to delight customers, i.e., members of associations.

Here in our country, the Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives (PCAA) and the Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers are working together to put associations and meeting professionals in one platform, like the joint table-top exhibition held at the Philippine International Convention Center in the last PCAA Associations Summit IV in November 2016. Such collaboration provides opportunities for associations to know what's out there in terms of meeting and conference venues, professional conference organizers, technologies, tools and resources for events, not only here but also abroad.

The phrase from the poem of Rudyard Kipling, "never the twain shall meet" certainly does not apply in the context of association and meeting professionals. More and more, these two groups are convening and exploring ways of improving their services to members and other constituencies.