

Press release 14th October 2004

Premium service in the "centre of power": 5th anniversary of the axica Congress and Convention Centre

"I'm not one to claim that we are better than other operators of premium event locations", says Jochen A. Lohmar-McKinnon with German-Scottish understatement, "but we are most definitely different from the others." He should know – as the Managing Director for the axica Congress and Convention Centre, he has elevated the idea of uniqueness to a business model. Presenting guests with a combination of flawless service, dedication and imagination, the axica likes to surpass the usual expectations.

An apt physical framework was supplied by the Californian star architect Frank O. Gehry, whose award-winning designs can also be marvelled in Paris (American Center), Weil am Rhein in Germany (Vitra Design Museum) and Bilbao (Guggenheim Museum). "The best thing I've ever done", claims Gehry of the DZ BANK building on Pariser Platz, host to the axica.

The maintenance of this architectural masterpiece is a challenge indeed – a daily balancing act to accommodate visitor demands on the one hand, and on the other, a sophisticated interior design that needs to be protected from the wear-and-tear of the many events staged here.

Luckily, most of the guests – the list frequently reads like a who's-who of the German Bundestag – are quite familiar with how to treat buildings of high architectonic value. In the past, regular guests have included Prof. Dr. Roman Herzog, Gerhard Schröder, Dr. Guido Westerwelle, Dr. Angela Merkel, Walter Riester, Laurenz Meyer, Otto Schily, Dr. Edmund Stoiber, Jürgen Trittin, Wolfgang Clement, Franz Müntefering and Lothar Späth. Späth has even hosted his talkshow "Späth am Abend" at the axica.

The list of international politicians, ambassadors and royalty that has visited the axica is long and impressive. John Major and Queen Beatrix have traversed the same red carpet at the axica as Václav Havel and Madeleine Albright.

An even longer list of visitors includes all those high-ranking representatives of the economy and the media who regularly attend symposiums, conferences, receptions and private functions here at the axica. However, most of these wish to remain unnamed – consequently, their identities are guarded as closely as the famed address book of Berlin's Countess Isa von Hardenberg. At the axica, discretion is the foremost virtue practised, closely followed by our fully

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professional security management.

We have 15 professional staff members permanently working in what must be some of the most stunning offices of Berlin; for large-scale events, our team grows to incorporate up to 200 staff, responsible for areas such as service, catering, security, event chauffeur service, technical service and decoration. Because personal contact to high-ranking clients and the trust associated with this is paramount to the success of a high-class event, we have decided here on Pariser Platz to stop working together with unprofessional or badly managed agencies. We prefer to take care of our discerning clients directly – who in most cases will return themselves or recommend us to others.

With some pride, we look back to the successes of our more than 300 meticulously organised events. In our role of promoting the German capital, we most certainly have a wishlist for our fifth anniversary: no more negative marketing strategies, more self-confidence for the capital, and more efforts towards joint activities by the city's tourism and promotional associations. Berlin is a top choice when it comes to hosting conventions and conferences. No significant German company can afford not to hold at least one of their prime events in the capital. As Berlin is already the centre of politics, the axica is the prime choice for the numerous events held by the country's political parties, associations and interest groups.

Seeing that operators of event locations are very directly involved in the promotion of the city they are part of, infrastructure deficiencies can be difficult to compensate even with the best business model. A capital without a major international airport simply isn't very attractive to the international congress market.

The axica nevertheless has plenty of optimism for the future. Once all the construction sites have disappeared from the face of Pariser Platz, the location will become even more profitable. Compared to most other European capitals, Berlin is very attractive in terms of visitor expenditure. Research by the German Hotel Association (IHA) reveals that in Berlin, a guest pays 87 Euro per overnight booking on average; this is 50 Euro less than an overnight stay in Rome, Paris, London or Madrid. For a convention involving hundreds of visitors and spanning several days, this can be a crucial factor in selecting an appropriate location.

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