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Abbott Vascular boosts sales team in Malta

The pharmaceutical firm's award-winning annual sales conference had a Bond

THE BRIEF

Abbott Vascular's annual sales conference came at a challenging time for the pharmaceutical firm. A major stake of the parent company (Guidant) had been sold to a competitor

(Boston Scientific) and its key product in vascular care had been licensed as part of the deal. The company wanted to motivate its 350-strong European sales team, emphasise teamwork, and prepare them for what was going to be a competitive year ahead.

"The event was in April and one of the key requests from the client was a nice environment and good weather. It was also important to give delegates the chance to go somewhere they had not been before," says agency World Events business director, Marina Conrad-Evers.

CHALLENGES Finding a location in Europe that guaranteed good weather in April and that was also new to many of the delegates was a challenge.

World Events identified several potential destinations but presented Malta as the strongest contender.

The only problem with Malta, according to Conrad-Evers, is that while flight connections have improved

significantly over the past few years, it can still be difficult getting a large number of delegates into the island out of the summer season.

SOLUTIONS Malta was chosen because it offers year-round good weather, cost effectiveness and has a good infrastructure and meeting facilities. "Malta as a location has incentive appeal," explains Conrad-Evers.

"Apart from flight access out of season, the challenges with this event were minimal. We managed to get all the delegates there but it could have been easier," she adds.

The agency also signed up local DMC Allianz to help with transfers, and logistics on the ground and ensure smooth running of the event.

EXECUTION The event was held around the launch of Bond film *Casino Royale*, so World Events worked with Abbott Vascular to create a secret agent theme, linked to the company's business strategy. The creative concept positioned delegates as secret agents, going on a 'Mission to Malta', confronting their enemy



and working as a team to defeat them. Some delegates were positioned as double agents, working against the team. Prior to the event, a teaser email was sent to delegates, calling them to action to rescue a missing comrade in Malta and asking them to register online, which was followed by several further communications.

The Abbott agents were met in Malta by actors dressed in traditional spy outfits and were transferred to their hotel, the Westin in St Julians. They checked in by completing a secret phrase, and each received a personalised room key and lanyard. When they entered their rooms, delegates

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MARINA CONRAD-EVERS, BUSINESS DIRECTOR, WORLD EVENTS

received a pre-recorded phone message from their contact 'M', giving agents details of their first mission – to find their teams and discover the location of the missing agent, which was followed by an SMS blast at 7pm calling agents to the bar for a themed welcome reception. 'Spy packs' were also placed in delegates' rooms containing items to be used over the event to achieve success.

The next day, the opening plenary continued the Bond theme with an opening sequence featuring the names of the conference speakers against silhouettes like the classic Bond titles. Each session during the plenary was themed with its own lighting and sound design, reflecting a distinct Bond film. The closing session of the day featured a special message from 'M' calling all agents to the front of

the hotel for an afternoon activity to find the missing agent. They had to combine sections of maps contained within their spy packs and a code-cracker card. The delegates received clues as to where they believed they would find their missing agent. They then undertook team-building activities on the location, Popeye Village, to find and release the missing agent and to expose double agents.

The second day of plenary featured a special opening sequence including footage of the opening day's activities, and a keynote presentation 'License to Win'. This was followed by break-out sessions in the afternoon and a final closing call to action, which encouraged teams to find the final clue, in the hotel pool, which gave the location of the evil Dr T's lair and how to get there. A trail of fire was lit, leading agents from the hotel to the nearby Reef Club for a

themed dinner followed by a Bedouin style disco. A stage presentation during the evening revealed the identity of Dr T (the client) and explained key messages from the conference, and that the real challenge was still to come.

The closing session on the final day featured a video shot throughout the week highlighting the delegate experience and providing delegates with the opportunity to talk about how their mission would help them during their day-to-day work.

VERDICT The event picked up gold in the Best Conference – Short Haul category at the 2008 Eventia International Awards. Abbott Vascular says that logistically and production wise, World Events were "spot on and at the top of their game".

Conrad-Evers adds: "The client said it was their best sales conference ever, and that it would be a hard act to follow."

FACTFILE

Client Abbott Vascular
Event Conference
Group size 350
Agency World Events
Dates April 2007
Venue The Westin, Malta
Budget Undisclosed

theme to help prepare staff for a competitive year ahead

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