

Organizers hail debut Summit of the Americas and show promise to evolve

By **Jas Ryat** on March, 23 2018 | Associations



Both IAADFS President and CEO Michael Payne and ASUTIL Secretary-General José Luis Donagaray discussed a common theme of perspective vs. reality during a press event held at the 2018 Summit of the Americas

IAADFS President and CEO Michael Payne and ASUTIL Secretary-General José Luis Donagaray hosted a press conference after the first jointly organised Summit of the Americas in Orlando.

They acknowledged that the event was a work in progress and, following some concern from exhibitors about certain aspects of the event, said they were both open to dialogue to make changes.

Thanking the teams involved, Donagaray admitted it was not easy to organize the Summit because of

the different cultures and different ways of working at ASUTIL and IAADFS.

“We have to fix a lot of things for the future just to be more efficient,” he said. “For us it was a very good experience. We are satisfied with the result. Always it can be better; always we can improve a lot of things.”

Payne admitted that both teams would have preferred to kick off the Summit at a new location, but it was not feasible with the contractual agreements with the Marriott hotel.

Turning to the conference sessions, he said: “We think the speakers and addition of the educational [conference] speakers were very good, very complementary and very good quality.”

Surveys will be sent out in the next few days to canvass opinion on the Summit.

Speaking about feedback in general, Payne said most exhibitors had seen who they needed to see during the show.

“It’s all about perception; traffic looks like it is down, numbers will let us know, but people are having quality meetings,” he noted, admitting that some people were commenting on less traffic. But he said that happened every year and was not an unusual comment.

Turning to the challenges faced by the organizers, Payne said that on-site registrations from the Caribbean would be down for a number of reasons.

He noted that this year’s Summit boasted more square footage than last year (1,000 square feet more, with eight more exhibitors).

Payne did not reveal official numbers, but said overall all registrations as of Tuesday were 1,860, roughly 160 fewer than last year.

Next year’s move to the Hyatt hotel in Orlando would bring benefits to the Summit, according to Payne, who said there were more meeting room spaces that were more closely connected to the exhibition area.

The Hyatt has everything nearby in one location, including shops and bars, as opposed to the spaced-out nature of the Marriott. He added that the show would be held at the Hyatt “for the next couple of years for sure”, and after that the organizers would look at other locations “as we are not bound to the US”.

Donagaray said he had spoken to “a lot of brands. They are really satisfied with the amount of meetings they had and the business. The whole Americas is doing well, maybe Latin America is doing a little bit better because Brazil is doing better,” he observed, concluding: “We are satisfied with the first show.”

Regarding the social events, Payne said people were requesting more networking time/options.

The new Networking Time session, held on Wednesday for paying non-exhibitors to meet visitors, boosted traffic this year on an otherwise slow day, said Payne.

But some exhibitors complained that they were losing visitors to this networking time.

“We wanted to stop people having meetings in the lobby. This way, people paid for the networking time on Wednesday. We wanted to have an added value for Wednesday,” explained Payne.

Both Payne and Donagaray ended the session with notions of amplifying the positives and working to strengthen the show as a team.