

Enabling DEAL MAKING at Live & Online TRAVEL TRADE EVENTS

To increase the economic impact of events and create a win-win situation for destinations and business tourists, the Meetings, Incentive, Conference and Events (MICE) industry in Africa needs effective technology to support business deals. Pitch and Match – a business matchmaking app for live and online events – provides a perfect solution.

By Des Langkilde.

Using the latest Africa Hotel Investment Forum's delegate deal values as a yard stick, their independent report of \$124 million – an average of \$4.6 million per deal and \$4.4 billion for all AHIF events over 5 years – serves as testimony to the value of deal-making at events (see page 18). And with Africa's international tourism growth expected to rise by 8% for the remainder of 2017 (see page 17), the potential for business deal making at live and online events has never been better as business tourism in Africa continues to expand.

Technology ranging from simple apps to comprehensive meeting planners at event websites have become a mainstay of exhibitions and conferences around the world.

However, according to Robert Bol, CEO of Pitch and Match – a business matchmaking application for live and online events – event technology must extend far beyond the day of an event by providing year-round support for event organisers. To discover how his company's technology complements deal making, Tourism Tattler (t) interviewed Robert Bol (RB).

(t) How do Pitch and Match enable deal making?

RB: Pitch and Match connects delegates with speakers, exhibitors and each other by delivering the content they need and the connections they value. To ensure that the time visitors invest at events is worthwhile, the participant can profile, match, interact, pre-schedule meetings and conference sessions. It all ends up in their personal event schedule.

Participants can arrange one-on-one meetings either at specific on-site or off-site locations during the event or conduct online video meetings. It only takes one click to start a high-quality video call. There's no disconnect. The participant stays in the browser.

The event organiser decides how each participant can engage and use their personal event schedule. Before participants get access the organiser automatically grants (or sells) each group specific privileges and limitations.

(t) What feedback have you had from users?

RB: Our customers have told us that Pitch and Match has become a fundamental part of their event experience and that matchmaking and the ability to make deals are the key reasons for participants to register for their events.

(t) What sets Pitch and Match apart from the competition?

RB: Pitch and Match is the first business matchmaking app in the world to integrate a video call feature directly into the app itself.

(t) Is the technology easy to use?

RB: As a browser app, Pitch and Match can run on a desktop or tablet and participants can also check out their event schedule on their smartphone.

From an event organisers perspective, they can set-up Pitch and Match in less than 30 minutes. They can also use our Wordpress plugin and API to integrate seamlessly into their existing online community, event website and registration flow.

(t) Is online business match making a threat to live events?

RB: Online events are here to stay and, rather than being a threat, event organisers can actually benefit from it.

People attend online business events because it enables them to reach out to the world in less time, and at a lower cost. To grow their business year round, many destination managers and event organisers have already embraced online events. In doing so, they have been able to reach new audiences and maintain strong relationships with existing ones. They've increased their global reach because there's no restriction on attendees when it comes to online events, and location doesn't matter. Online events also help organisers generate extra income year round.

(t) Can you give us examples of Pitch and Match's application at events?

RB: This year alone, Pitch and Match has facilitated 300 events with 150,000 attendees in more than 50 countries. The [Belize Virtual Expo](#) won an Award for the Belize Tourism Board. They used Pitch and Match to enable the destination managers from Belize to conduct business in pre-scheduled video calls with travel agents, tour operators and others. Readers can discover how this works by watching our [YouTube video](#).

Our Service Partner in Latin America decided to build the Online Latin America Travel Trade Community, which has become the place to sign up for live and online events.

(t) What about Africa based events?

RB: Pitch and Match are proud to have appointed Tourism Tattler as our Service Partner in Africa, and look forward to enabling the first live deal making event in Africa at the HVS [THINC Africa Conference](#) in Cape Town, South Africa this August (see page 27).

For more information visit www.pitchandmatch.com