**CASE STUDY**

**PCOA Conference 2017**

**CLIENT:** Professional Conference Organisers Association

**EVENT:** PCOA 10th Anniversary Conference

**ATTENDEES:** 440

**DAY/S:** Three

**DATE:** 26-28 November 2017

**BUDGET:** Undisclosed

---

**The Client**

The Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) is the leading body representing the interests of Professional Conference Organisers and Event Managers in Australia and New Zealand.

The Association aims to increase the standard of professionalism of its members and promote a better understanding of the roles, functions and contributions of Professional Conference Organisers and Event Managers in the conference and event sector.

**The Event**

The PCO Association gave the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCCEC) the mammoth task of helping to deliver an awe-inspiring conference and exhibition for 440 meeting industry professionals - the who’s who in the meetings industry.

**The Challenge**

There’s nothing more nerve-racking than hosting experts in your own industry. But GCCEC took on the challenge and in November it was the destination for the Professional Conference Organisers Association Conference.

The theme of **MEETING Beyond Tomorrow** had two sub-themes of Innovation and Engagement. It also happened to be the 10th anniversary of the annual conference and exhibition.

The 440 delegates from around the country explored ways to stay competitive and take the ever-changing meetings and events industry into the future.

Keeping the theme of **Innovation and Engagement** in mind, GCCEC event planners challenged themselves to come up with something to really wow the crowd. It was a discussion around doing something out of the box with the menus that was the genesis for an idea. Talk turned from on-trend grazing platters to a tongue-in-cheek comment about throwing desserts in parachutes off the 12m high catwalk in the Arena. Executive Chef Garry Kindred’s imagination took off.

Two hundred mini toy parachutes were sourced from all over the Gold Coast and it was decided the macarons were the best treat to make the stunt work. But after a couple of trial attempts, it was clear they were too heavy. Thinking outside the box, smaller, lighter versions of the meringue and almond-based dessert were created.

With the type of dessert sorted, the logistical work had to be addressed. How were two hundred 10g macarons attached to toy parachutes going to be dropped at a certain point in time and from a catwalk in the ceiling without getting tangled?

Eleven GCCEC staff were recruited for the practice challenge and underwent a safety induction before being installed 12m in the air on the catwalk. Strategically placed along the catwalk the staff then threw the macaroon-laden parachutes down on the Arena floor. The practice was a success! All was now ready for GCCEC to kick off the conference with its own twist on innovation.

On the evening of the opening, everything and everyone was in place. As the MC was queued to say ‘thanks for dropping in’, 200 delectable macarons floated from the ceiling into delegates’ hands. The feat certainly set the tone for the conversation during the rest of the three-day conference and exhibition. And the best thing about the feat? The macarons were delicious.

**Client Testimonial**

The PCO Association was very grateful to Adrienne Reading and Michelle Mann for everything they did to make it possible for the association to hold its 10th birthday conference & exhibition at GCCEC.

The post conference feedback has been superb. A lot of this can be attributed to the professionalism and friendliness of the GCCEC staff.

It was a privilege for the PCO Association management team to have the opportunity to work with such well-trained happy staff.