

Beyond the Programme: Why Relationships Are the Real Deliverable

CPO HANSER SERVICE applied the Fraunhofer Innovation Ecosystem Strategy Tool at its team meeting – and discovered that the programme was not the point



Every congress starts with a programme. But the most valuable thing that happens at a congress rarely appears on it. At CPO HANSER SERVICE, we have been quietly asking ourselves this question. As a professional congress organiser with over forty years of experience, we know how to fill a room and a timetable. We are comfortable thinking in programme slots,

session chair and logistics. But at our most recent annual team meeting, we chose to try something different.

We introduced the Innovation Ecosystem Strategy Tool, developed by the Fraunhofer Centre for Responsible Research and Innovation (CeRRI) at Fraunhofer IAO. The tool maps the players in any given innovation ecosystem – assigning roles, resources and relationships – and makes visible what is often left implicit: who benefits from collaboration, what each actor contributes and where value is actually created.

A different lens on a familiar format

Using the tool as a structured exercise, we did not focus on what CPO does in isolation. Instead, we asked: who are the actors in our ecosystem? Which roles do we play: orchestrator, connector, knowledge broker? Which roles are currently missing? And where could collaborative formats unlock value that remains untapped?

'Instead of discussing service offerings, the conversation moved to relationships – to trust, and to the question of what we and our clients actually co-create.'

The shift was immediate. Isolated programme items gave way to a discussion of relationships, mutual dependencies, and long-term value. For the first time in some years, the room talked less

about what we deliver and more about what we build – together with clients, associations and partners – over time.

Relationships over programme slots

For PCOs, the implications are practical as well as philosophical. Scientific congresses are, at their best, moments of collective knowledge creation. Speakers, delegates, sponsors, associations, industry partners and host institutions are all actors in an innovation ecosystem. Yet too often they are managed as isolated programme elements – booked, briefed, and optimised separately.

The Innovation Ecosystem Strategy Tool invites you to draw these connections explicitly. It helps a team see who plays which role, where dependencies lie and how meeting formats – panels, workshops, side events, networking sessions – could be designed not just to deliver content, but to cultivate sustained ecosystem relationships and lasting co-creation.

What we took away

The session produced no new strategy document or rebranded service offering. What it produced was a different quality of conversation – one rooted in co-creation, long-term thinking and shared value. We believe that is exactly the kind of conversation the meetings industry needs more of.

Inge Hanser, Managing Director of CPO HANSER SERVICE: 'A very useful tool that works well for events. Please feel free to contact Nico or me at any time for further information.'

Nico Lindemann,

Chief Technology Officer (CTO), GLOBIT GmbH, the conference software subsidiary of CPO HANSER SERVICE GmbH

