

Creating a pathway to success

The Young Managers Club Global Congress is always something just a little bit different in the FINAT agenda. It's generously sponsored by Mark Andy, Delfort, Gallus, and Nilpeter – but that doesn't mean to say the content is largely TECHNICAL. It's not!



The 22 delegates participating in the 2017 YMC Global Congress don't come to hear about the latest technical innovations in the label industry supply chain. They know all about them. They have come to fine-tune their skills in being MANAGERS, because they (and the companies they work for) believe they will be moving up the management ladder, and eventually be the leaders in the industry.

The 'young talents' attending YMC Congress are all part of an eminently successful pool of companies specialising in "labelling" in its broadest sense, and it's essential that, as they move up the management ladder, they know and understand what they're doing in running a BUSINESS. They already know all about running a press!

The agenda for this year's Congress in beautiful Lisbon opened with thanks to the sponsors from YMC VP Chris Jones of Alphasonics (UK), deputising for YMC President Dana Kilarska (SK), whose commitments as recently-appointed second-generation MD of family-owned label printers Purgina prevented her from attending the event.

Come in, young talent!

Proceedings on the first day opened with a special and important interactive workshop, led by expert independent strategist Bert van Loon (NL), whose brief was to expand on the thought platform established at the 'Young Talent' meeting in Berlin a few weeks ago on building a programme to recruit new external talent to the industry. As Bert van Loon said: 'What would the world be without labels?' So what skills do we need to attract? Of course, as well as 'tekkies', we also need salesmen – and if they're experts in that arena, we can always train them in the technologies. And whatever talents we want to attract, we need to establish an attractive platform for doing so: promote the industry. We need to define how best we can reach our potential audience – and make use of that important new choice in recruitment: the social media. In teams, YMC delegates worked together to invent some thought-provoking ways to promote the specialist world we inhabit to potential industry entrants. Company magazines, blogs, videos were all proposed and, said Bert van Loon, all could form part of a practical programme in terms of content by 'showcasing what you can do with printed labels'. The many available routes to recruitment were also explored; and Bert van Loon concluded the workshop by saying there had been 'a lot of ideas to boil down to specific proposals in the next few weeks'. The ultimate aim, he said, is to 'make this real': to have a solid programme ready to go live in time for Labelexpo Europe in September.

Successful innovation

After a well-deserved lunch, delegates turned their minds to innovational thinking -- with Erik Joosten, founder and CEO of Arion (NL), a leading international company in the healthcare market with a special focus on ageing and recovering customers. Himself a successful innovator, Joosten said, it's all about selling a mindset, and in his company 'we don't sell products, we sell solutions.' He introduced the SMILE concept for a successful business: Socially-responsible; Market-driven; Innovative; Leading; Energetic. Erik Joosten and Arion certainly meet all these requirements, and have developed two major innovations in the specialist markets the company serves: the development of a device to aid pulling on and removing compression stockings, and introducing the Swash wet wipes range to the European market – both of which are of major assistance to bedridden patients. That Mr Joosten is an energetic, creative, and active businessman, as well as a successful one, was evident to all participants – and inspiring.



It was then the turn of Pau García-Milà (ES) to introduce his own particular – and very different – route to successful innovation...in the clouds. He is a successful young entrepreneur, having founded the eyeOS digital workplace, which won several awards for innovation; IdeaFoster, an 'idea materializer' for both start-ups and big corporations; and, among other things, the Leaders University, an online education platform. He is also a regular broadcaster on TV and radio in Spain, and the author of four books about entrepreneurship, idea generation and communication. As he himself has proved – with this curriculum vitae at the age of just 29 – fast thinking is the right route to innovation success. Ideas for innovations, he said, should always answer questions, and should always ASK the right questions. He introduced a challenging real-life case history: a car hits four small children on a bridge. Should the car's prime role be to protect YOU, the driver, or the children/the rest of the world? Hmm... .

What YMC members want

Following this exceptional example of young talent in action, Chris Jones moderated a members' forum on the problems they face in their work life and the YMC topics that would help them, ideas for future YMC topics and Congress locations. He added, of course, that YMC is keen to attract new members, and to add to the volunteer force which organises its activities.

A delightful dinner featuring Portuguese culinary specialities followed, and many delegates chose to continue their 'networking activities' well into the night!

Awe-inspiring management simulation workshop



Day two of the conference consisted of an awe-inspiring management simulation workshop, conducted by Zoe Wilkins and Caroline Svejors -- two experts from BTS, an international business services company focussed on turning strategy into action. It was an outstandingly-engaging experience for the YMC participants who, working in teams whose members represented key management functions in a fictitious company, were doubly challenged: to win in business – achieving maximum margins and a happy customer base – and, of course, in this particular workshop, for their team to win the YMC challenge. In a series of in-depth breakout sessions, the teams worked out their in-depth financial statements covering different business units, performance indicators, and investment

decision-making. They were then debriefed by the workshop leaders, and the different team outcomes were compared.

The programme enabled participants to increase their understanding of key issues that drive long-term business performance; solidify their financial acumen; build team, communication, and social-style skills; and identify the most important drivers of profitability in specific industries. The whole day, from initial briefing to final debrief, was very lively and participative, with all YMC members involved and engaged all the time.

The joys of Lisbon

After Chris Jones formally closed the Congress, the social programme began in earnest for those people who did not have planes to catch: a delightful dinner of Portuguese tapas with port tasting, and the option the next day to join a 'Taste of Lisboa' food tour of the gastro-trendy district of the city that combined food and 'culture'. Delicious!

Participants' verdicts

After returning from a successful edition which attracted some 25 talented young managers, event moderator Chris Jones summarised the feedback:

'This year's event focused heavily on getting our delegates to think about their future careers in the label industry, both internally and externally to their own companies. This really is the pillar of what we do: focus on what matters most to the young talent in our industry, and look at how we can get others to share our passion. It's extremely pleasing to see such positivity for yet another one of our events from our members, and we've already begun looking at what's next for the YMC!'