

2023 MARKETING CANADA AWARDS – EDAC/ACDE

CATEGORY 12: COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AWARD

Project: French-Speaking Business Forum/ Rendez-vous d'affaires de la Francophonie /

Purpose of project (including anticipated outcomes)

In July 2022, the French-speaking Business Forum held in Québec City and jointly organized by Québec International, the Centre des congrès de Québec [Québec City Convention Centre] and Québec Cité Destination Affaires, was attended by a wide range of people from the international French-speaking world including the business and industry communities, as well as organizations and associations from various backgrounds, with the main objective of developing business. The event also represented the first major activity targeting business tourism after two years of the pandemic. Against this backdrop, the French-speaking Business Forum was an essential step in taking stock and providing food for thought for future collaborations and partnerships in the international French-speaking world. Business-to-business (B2B) meetings were central to the event, which also featured a wealth of presentations content. To encourage discussion, the event focused on four themes: entrepreneurship, sustainable development, supply chains and digital technology.

Effectiveness/Meeting Objectives

The event, which took place from July 4 to 6, 2022, attracted more than 430 participants from 14 countries, with the aim of developing business by strengthening or consolidating links between the various French-speaking business communities. French is the third business language in the world after English and Mandarin. The aim of the initiative was to encourage companies to do business abroad and seize opportunities to develop and diversify their markets by promoting the French language as a formidable tool for economic development. The event also served to stimulate business tourism in Québec City following the lifting of health restrictions, raising the international profile of the Capitale-Nationale region and strengthening its position as a key player in the global French-speaking world. The Forum was a unique opportunity for all participants, including members of the foreign and Canadian delegations, to develop and consolidate their business relationships. It gave business leaders the opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them in French, and to forge new links between French speakers around the world. The event also had a tangible impact in terms of partnerships. For example, the Quebec company MIRAPAKON, a subsidiary of Groupe SiliCycle specializing in the clean technology market, signed a partnership agreement with the European company TEPAJYA with a view to pursuing its ecological solutions activities with a positive impact on the environment on an international scale. The Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ) took advantage of the first edition of the French-speaking Business Forum to sign an unprecedented memorandum of understanding between the major French-speaking international chambers of commerce.

Challenges and Changes Made

The first year of the Québec City French-speaking Business Forum was a resounding success. Despite a short organizational lead time of around three months, every effort was made to ensure the success of this international convention. After two years of the pandemic, and despite certain restrictions on air travel that were still in force and a resurgence of COVID at the time the event was being held, the organizers redoubled their efforts in terms of health risk prevention, registration management and international promotion to ensure that this first major French-speaking business event in the region would raise the profile both here and abroad. The vigilance required by the context contributed to the success of the event and the return of major live events to Québec City, while also contributing to the revival of business tourism in the greater region. As a result, we can say 'mission accomplished' with this event, which facilitated business development through meetings and other privileged networking opportunities, in addition to offering a substantive program.

Target Audience

Over 300 participants were expected to attend this major event, aimed to bring together a wide range of people from the international French-speaking world, including the business and industry communities, as well as organizations and associations from a variety of backgrounds, with the main objective of developing business. In all, the event attracted professionals from 14 different countries, including France, Switzerland, Belgium, the United States, Tunisia, Mexico, Haiti and several African countries. Over 430 participants, almost 55% from outside Quebec, attended the three-day event designed to foster the exchange of ideas. More than 120 speakers and panellists contributed to discussions on four topical themes: entrepreneurship, sustainable development, supply chains and digital technology.

Specifics and Sustainability of the Category

The desire to accelerate business relations between French-speaking companies from all four corners of the globe motivated the organizers to innovate and create a venue conducive to exchange and collaboration between French-speaking countries! What's more, after France and Côte d'Ivoire, it's now Quebec's turn to host another major French-speaking economic event, a direct consequence of the success of the Forum in 2023. In June 2023, the 3rd Rencontre des Entrepreneurs Francophones, with which Québec International is collaborating, will be held in the region under the aegis of the Conseil du Patronat. This is a logical extension of the event, and is part of an effort to maintain interest in situating business development in the French-speaking world ahead of the 2024 Forum. Organizers also made sure to showcase local culture during the event, with the participation of Flip Fabrique (fun circus shows) and Jeune COOP La boîte à musique, as well as the opening performance by Les Femmes au Tambour de Wendake (Huron-Wendate Nation). In terms of promotion and public relations, the event generated 4 press releases, 26 media mentions in the province of Quebec and abroad, orchestrated 2 newsletter mailings to 13,500 subscribers and 3 Google Ads advertising campaigns, as well as more than 340 posts on social media sites on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.