

A credit to the team

The logistics behind an event on the scale of the recent Brisbane G20 Leaders' Summit are immense, with the registration and accreditation process one of the first tasks to rollout. Sheridan Randall spoke with Touchpoint Meeting Services managing director Chris Buckley about the challenges of working on such a complex event.

For the tens of thousands of delegates and support workers involved in the Brisbane G20 Leaders' Summit picking up their security pass marked the beginning of their involvement. But for the small team at Touchpoint Meeting Services tasked with the registration and accreditation process it was the culmination of 12 months hard work.

Managing director Chris Buckley founded Touchpoint Meeting Services in 2010 after forging a successful career working on the accreditation and registration of a suite of high profile international and local events. Working closely with Australian event management software provider Centium Software, Touchpoint Meeting Services was an integral part of the registration and accreditation process of the Brisbane G20.

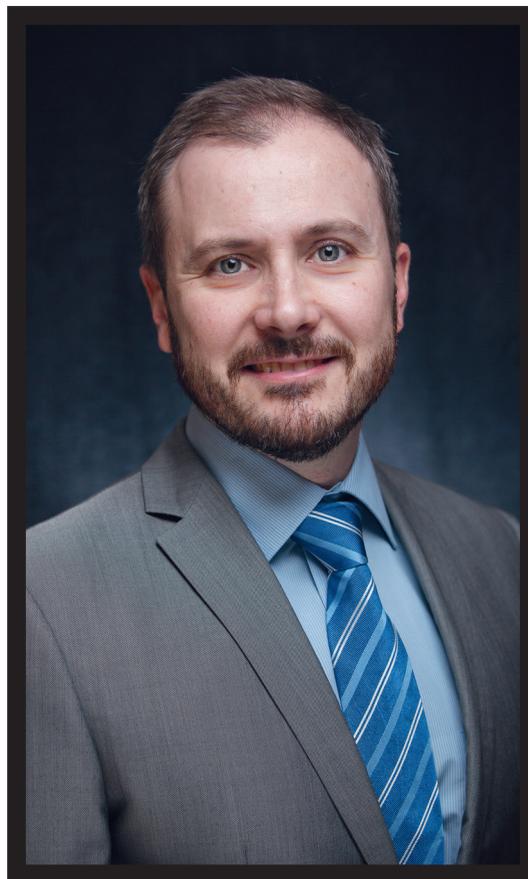
"There is a misconception that accreditation is somehow just an enhanced or beefed up version of registration," he says. "This couldn't be further from the truth. Registration is just the gateway to accreditation – it is step number one on a complex pathway of checks, data exchanges and clearances, which are based on a series of business rules, which are themselves based on various criteria such as attendance category and citizenship."

With an event as large and involving so many stakeholders as the G20 accreditation is no simple task. In short to get a single accreditation over the line involves multiple, time sensitive, dependent processes across multiple stakeholders.

"This is the biggest challenge for any of these world events from an accreditation point of view – the data management," he says. "The G20 was no different, but it was particularly hard due to the fact that security was paramount, so the checks were rigorous, and the size of the workforce, which was quite large due to the number of secure venues and the number of accredited police."

Beginning the process around 12 months out from the Summit, the Touchpoint team, using Centium Software's EventsPro, went through a series of stages including the initial delegate registration, working closely with the many designated accreditation officers and media organisation accreditation officers to ensure that the 28,000-plus registrations were pushed through successfully on time.

The team then reviewed all of the submitted data, including the accreditation photos, before beginning the accreditation process.



"One of our key roles at these events is to work with our client to shepherd the thousands of applications through the accreditation process and keep everything moving over time, ensuring that there are no bottle-necks, which would cause major issues close to event time," he says.

"Simultaneously we liaise with the various agencies involved in background checking accreditations, such as policing agencies and border control. Our team develop close relationships with these agencies and are in daily contact, particularly in the weeks leading up to the event, when the majority of the data is trying to get pushed through.

"It is such a finely balanced activity as there are so many dependencies. You need to make a judgement call on when to start the ball rolling based on how good or complete your data is versus the need to complete the job in time for distribution. Get it wrong and you will either waste a lot of time and money doing re-prints or, at the other end of the scale, face an ugly scene onsite with delegations and media standing around waiting for passes."

Following a formal sign-off process that happens with every delegation and organisation represented at the G20, credential production begins, which in this

case consisted of a photographic radio frequency identification pass with a holographic overlay.

"All governments want to be seen using the latest technology, particularly if it fades the security into the background, but they also want to mitigate risk, which means using proven technology," he says.

"We are working with Centium and their latest generation EventsAir software to create new innovations for large events. It won't be too long before we see biometrics as the primary means of security for large events."

Brisbane can safely measure the success of the G20 by the glowing global media coverage but for those working in the background, such as Buckley and his team, not getting any attention is probably a sign of a job well done, as is having Prime Minister Tony Abbott pop his head in to the accreditation zone to personally say thanks.

"I would say though that the number one measure of success for us is the satisfaction of our clients," says Buckley. "On that score I believe we have been very successful." **CIM**