



Designing a seamless sourcing solution for global event growth

\$649K

savings in reduced
potential attrition

\$10.9M

total savings for 2018

28%

growth in number of
meetings managed

Autodesk is a leader in 3D design, engineering, and entertainment software. The organization hosts hundreds of annual events including user conferences, business meetings, and a global sales kickoff. "We manage all of the sourcing and contracting for everything from our ten-person team meetings all the way through our 11,000 person user conference, and everything in between," explains Gigi Gleason, Global Strategic Senior Manager. The Global Strategic Meetings department at Autodesk joins counterparts in Event Strategy, Global Customer Events, Sales, and other groups to create a holistic events strategy across the organization.

Eliminating Manual Inefficiencies for Global Growth

At Autodesk, previous disparate systems created difficulties in benchmarking program growth. The team could not leverage total spend in the sourcing process, while limited reporting capabilities provided little insight into program maturation. The internal teams needed to simplify the meeting request process, accurately capture spend, and benchmark budget versus actuals to showcase year-over-year savings. A planned global expansion necessitated improved sourcing processes for the EMEA and APAC regions. There



was no centralized process for risk management, data tracking, or ensuring cost savings. The organization realized the need for a robust meetings management system to better leverage in-depth event data.

Importantly, the Global Strategic Meetings department knew they needed to balance any proposed program with stakeholder expectations from across the company. “We were trying understand what was going to drive value for each of those stakeholder constituencies we were working with and how we communicate that value to them,” explains Gigi. They sought to generate cost savings by eliminating duplicate efforts across multiple vendors and platforms for each event type. They also needed to reduce manual labor, increase cost savings, and generate a clear line of sight into meeting spend and scope.

Designing a Seamless Technology Solution

To manage sourcing and registration for Autodesk’s global event portfolio, the department

sought to provide key cost savings for internal stakeholders while protecting the organization from excessive risk. Implementing a Strategic Meetings Management program (SMMP) was the clear solution. In 2014, Autodesk adopted several Cvent solutions to help manage their suite of meetings and events. “I’ve done many technology rollouts in the past and it was the most seamless technology implementation I have ever experienced,” Gigi says. “We were up and running super quickly, and I think the results speak for themselves.”

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Inspiring the Future of Autodesk Events

Autodesk integrated other Cvent solutions into their tech stack to create a fully integrated platform. “Sourcing is our primary hat, but we do wear a couple of other hats as well... we do registration sites, we do CrowdCompass, and we have OnArrival,” Gigi notes. The global rollout initiative was inspired by the success of their US program, specifically the number of meetings managed, contracted venues, and overall savings. They have since doubled the number of meetings offered in EMEA region while expanding their team to meet growth in the APAC region.

Different departments can now access a centralized Meeting Request Portal for smaller events, which is quickly transformed into an RFP. This process eliminates paper form transcriptions and the risky data gaps that accompany manually-tracked requests. The Cvent Supplier Network allows the team to source venues using unique criteria and filters. “We source almost everything out of Cvent and, in the end, everything does end up in Cvent one way or another,” Gigi notes. “Rather than having every single hotel follow up with us individually, they’ll go through the NSO and it’s very efficient. It saves us tons of time, and we use the Bid Report that comes out.” The integrated reporting functionality allows team to pull customizable, on-demand reports for stakeholders as needed.

Gigi’s team can now track attrition and proactively address issues before meetings actualize. “As soon as we were able to see that something is beginning to not look right, we were able to go out to the hotel in advance and work with them. For one year, that was a savings of \$649,000,” she explains. Creating proactive cost savings for the organization has allowed helped prove the value of these events, as well as Autodesk’s investment in event technology. Gigi says, “We have a great track record of being able to rebook other Autodesk meetings that can use that space for a future meeting. All of that data is flagged in Cvent, so we’re able to easily identify those properties. That’s just a massive cost savings for the company.”

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As a result of their success, Gigi’s team has been tasked with what one executive described as the “most important marketing project of the year.” After twenty-five years spent hosting their annual user conference and sales kickoff in the same location, the CEO asked Gigi’s team to source a new location and rebuild both events from the ground-up. “Again, our source of truth for all of the real information is Cvent,” she says. As her

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team moves to source venue options across multiple locations under tight timelines, they rely on the centralized platform to streamline processes. “We’re able to keep track of our contract deadlines and deposits all in the system. We have our dashboards set up, know what contracts need to come up next, and everything else. Cvent has really been at the center of that,” she explains.

Showcasing Impressive Results for Executive Stakeholders

As a result of their tireless efforts, Gigi’s team has been able to benchmark key data and track program growth. They have increased the total number of global events by 28%. What began as a small team of two creating roughly \$900,000 in savings has grown to a seven-person team amassing \$10.9 million in savings. Gigi credits her Cvent team with helping to guide their technology success. “It’s been a very successful partnership from day one and started with a really strong foundation,” she says. “We know we’re in good hands at all times, and the online support features are unparalleled within the industry.”

The team’s admirable success has served as the first step in creating a global meetings policy for the organization. Gigi insists the key to supporting their continued growth lies in understanding individual stakeholders’ needs and values. These efforts have not only allowed the team to better support cross-department relationships, but have increased their visibility within the organization. “It is definitely elevating what the team does and what our mission is,” she notes. “We regularly meet with our chief human resources officer, who we roll up into. We also meet with our chief financial officer and our chief marketing officer, as well as our CEO.”

Creating such powerful financial impact within the business will help scale for future success. The department is now successfully mitigating risks and integrating with Autodesk security while ensuring they leverage spend across all Autodesk meetings. They have not only met internal stakeholder needs and expectations, but have helped create enterprise-wide efficiencies. “I think the marketing organization really does understand that events are critical to the marketing ecosystem,” Gigi says. “We’ve been able to prove those numbers and we gained trust with all of our stakeholder communities.”

