

2011 World Chambers Competition – Best International Project CENTRALLIA 2010

Executive Summary

Centrallia is a global business-to-business (B2B) forum, which was held for the first time in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, from October 20–22, 2010. Centrallia brought together more than 600 business leaders from 40 world economic regions, for a combined total of 4,250 targeted matchmaking meetings in a business “speed-dating” event. The focus was primarily on small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), who, in a very time and cost effective format, had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with up to 14 international business partners of their choice. Centrallia is a trilingual event (English, French, and Spanish), which reflects the languages of North America. The energy in the building was dynamic. The event provided an unparalleled opportunity to promote Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, on the global stage while inviting the international business community to come to our city, to meet with our world-class companies and to do business.

The Need - The Chamber often hosts incoming delegations that talk about their upcoming trade show events, but there was no equivalent Winnipeg event that we could promote in return. Despite Winnipeg’s numerous trade agreements, memorandums of understanding, and partnerships, we have always been missing a compelling reason for companies to come to Winnipeg. In addition the latest Winnipeg Business Leaders survey stated that the number one priority for our membership was the pursuit of new markets.

In 2008, Futurallia came to Quebec City, Canada. A delegation of over 40 business people attended from Manitoba in hopes of attracting the event to Winnipeg in 2010, during our homecoming year. Futurallia originated in France and has been in operation for 15 years. This business-to-business forum is an annual biligual event (French & English) with its primary audience being Europe. An agreement was reached that Winnipeg would host an event affiliated with Futurallia. This allowed us to have more flexibility on the timing, branding, marketing and structure of the event, while still utilizing their state-of-the-art search software for the business matching. Through this process a very strong and unique partnership emerged between the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and ANIM (agence nationale et internationale du manitoba), Manitoba’s bilingual trade agency.

The Chamber and ANIM then proceeded to collaborate on Winnipeg’s first-ever international business conference. With the assistance of an Advisory Council, consisting of public and private sector organizations, we embarked on a campaign to put Winnipeg and Centrallia on the map around the world. After many conference calls, in-person presentations, and emails we finished with 52 delegation leaders, many of whom represented Chambers of Commerce. Part of the delegation leader role was to recruit participants to the event and to assist them in building their profile. The profile and state of the art software was then used to assist the companies in finding their matches for the B2B meetings. Many of the organizations, who for various reasons were unable to be delegation leaders, were very interested in helping to promote the event.

The benefits of Centrallia will continue to unfold as time goes on. The exposure that the Winnipeg business community received during the marketing process is priceless, and we now have an international network that is centred around Winnipeg. Centrallia will continue to be a prime event for enhancing trade in small and medium sized enterprises and it will also be an opportunity for Chambers around the world to work together in the promotion of our international markets.

The Innovative Nature of Centrallia

Centrallia benefited greatly from unique partnerships. The most evident partnership was the one forged between ANIM and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. The two organizations worked together to achieve this great milestone event for our city. There wasn't a single person in either organization that wasn't involved on some level. What was truly amazing was how seamless it was. Two organizations whose offices are 3 km apart, and whose preferred languages differ (English / French), united with a common goal to make this not just a successful event but a showcase event.

The Advisory Committee consisted of more than 20 members from key public and private sector organizations. This group not only helped provide guidance for the event, but also utilized their local and international networks to promote Centrallia. Many of them made presentations around the world as they went about their general business.

The biggest challenge in hosting an event such as Centrallia in Winnipeg was explaining to people why this event was unique and why they should come to Winnipeg. This challenge spurred a very innovative multi-pronged marketing approach, some of which included:

- Using the Chamber brand to open doors internationally.
- Fully utilizing existing networks such as the World Chamber Federation, the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, and Futurallia to help spread the word.
- Working with the federal department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to get the messaging out to the Canadian consulates around the world.
- Visiting many of the international consulates that are based in Canada.
- Targeted emails and phone calls to countries that were a key fit with Winnipeg's economy.
- Participating in a number of international events.
- Utilizing Mani the mascot at a number of speaking engagements (Mani is a Polar Bear – see photos).
- The promotion of an early bird draw for a trip to Churchill, Manitoba, to see the real polar bears.
- Use of all media forms – mail, email, website www.centrallia.com, YouTube, using everything from video clips, brochures, to newsletters.
- Newsletters were sent out to registered participants to keep them enthusiastic about the event and aware of exciting developments. Many of the participants shared this information with some of their suppliers and associates, helping to spread the word.
- Numerous telephone and video conference calls.

The other innovative aspect of Centrallia compared to other events, including Futurallia, is the planned followup activities. We really want to create a long-term international network that participants can continue to mobilize. To accomplish this we are:

- Exploring the creation of a Virtual Trade Expo – this will allow participants to learn more about other past participants through this interactive software (in development).
- Following up with various participants to see how we can assist them in finalizing business deals / partnerships.
- Following up with some of the delegations that were not able to attend Centrallia due to Visa issues to see how we can integrate them into the Centrallia network (in some select cases this may include a business mission to Manitoba).

The Impact of Centrallia on the Chamber and the Business Community

The impact to the Winnipeg business community is huge. Many of the 600 business leaders who attended had little to no knowledge of where Winnipeg was, let alone how strong our business community is. The 150 Manitoba businesses that attended will reap the same benefits that the other participants did, as well as the economic spinoffs and the credibility one gets from being from the host city.

Survey results indicated that:

- 50% of all of the participants anticipate 1 – 3 business deals from Centrallia
- 27% anticipate 4 – 6 business deals
- 6% anticipate over 10 business deals from Centrallia
- Averaged out this is more than 1,500 new business deals during the two days

These same statistics would hold true for the Winnipeg businesses as well. One Winnipeg business was able to finalize a deal at Centrallia for \$1 million.

The Winnipeg business community also benefited by the exposure of our key sectors during our pre-conference industry tours. 25% of the attendees took part in the tours which included:

- Energy & Environmental Industry tour – Manitoba Hydro
- Life Sciences & Biotechnology tour
 - Canadian Science Centre for Human and Animal Health which houses Canada's only level four lab, the Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Lab and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency National Centre for Foreign and Animal Diseases
- CentrePort Canada
- Agribusiness and Advanced Manufacturing tour
 - MacDon Industries
 - New Flyer Industries
- Food Processing tour – Food Development Centre
- Aerospace tour – Magellan Aerospace (previously known as Bristol Aerospace)
- Seminar on Developing a Successful Canadian Business Strategy
- Information Technology tour
 - Project Whitecard
 - ICTAM (Information Communication Technology Association of Manitoba)
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights

The Winnipeg Chamber has benefited in many ways both directly and indirectly; through the acquisition of new members and through exposure to local businesses that engage in trade. Our international network is now stronger than ever and will be an increasingly important asset to our membership. During our last Winnipeg Business Leaders survey the number one priority for our membership was pursuing new markets. Centrallia is an avenue for the Chamber to help them achieve their needs and goals. Since Centrallia, the Premier of Manitoba has established a new Council on International Trade and has asked Winnipeg Chamber President and CEO Dave Angus to co-chair the council along with the minister responsible for Trade. This indicates that the Premier sees the benefits of increased trade to Manitoba and that the Chamber has an important role to play in those activities.

Other Chambers around the world are also finding they need to play a more active role in today's global market. Being a delegation leader to Centrallia gives them an easy way to be responsive to this need and allows them to directly provide a service to their membership that is within their human and financial resources.

Measurable Outcomes

Financial Impact:

Economic impact to the local economy – More than 600 business leaders attended Centrallia from 20 countries, representing 40 world economic regions. Collectively, they participated in 4,250 one-on-one meetings in a world-class business-to-business event. Final economic impact numbers for Centrallia have not yet been calculated, but it is widely accepted that conferences and trade shows of this scale bring significant economic impact to the host cities (conference facilities, hotels, catering, airfare, transportation, tourism, translators and interpreters, entertainment, etc).

Revenues generated – One financial impact measure that is available at this time is the private sector revenue generated by Centrallia, measured in both sponsorship and registration dollars, which together contributed nearly \$700,000 to the project.

New business opportunities – ANIM conducted a post-event survey with Centrallia participants immediately following completion of the forum. Overall, 73% of companies in attendance completed the survey. While recognizing that many of the returns the participants will experience, in the form of new business opportunities, will be realized in the medium to long-term, the survey results nevertheless give an indication of some immediate benefits (below).

- An almost unanimous 97% would recommend this type of event to other companies
- 92% found the event of significant benefit and would participate in another edition of Centrallia
- 87% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience at Centrallia
- 90% of the respondents rate the B2B matchmaking model as highly effective

Survey results also paint a clear picture of new business opportunities generated at Centrallia:

- 70% met their objectives in coming to Centrallia, which most often included “new customers” and “strategic alliances”
- 50% of participants anticipate 1 to 3 business deals from their Centrallia participation
- 27% of participants anticipate between 3 to 6 new business opportunities
- 6% of participants expect more than 10 new opportunities
- The most common business opportunities that will be pursued are exports and new distribution channels

New trade relationships – Centrallia organizers worked with an international network of delegation leaders to promote and organize the event. In the end, 52 delegation leaders attended, while more than 70 were involved to promote Centrallia in some fashion. These partners – typically chambers of commerce, trade offices or economic development agencies – promoted Centrallia to companies in their region and recruited companies to attend. Using this model, not only was representation achieved from many different regions of

Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce (Saskatchewan, Canada)	Participant
Ontario Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Delegation Leader
Mississauga Board of Trade (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Cambridge Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Delegation Leader
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Guelph Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Vaughn Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Markham Board of Trade (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
NewMarket Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Toronto Board of Trade (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Sudbury Chamber of Commerce (Ontario, Canada)	Promotional Partner
Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ)	Delegation Leader
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce (Minnesota, USA)	Delegation Leader
North Dakota Chamber (North Dakota, USA)	Promotional Partner
Des Moines Chamber of Commerce (Iowa, USA)	Promotional Partner
Rapid City Chamber of Commerce (Iowa, USA)	Promotional Partner
ACCE – American Chamber of Commerce Executives (USA)	Promotional Partner
ICC World Chamber Federation	Promotional Partner
Bogota Chamber of Commerce (Colombia)	Promotional Partner
Canada-Colombia Chamber of Commerce	Promotional Partner
Chambre de Commerce et d'industrie de Cognac (France)	Promotional Partner
Chamber of Commerce of Lima (Peru)	Promotional Partner
Chambre de Commerce Française en Égypte	Promotional Partner
Chambre régionale de commerce et d'industrie du Centre (France)	Promotional Partner
France-Canada Chamber of Commerce	Promotional Partner

Membership Recruitment:

There has definitely been some direct and indirect benefits to membership recruitment as well as to membership retention. The direct benefit is 11 solid new membership prospects, 3 of which signed on almost directly after the event. Indirectly, it has increased the Chamber's profile in the business community which will help to attract new members as well as to retain our existing members. Centrallia is a solid event that highlighted some of the value the Chamber offers to the business community.

Stakeholders' Participation in the Project:

Centrallia benefited from a high level of commitment and engagement from key stakeholders to the provincial economy. To guide this initiative, an Advisory Committee of more than 20 members was assembled to provide strategic direction to Centrallia, consisting of key public and private sector organizations responsible for trade and economic development. These organizations not only offered their strategic direction but also acted as key promotional partners both locally and internationally.

- ANIM (agence nationale et internationale du manitoba)
- Business Council of Manitoba
- Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre (Federal Government)
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (Manitoba)
- Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingue du Manitoba

- Centreport Canada
- Chambre de commerce francophone de Saint-Boniface
- Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
- Economic Development Winnipeg
- Entreprises Riel
- Information and Communications Technologies Associations of Manitoba (ICTAM)
- Life Sciences Association of Manitoba (LSAM)
- Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives (Provincial Government)
- Manitoba Homecoming 2010
- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Trade and Investment
- Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
- Travel Manitoba
- Western Economic Diversification Canada (Federal Government)

In addition, a number of other local organizations provided promotional and marketing support to Centrallia.

- Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce
- African Communities of Manitoba - Nyunga International Inc.
- Assiniboia Chamber of Commerce
- Composites Innovation Centre
- Downtown BIZ
- Italian Chamber of Commerce
- Manitoba Aerospace Association
- Manitoba Customer Contact Association
- Manitoba Music
- New Media Manitoba
- Nigerians In Diaspora Organization (NIDO)
- Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba

Community support – 113 volunteers from the community at large brought their time, energies and talents to work as Ambassadors. Volunteers worked as Interpreters during the meetings (Centrallia was a fully trilingual event – English, French and Spanish) and assisted in implementing the many different facets of this event. The volunteer support is another demonstration of the significant buy-in of the community at large to an initiative that put Winnipeg squarely in the global economic spotlight.

The Relevance of Centrallia in the International Project Category

There is no doubt that Centrallia is an international event. With over 600 business leaders in attendance, representing 20 different countries and 40 world economic regions, it truly spans the globe and will only get stronger going forward.

Centrallia really was an effort of co-operation through world wide partners. We could not have succeeded without our many promotional partners and our 52 delegation leaders from around the world, with everyone spreading the word.

Centrallia is a coming together of the international business communities to do what they do best – find business opportunities. There were 4,250 one-on-one meetings with business people from around the world, from different cultures and speaking different languages. Centrallia had three official languages, English, French and Spanish. This included translation of all electronic and printed documents, signage, speakers or simultaneous translation equipment, and translators to assist with the individual business meetings.

Centrallia also provides Chambers from around the world the opportunity to increase their trade activities and networks in a cost efficient way.

Potential for Centrallia to be Successfully Adopted by Other Chambers of Commerce Throughout the World

Centrallia offers a great deal of potential for other Chambers, in a number of different ways.

There is always the opportunity for a Chamber to create their own version of Centrallia or possibly to host a Futurallia event. The event was about two years in the making with many long hours, but there are great rewards as already identified.

Another option would be to host a business-to-business event on a regional scale. This could mean just within their city, or within their country, or with multiple countries within a select geographical area. The model could still be used, but the smaller scale would make it less resource intense and could decrease some of the language issues.

The biggest opportunity for other Chambers through Centrallia itself is becoming a delegation leader for future events. Our delegation leaders promote Centrallia to SMEs in their market, as well as organize and lead a delegation of their local companies to the event.

As a delegation leader, Chambers benefit from the opportunity to:

- Raise the profile of their community or region internationally
- Establish new relationships with other Chambers and trade organizations
- Reinforce their Chamber's leadership role in trade facilitation, investment attraction and economic development both within their region and internationally
- Promote their own events, conferences and forums
- Promote and learn about trade policies
- Expand their local network of companies conducting international trade
- Be part of an ongoing international trade network
- Potentially promote your Chamber and your businesses through Centrallia's Virtual Trade Village for up to two years.

Other benefits that Chambers received in 2010 are:

- \$200 Canadian for each company registered
- One free – single person – Centrallia registration for each 10 registered companies (this included three nights accommodation, meals, and local transportation between functions)
- Complimentary trade booth (10' x 10') in the International Village (minimum of 10 companies registered).

- Commission of \$400 Canadian per booth sold at the Experts Village
- Helpful sales support including a comprehensive sales kit and promotional materials

Chambers are always trying to maximize their resources both human and financial while providing increased services to their membership. In today's global marketplace it is critical for our small and medium sized enterprises to gain international exposure in as cost effective way as possible. By being a part of Centrallia, Chambers can help their membership and be seen as playing an active role in international trade without expending a large amount of resources.

Statistics and Participant Survey Results

Statistics

- 4,250 meetings
- 602 business leaders
- 52 delegation leaders
- 20 countries
- 40 world economic regions

Centrallia 2010 Survey Results

- 73% of companies in attendance completed the survey
- 92% found the event of significant benefit and would participate in another edition of Centrallia
- An almost unanimous 97% would recommend this type of event to other companies
- 90% rated the event format high in quality
- 90% of the respondents rated the B2B model format as highly effective
- Over 90% of respondents rated programming good to excellent
- Highest votes went to the Welcome Reception with Ken Blanchard and the Gala Dinner featuring Randy Bachman
- Overall logistics was rated excellent
- More than 30% of the participants first heard about Centrallia through delegation leaders
- 23% heard about it through ANIM, The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and Industry Associations
- 13% through word of mouth
- 30% from advertising, the website and presentations
- 73% of participants of Centrallia had never participated in a Futurallia event
- A big applause to the volunteers, whom 99% of the participants thought good to excellent
- 25% of participants took part in the industrial tours that were offered
- Industrial tours were rated good to excellent
- Objectives for participation: Most chose "new customers" and "strategic alliances"
- Over 70% met that objective
- 50% of the participants anticipate 1 to 3 business deals post Centrallia
- 27% anticipate between 3 to 6 opportunities
- We also have about 6% which expect more than 10 opportunities
- The most common business opportunities pursued are exporting and new distribution channels
- 42% of the participants would be interested in a follow-up from Centrallia

- Ways that we can assist participants going forward
 - Support in building strategic alliances
 - Follow-up on meetings
 - Facilitator
 - Establishing contacts
 - Providing market and industry information
 - Organizational support
 - Organizing trade visits
 - Language facilitation

Conclusion

Centrallia is an opportunity for small and medium sized businesses to come together at an event that is truly world class, with lots of opportunities with businesses from around the world at a cost they can afford. Many of the participating companies said that the event had already more than paid for itself after the first day alone.

Centrallia really is what Chambers are all about, the bringing together and facilitation of business. Chambers have a number of key strengths that are utilized by Centrallia, our business network, our ability to bring people together, our reputation, and our international network. Centrallia really is an opportunity for all of the Chambers to work together to enhance our member businesses through international trade.