

CHRISTCHURCH CONFERENCE 2015

The following case study illustrates how Greg Ellis Creative can continually reshape ourselves to deliver a conference programme that sticks for a long term client.

WHAT OUR CLIENT NEEDED

We have worked with Harding Consultants for several years now to support Glenda and the team in delivering the IPENZ Transport Group Conference.

For the 2015 conference, in Christchurch, Hardings needed someone who could MC the conference, and its associated gala dinner in the Christchurch Transitional Cathedral. The group was several hundred technically minded engineers and their sponsors.

In addition to the delivery of the programme we were also responsible for delivering activities for a team-building/ice-breaking welcome function to be held at Hagley Oval.

THE CHALLENGE

The programme is dense and very technical and runs through a variety of plenary sessions and concurrent workshops so it needed to be kept energised and engaging as well as running to schedule.

In addition the opening function needed to involve and entertain people without making anyone feel uncomfortable. With a theme of a village fair we needed to come up with some activities and an MC character to suit personalities that are often very analytical and academic.

This conference is also a very loyal client and had us working for them in the past. We needed to keep things fresh so that the conference did not feel like it was stagnant.

OUR THINKING

Keeping our characters super relevant to the venues and theme helps keep this sort of audience engaged. The more they need to question things the more likely they are to disengage.

We also needed to suggest activities that were fun and catered to more intellectual participants without relying on any one person to stand out. There were already a series of activities planned to fit in theme and we needed to suggest activities that would fit well with those.

As Greg was appearing as himself through the day the characters needed to be the biggest point of difference year to year. Although through the use of the skills of improvisation Greg's style of MCing is more spontaneous, fresh and engaging.

WHAT WE DID



To begin the conference we hosted the Hagley Oval event as the Village Vicar who was affable, bumbling and very British. Into the mix of activities we introduced a physical teambuilding activity that involved two

teams racing to pass a hula hoop around the group as well as a "parade of nations" for the teams involved. This was a perfect beginning because The Vicar helped put people at ease, and made them feel less silly. The atmosphere was fantastically relaxed and everyone got amazingly involved in all the activities.

The other evening event was a Roman themed dinner at Christchurch's "Cardboard Cathedral". With formalities, including a major conference prize and lifetime achievements to award there was some serious things to attend to but there was also a band, lots of costumes and dancing that needed to be provided with introductions and continuity. So to provide this Greg MCed this as the Roman Centurion "Felis Oculus Medianus Strada".



In contrast to the evening functions the daytime was a little more of a serious and professional affair and Greg swapped the toga and dog collar for a suit and tie. However this didn't mean that things weren't injected with our usual lively brand of humour to keep things cracking along until the delegates were done at the end of almost 2 days of conferencing, networking and letting their hair down in equal measure.

"Greg is a very accomplished MC. His ability to improvise in ALL situations is an incredibly value commodity to have in an MC and not one that is easily found. His humour is appreciated by a very large majority of conference delegates, which again is unusual. Often humour can be polarising for audiences, but that is not the case with Greg."

Glenda Harding, Harding Consultants