

HUGO SLIMBROUCK

Hugo Slimbrouck (49) is a man of many talents and many interests. This has definitely been reflected in his career: he started in the hotel industry, created the Bruges Convention Bureau and then combined all his knowledge and went straight to the client as a Meeting & Incentive Planner. Today he is living what should be a great year for him: on January 1st started his Presidency of SITE and in June he celebrates his 50th birthday...whilst going on a healthy walking trip with friends in the mountains!

Hugo likes a challenge

That becomes clear when you hear him speak – with a lot of fire and enthusiasm – about his new role at MCI. He is now in charge of developing the Corporate Division in Belgium, globally this market represents 50% of the total MCI business. Whilst he states that MCI has definitely got the know-how for this development in house, there is no denying that there is still a lot of work to be done. But then of course there is the huge advantage of being part of a global company and in this day and age of communication clients of other offices but with divisions in Belgium are easily identified and approached. For now MCI Belgium – and Hugo – will concentrate their efforts on Pan-European companies and they predict a yearly growth of 30%!

"The last 6 months have been a steep learning curve but with ever growing effect thanks to the structure and organization of a big group such as MCI." Hugo reflects and speaks also of the more than 100 people working at the Brussels' office, representing 27 different nationalities and with 20 different languages spoken!

He revels in the constant growth of the company, speaks about the constant need for new "talent" and his creative role in making this a bigger and better company.

Part of this role as developer of new talent, Hugo sees as a priority for the industry, an industry, it has to be said, that is growing bigger and more important every year. This commitment is obviously also reflected in his very active and this year, very prominent involvement in SITE

SITE President 2007

Hugo started his presidential year on January 1st and is proud as punch to be the first Belgian to accede to this high position in this respected association.

After all the past difficult years, to be voted unanimously as the new President of SITE is first and foremost recognition by one's peers and that is the greatest satisfaction of all for Hugo.

For long years SITE was mainly an American based organisation but today they represent 36% of the total membership (2080 members) versus 35% Europeans.

His motto "It's YOUR business" illustrates how Hugo wishes to turn SITE into an even more pro-active organisation for all its members. Through networking, educational 'peer to peer' learning and a bigger accent on return on investment and return on objective, Hugo hopes to create an environment where all members worldwide will find ways to learn and be better at their jobs.

It promises to be a busy year for Hugo as his Presidential role will take him around the globe in the coming months as well as his growing responsibilities for the MCI group. A silent prayer of thanks for the ever better communication facilities is certainly not out of place here and technology will definitely be a great ally in the years to come.

Prior career

Some people may have forgotten that Hugo started his career in the hotel industry where he worked in different Sales & Marketing capacities for groups such as Holiday Inn, Don Carlos Marbella, Pullman & Sofitel, Hilton and Starwood Hotels.

In 1995 Hugo started Hospitality Services his own consulting company. The major project was the development of a convention bureau for the city of Bruges. He presented a business plan to the city authorities as well as the private sector to create and manage a city convention bureau. 'Meeting in Brugge' was launched in August 1995 after 6 months of preparation. The story was published in a book about the meetings industry in Belgium: *'Stilte in vergadering'*. Hospitality Services assisted several entrepreneurs in sales and revenue management, conducted several tourism projects, was a consultant to the Minister of Tourism in Jordan, wrote the business plan for the new Bruges Concert Hall (opening 2002), wrote feasibility studies for hotel development projects and signed for the pre-opening marketing of the 5-star Melia All-Suite Hotel in Brussels in the spring of 1999. In 2002 Hugo Slimbrouck joined CIB Performance; a leading Brussels based DMC Company, as General Manager. A company restructuring forced the group to re-organize and Hugo left CIB to join MCI Benelux in May of 2006 as Director of the Corporate Division.

Hugo Slimbrouck on

Leisure & Family

Leisure time means free time and that is a rare commodity in the Slimbrouck household where Lola, his 16 month old daughter, reigns supreme! He and wife Catherine Smits, whom we still remember from her days at BECIB & OPT, raise the little princess in Flemish and French, a perfectly bilingual little Belgian! Hugo also finds time for his 3 older children Joffrey (26) who is a Logistics Manager, Ophélie (23) a young architect and Fauve (18) who seems to want to follow in her father's footsteps and studies hotel management at HTI in Bruges. She plans to be a fashion victim and feels attracted to the hospitality industry as she already joined him on some business trips around the globe.

But, travel permitting, Hugo tries to play tennis twice a week and is a member of a Leisure and Fitness complex. Business is never far away and with his Presidents hat on he talks about organising an 'industry tennis get together' this year...watch this space!

Travel

Talking about travel to a travel specialist is a bit like bringing coal to Newcastle (or sausages to Munich) but it is always an eye opener to listen to favourite destinations. Hugo likes countries with an extreme climate and talks about Iceland and Jordan. He also remembers fondly (no, not just for that!) the great honeymoon trip he and wife Catherine made to India, definitely a country of extremes.

He admits to not knowing South America at all and he discovered Mexico recently and that definitely tasted like more.

After Bruges – his beloved native town- he tells me Firenze is his favourite town for the combination of culture, good living and that element of Italian show.

Books & films

Thrillers are definitely favourite books, Ian Rankin and his inspector Rebus stories make a fascinating read. Hugo reads most of the time in English but was recently intrigued by a book his wife bought: ' Et si je me confessais' the autobiography of Père Gilbert. He admits to having read it in one go as he was drawn in by the tale of this fascinating if controversial priest known in Belgium for having married Prince Laurent and Claire.

As a born and bred 'Brugeois' Hugo is of course a fan of the Pieter Aspe thrillers, all based in the lovely city of Bruges and now a major series on VTM television.

As a further surprise he then tells me that the Italian movie 'the best years of our lives' – a 6 hour long feature film! – is his favourite! Where does he find the time?....

Music

Hugo confesses to a very broad musical choice, from classic over jazzy to blues (Gary Moore - Blues Alive!). He likes big bands (if you find me a dance partner who can swing you wont get me off the dance floor!). Concerts that stayed in his mind: some Festival of Flanders concerts in Bruges, Sade in '87 in the Plaza de Torros in Marbella, Steve Houben, Bruno Castelluci and a few other Belgian Jazz greats in Flagey last year. For him the most beautiful piece of music ever written is '*Dôme Epais le Jasmin*' from Lakmé et Delibes, performed by Joan Sutherland and Jane Berbié.

"For Christmas I bought a CD and book of children's songs for Lola - Scalleta by the Kolachny brothers -. I love singing along, my wife suggests I enjoy it more than my daughter.."

Food & Drink

A good glass of wine or a fine Belgian beer are always much appreciated. Home cooking with family and friends is a favorite pastime and excellent wind-down therapy after a busy week. As far as restaurants are concerned, in Brussels his favorite addresses are: Chalet de la Fôret, Bleu de Toi (where he took Catherine on their first 'date' and sat next to Philippe & Mathilde!) and Maison du Boeuf.

In Bruges there is of course the superb De Karmeliet of Geert Vanhecke, but he also likes to go to Sans Cravatte (recent Michelin star) and to his friends Daniel & Laurence at CALIS, a great little restaurant and chamber d'hôte near the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In Ostend the Ostend Queen is a favorite especially as his daughter likes the waiters so much..

There are also a few favorites abroad: in London Hugo either goes straight to an Indian Restaurant or to the restaurant where one still sees the occasional bowler hat: Simpsons on the Strand. In Chicago – a regular stop on his travels – he loves the great steaks at Smith & Wolensky.

Most 'anciens' will definitely remember the favorite Belgian delegation restaurant in Geneva during EIBTM (something we miss nowadays in Barcelona) Jipek'a la Glycine .This was the place where after 2 hard days at work at the fair we all ended up at and where after dinner the tables were pushed aside and the dancing started until the early hours of the morning. No wonder the third day at EIBTM was always so quiet?....

Last Word

Hugo and his new family live in the green belt of Brussels as they love the fresh air and long walks for which unfortunately he cannot find the time anymore. Family, and as said before, the apple of his eye 16-month old Lola, is important to Hugo and provides him with the right counterpoint for the hectic business life he leads year round.

With a cheeky smile he says he wants to be remembered as follows: I have enjoyed other people and I hope that they have enjoyed me as well!

A fitting closing statement for a President!

Hugo Slimbrouck
Director Corporate Division
MCI Brussels Office
300, avenue de Tervuren
1150 – Brussels
Tel +32(0)2 743 15 40
Hugo.slimbrouck@mci-group.com

About MCI

Founded in Geneva in 1987 with just four employees, MCI now has offices in Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Dubai, Geneva, Lyon, Madrid, Paris, Petersfield/London, Prague, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Vienna and Zurich and has approximately 480 fulltime staff. Turnover has risen to 89.4 Million EUR (138.5 Million CHF) and our 2005 Gross Margin to over 26 Million EUR (41 Million CHF). MCI is firmly established in the European market and around the globe and a leader in the field of communication strategies, events and production, conferences and meetings, professional congress organization, and association management.

While achieving spectacular growth, MCI has structured its offer with sector specific teams supported by a range of specialist skills including business and event consultancy, delegate management, creative production, logistics, multimedia, abstract handling, communications and incentive travel. Group HQ remains in Geneva and our national offices are strongly positioned in their local markets as well as globally. The integration of our offices has contributed significantly to both operational synergies and client service.

MCI will continuously adapt and evolve with the market to offer modern solutions to modern challenges.

Whilst we believe that relationships are best developed locally, MCI wants to be a leading international player. We are therefore committed to multi-national, multi-skilled growth.

From strategy to production, MCI will provide clients with solutions and local expertise from a local presence in all major countries of Europe and beyond. We will also provide multiple talents by developing centres of competence across industry sectors and key capabilities, to provide high level consulting and organisational excellence throughout the globe.

Our future expansion will focus on development in countries and regions where clients have requested that we become more local, such as: Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, the Americas, Middle East and Asia.

www.mci-group.com

About SITE

Founded in 1973, SITE is the only international, not-for-profit, professional association devoted to the pursuit of excellence in incentives, a multi-billion dollar global industry. SITE provides educational seminars and information services to those who design, develop, promote, sell, administer, and operate motivational programs as an incentive to increase productivity in business. Currently SITE has over 2,100 members in 86 countries, with 34 local and regional chapters. Members represent airlines, cruise lines, corporate users, destination management companies, ground transportation companies, hotels and resorts, incentive houses, official tourist organizations, trade publications, travel agencies, and supporting organizations such as restaurants and visitors attractions.

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