

# In Play

## The power of perception: Why your meetings and events should be above reproach

In today's corporate environment, perception is just as critical as performance. The way your organisation is perceived—both internally by employees and clients, and externally by the public—can dramatically shape your success or failure.

Recent high-profile scandals in Australia, like those involving Australia Post, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), and NAB, are prime examples of how public scrutiny can lead to significant reputational damage when businesses fail to manage perception effectively.

But it's not just about avoiding a PR crisis. Managing perception with a **strategic approach to meetings and events** ensures that your organisation not only thrives but is seen as transparent, ethical, and trustworthy. Here's why perception matters and how a strategic program can protect your brand from headline-worthy disasters.

A strategic meetings management program (SMMP) ensures that:

- **Budgeting and approvals are transparent**, allowing employees and clients to see that funds are being used effectively.
- **Expenditure is aligned with organizational values**, showing that every dollar spent on meetings or events is necessary and delivers value.
- **Clear guidelines** are in place to ensure events reflect the integrity and professionalism of your brand, building trust with both employees and clients.

You will have the confidence that should the worst happen and your organisation become prey to a perception attack, you can silence it swiftly and securely.

## External Perception: The Public Eye and Media Scrutiny

In today's era of rapid information dissemination, one damaging headline can cause long-lasting reputational harm. Public perception can make or break an organisation, and there are countless examples in Australia of how poor oversight of meetings, events, and expenditure has led to public outcry.

### Australia Post: Lavish Watches & Public Outcry

In 2020, Australia Post found itself under intense scrutiny after it was revealed that the company's CEO gifted luxury watches to senior executives during an event. What followed was a media storm that led to public **backlash, government investigations, and leadership resignations**. The event became a case study in how extravagant expenditure—especially by an organisation perceived as a public service—can lead to a reputational crisis.

### Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA): Missteps in Perception

The RBA faced its own controversy when the public learned of high-end dinners and seemingly excessive entertainment budgets. As an institution that plays a pivotal role in managing the country's economy, the external perception of irresponsible spending had serious implications for public trust in the bank's integrity.

### NAB: The Risk of Reputational Damage

In recent years, NAB has also faced scrutiny over spending practices that were seen as excessive and out of step with public expectations. The damage to its reputation forced the bank to implement stricter governance measures to restore public confidence.

## What Would Happen If Your Organization Faced Similar Headlines?

Imagine waking up to a front-page headline in **The Herald Sun** proclaiming: "**<Your Company> spends millions wining and dining in exchange for sales.**"

The fallout could be devastating:

- **Public trust would be eroded**, damaging customer relationships and potentially driving clients to seek more responsible partners.
- **Shareholders would question your leadership**, leading to a decline in stock value and possible changes in governance.
- **Employees could lose faith in the organisation**, damaging morale, increasing turnover, and making it harder to attract top talent.

These kinds of headlines reflect poorly not only on the organization but on everyone associated with it. A strategic approach ensures that your meetings and events are **above reproach**, tightly managed, and fully transparent.

## How a Strategic Approach Protects Your Brand

A well-executed SMMP is designed to protect your organisation from these risks. Here's how:

- **Transparency and Accountability:** A strategic meetings program offers full visibility into where and how money is being spent, reducing the risk of wasteful or unethical spending that could lead to public scrutiny.
- **Governance and Compliance:** Implementing strict policies and ensuring every meeting and event complies with both internal guidelines and external regulations means your organisation can stand up to any external inquiry or media attention.
- **Value-Driven Expenditure:** A strategic approach ensures that every dollar spent on meetings and events is aligned with the organisation's broader mission and values, so that spending decisions are seen as responsible and necessary by all stakeholders.

## Conclusion: The Big Picture

At Lusion Advisory, we specialize in helping organisations develop meetings and events strategies that enhance their brand while protecting them from reputational risk. By taking a **big picture approach** and managing both internal and external perceptions, you can ensure that your organisation is seen as ethical, responsible, and trustworthy.

Let's work together to keep your brand out of negative headlines and in the spotlight for all the right reasons.