

Heike Mahmoud has been the COO and authorized signatory of the CCH Congress Center Hamburg, a division of Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH, since 01.03.2018. Her task is to position the New CCH together with a very dedicated team as one of the leading Congress Centers in Europe. After an extensive construction phase and redesign, the New CCH will reopen in August 2020. The aim is to win many new national and international congress customers, to double the number of events and participants within the next years. Expanding the strong network of business and science relations, cooperation with Politicians and all partners of the Hamburg Meetings Industry will be additional goals.

Ms. Mahmoud has in-depth management experience in worldwide sales and marketing for the global meeting, convention and event industry. With 17 years of leadership experience as Director Conventions and Business Unit Manager and Authorized Representative at Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH (*visitBerlin*), she has founded, built and developed the Berlin Convention Office of *visitBerlin* with innovative services. Under her leadership, Berlin became one of the most successful conference and congress destinations from 2001 to 2017. In the global ranking for ICCA - International Congress & Convention Association - in 2015 Berlin took the lead worldwide for the first time.



Together with her team, the booking volume of conferences, congresses, events and incentives in Berlin more than tripled. Global networks have been established, such as Representatives in London, New York, Sao Paulo and Beijing. Berlin's membership of the "BestCities Global Alliance" - an association of 12 congress metropolises worldwide - was of particular importance.

1. What values/skills do you believe are most important in being a leader?

As a strong leader, you have to have a vision! You have to decide; what is really important in your life? And how can you support others? You should be a very good listener and an advocate or ambassador for your profession, your job and your responsibilities. Being a role model gives other people an inspiration.

2. How did you overcome any challenges that you may have faced in this industry?

By asking a lot of questions and surrounding myself with people who inspire me. By using my great network in our industry and being open to other cultures so I can learn a lot from them. By sharing my own point of view and being open. I motivate myself every day, even if I have a bad or challenging day - I don't like to give up!

3. What does inspiring the next generation of girls mean to you? And how do you support this?

We are living in a very changing, fast world! Our next generation has a new view, living in a different world than, for instance, generation X or the baby boomers. Every generation has its milestones, important innovations and developments. The next generation will grow up with digitalisation and a close connection to our natural resources and with sustainable goals. I am a strong believer that we can learn so much from each other, to support each other and that we can create something new! This is the reason WHY I would like to support girls.

4. Is there anyone you would like to acknowledge for their support or influence in your journey to becoming a leader in the events industry?

I have a lot of women around me who inspired me and still do! I am impressed by how many women are very flexible in their work and family responsibilities. Even if they are working a half-day they manage a huge volume of work. In my view, women go very often "the extra mile" because they would like to change the world to a better place. I got my inspiration from a lot of great women in our industry. Some names are Carina Bauer, Nina Freyson-Pretorius and Karen Bolinger.

5. Why do you believe gender equality is important in the events industry?

The Meetings and Events Industry brings people from around the world together, from different cultures and different backgrounds. It is important to understand each other - and diversity plays a big role because you will find different views and different strengths. Gender equality gives you a great platform for different views and experiences, its like teamwork - everyone has a different responsibility to finalize one big goal.