In an increasingly regulated environment, picking a venue that sets the right tone, offers engaging and comfortable surroundings, and is easily accessible, can be a challenge. However, in order to comply with ongoing revisions to global codes of practice you don’t have to pick a nondescript, inhospitable venue, nor do you have to be creatively constrained.

The regulatory landscape means that pharma and the agencies and venues tasked with organising meetings, congresses or exhibitions need to consider every aspect of the communication spectrum, mapping the requirements of varying codes as they go – which is particularly important in an international setting where understanding the requirements of the codes of practice in the speakers’ countries of origin is just as important as the code related to the country in which the meeting is taking place.

Knowing the boundaries, working with the in-house regulatory and compliance teams, both global and affiliate, either one-on-one or via a dedicated contact, is crucial to the success of your event, as is finding a venue where staff understand the regulatory requirements pharma must work within.

With something to suit every style and every size of event you wish to organise, Pharmaceutical Market Europe’s A-Z of conference and meeting venue profiles is a time-saving resource to help you find your perfect partner.
The Ark Conference Centre

The future of conferencing is at The Ark Conference Centre.

Situated on the hospital grounds of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital, The Ark Conference Centre provides a stunning new experience for conferences, training events, seminars, breakfast meetings, AGM’s and product launches. In addition we can tailor bespoke events to individual client requirements.

www.arkcentre.com

Bournemouth International Centre & Pavilion

Lisa Achurst, Sales Manager | +44(0)1202 456550 | conference.bic@bhlive.co.uk

The BIC is a leading UK conference, exhibition and event venue; the largest on the South Coast. With four main auditoria, it has the ability to host multi-hall conferences and exhibitions, down to smaller more intimate meetings.

www.bic.co.uk

Conference Centres of Excellence

Katharine Armstrong, Sales Manager | +44(0)1926 623 328 | katharine.armstrong@cceonline.co.uk

Conference Centres of Excellence’s purpose is to represent specialist conference centres at the top end of the meetings sector, providing excellent quality events, in a dedicated environment, at all inclusive rates. On behalf of its members, the consortium works to promote the benefits of focused conference facilities and support.

www.cceonline.co.uk

Coventry TechnoCentre

Sandra Bimon, Senior Sales Manager | +44(0)2476 236 427 | sbimon@cad.coventry.ac.uk

Unique technology focused venues accommodating 2-200 delegates. The perfect solution for recruitment drives, IT training, quarterly company briefing sessions, sales meetings or new product launches. Located on Coventry University Technology Park, just minutes from the M42, M1, M69, M6 motorways and within walking distance of Coventry railway station.

www.coventrytechnocentre.co.uk

The Edinburgh Conference Centre

Lynne Geary, Commercial Operations Manager | +44(0)131 451 3191 | L.Geary@hw.ac.uk

The Edinburgh Conference Centre is the dedicated all year round facility located in the heart of Heriot-Watt University’s Edinburgh woodlands campus. Our team is committed to servicing a wide range of events including international conferences, product launches, exhibitions, training programmes, functions and special celebrations.

www.edinburgh-conference.com

Fitzwilliam College - Cambridge

Caroline Choa, Conference Coordinator | +44(0)1223 332 940 | conference.office@fitz.cam.ac.uk

Based on a classic design and set in spacious and attractive grounds near the centre of Cambridge, Fitzwilliam College encapsulates a rare blend of history and innovation, living up to its heraldic motto of providing “the best of the old and the new”.

www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/conferences

Harvester Conferences Limited

Anne Fanns, Events Co-ordinator | +44(0)1732 770 707 | conferences@therivercentre.org

Kent’s prestigious, contemporary, conference, meeting and events venue, offering some of the largest and most versatile facilities in the south of England. Complemented by advanced audio-visual technology. The River Centre is extremely flexible to meet your needs.

www.therivercentre.org

Hever Castle

Astor Wing Sales Office | +44(0)1732 861800 | meetings@hevercastle.co.uk

Hever Castle, founded in 1270 and the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, is the perfect combination of grandeur and intimacy. Set in 600 acres of idyllic countryside, Hever Castle has a rich and varied history dating back more than 700 years.

www.hevercastle.co.uk
Clause 19: Put emphasis on education and communication

When the UK Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry’s (ABPI) meetings and hospitality guidance was updated under Clause 19 of its Code of Practice 2008, many organisers thought that their events would inevitably become less inspiring and that their scope to communicate effectively would be significantly diminished. However, though the rules have changed, many events have become even more productive and memorable. A critical factor in that process is venue selection: by finding the right venue and working with it, a product launch, sales conference or motivational event can be created that is significantly more effective than it would have been under the old regulations.

My venue has seen a significant and progressive increase in business from the sector since the advent of the new Code of Practice. Our experience is that most pharma organisers are happy to have thrown off the burden of trying to outdo their competitors in terms of lavishness and generosity. They welcome the challenge of creating an event that has optimum impact because it is an excellent event, rather than an ordinary one redeemed by gifts or expensive cuisine. It is also interesting to see that pharma events have not become formulaic; there is still much scope for creating a distinctive event that is not only effective in terms of communications, but stylish and memorable.

But what is the best way to optimise that process?

Starting point
In choosing a location, it is vital to find one that cannot only demonstrate that it knows about Clause 19, but that it understands the demands that it creates. It is no good to have a venue that is constantly trying to push up the levels of hospitality because it does not understand the implications. Having tested out that level of understanding, the next, and probably the most important, job is to find a venue that addresses, as precisely as possible, the specifications of Clause 19. Of course, that means looking away from those that epitomise the ‘five star’ standard and finding a venue that is best suited to the purpose of actually delivering the message most effectively.

It means looking for a more focused, practical environment: a venue which prioritisces communications over glamour and overt hospitality. The ideal is an environment that is comfortable and welcoming but discreet about it, without risking giving the impression of ‘no expenses spared’.

Fit for purpose
The type of venue most likely to achieve those objectives is one that specialises in conferences and meetings. That is, a venue which is wholly focused on those things, they are not just part of a wider portfolio of activities.

It is probably still the case that some organisations do not fully understand that such venues exist. There are still organisers who, until recently, thought that organising an event inevitably meant looking at a hotel and that, as long as it was not ranked five star, or in some cases even four star, that would be satisfactory. However, this misses a major opportunity, because there are many specialist conference centres that provide a much better solution.

Wyboston Lakes, for example, has two dedicated venues on the same 350-acre rural site, with facilities for events for up to 270 delegates. These are fully focused centres, with none of the other demands that can be faced at hotel-based events. There are no other irrelevant activities going on, such as groups of tourists waiting for their coach or children running about, so every meeting feels special. Plus, if an organisation wants to achieve complete exclusivity and privacy, there is the option of exclusive hire.

As with other specialist venues, all our rooms, all our facilities and all our staff are dedicated fully to events, without any compromise. Each centre has substantial residential facilities, but the only people staying overnight are event guests or delegates and staff supporting the event if required. Our pharma business is growing progressively, with an increasing number of training courses, assessment days, medical education or clinical development meetings and product launches.

The right image
Clause 19 requires that the purpose of any pharma event is education and communication. That demands an environment that is conducive to learning, so that delegates can really concentrate
on the content of the meeting, helped by the fact that they are comfortable, relaxed and focused.

Importantly, specialist venues project the right message to the authorities, as well as to shareholders, boards and other opinion formers. They are a manifestation of the organisation’s determination that it has the right priorities; hospitality is not its primary business and caring for delegates or guests, without excess, is an intrinsic part of the philosophy.

Excessive hospitality is almost always hiding some sort of deficiency, such as a mediocre product, an uninspiring business message or nervous management. The pharma industry is to be congratulated for recognising this and taking firm steps to address it.

Professional approach
The ABPI rules, perhaps incidentally, are also encouraging organisations to prove themselves and their products and services by demanding a much more sophisticated and professional approach to their events. That is what really impresses guests and delegates. An event that runs smoothly, which shows that the organiser has spent time and thought in making everything work properly and that is welcoming for invitees, helps exude a confidence that says far more that is positive about the company itself than a lavish lunch, a free bar or an expensive gift.

“Many organisers are so pleased with the ability of a venue to meet all the obvious requirements that they forget the basics, such as whether the invitees can reach it without any undue delay or inconvenience”

Further considerations
Other factors must be considered when selecting the right venue and working with it to optimise the event.

Many organisers are so pleased with the ability of a venue to meet all the obvious requirements that they forget the basics, such as whether the invitees can reach it without any undue delay or inconvenience. Not everyone wants to travel by car, so the location needs to be close enough to railway stations or bus links. Plus, there must be enough parking spaces for car users.

City and town centres, though they may provide more choice, can be inconvenient to access and often do not offer parking, especially free of charge. There are several out-of-town venues, which are easy to reach and have plenty of dedicated, free parking areas.

Delegates’ comfort must also be taken into account. As well as having a pleasant, air-conditioned conference room with plenty of daylight, space, good acoustics and no ambient distractions, remember that invitees may have to sit there and listen for most of the day. A dining chair is not normally the best option for that, remember that invitees may have to sit there and listen for most of the daylight, space, good acoustics and no ambient distractions, having a pleasant, air-conditioned conference room with plenty of space, air-conditioning and no ambient distractions is much better than a luxurious hotel.

For example, the number of breakout sessions should be considered. Small or non-dedicated venues may offer a superb main facility but may struggle to muster sufficient support rooms of an adequate standard.

The availability of breakout rooms should also be considered. Small or non-dedicated venues may offer a superb main facility but may struggle to muster sufficient support rooms of an adequate standard. Dingy, dark or congested breakout rooms can impair the image the company has worked so hard to create.

However polished and productive an event, the quality of the food is vital. Lunchtime is a crucial stage of any conference. Guests can come back serene and ready for action, or wretched and even dyspeptic. Therefore the standard of the food is one of the most important items on the agenda and should be checked out in advance if possible.

Flexibility and response
Overall, the venue should instil a feeling of confidence about its ability to cope with any demands and last-minute changes or issues that happen during the conference itself. Does it give an impression of versatility and responsiveness?

Most events go reasonably smoothly, but it is inevitable that something will need to be sorted out. A speaker may arrive late, necessitating a revision of the schedule at the last moment; a PowerPoint presentation may not function; a microphone may fail or give unacceptable feedback. The people at the venue need to be relied upon to help the client address such problems, competently and without fuss. The issue of responsiveness is especially important when a hotel is on the shortlist of venues. Obviously, most hotels offer facilities for events, but their prime concern is for their residents. Hotels have a difficult balancing act, as many guests resent being made to feel second best to a company event. Dedicated conference providers almost certainly represent a better option than a hotel in this respect, because they are not beholden to what the industry calls ‘transient business’.

A real opportunity
In three or four years, the pharma industry, having been compelled to re-evaluate its methods, has made great progress overall. Most organisers have come to realise that tighter controls on hospitality do not mean that all events have to follow the same pattern and need not jeopardise the quality, style or impact of their event. In fact, the reverse is true. Organisers who commit time to the careful investigation and selection of potential venues can still find scope to create prestigious, distinctive events, which bring credit to themselves and generate business for their companies.

The Author
Clive Bache is sales and marketing director for Wyboston Lakes.
Imperial College London

Imperial College London offers an outstanding choice of meeting, conference, training, banqueting, exhibition and accommodation facilities. With more than 150 events spaces for 10 to 740 delegates, Imperial is London’s leading academic conference venue. Located centrally in South Kensington just minutes away from the Royal Albert Hall, Hyde Park and London’s famous museums, Imperial benefits from a vibrant neighbourhood and excellent transport links.

www.imperial.ac.uk/conferenceandevents

The Mermaid Conference & Events Centre

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www.the-mermaid.co.uk

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MIC Hotel and Conference Centre is the First Social Enterprise Hotel in the UK. We provide quality 4 star conference facilities and hotel accommodation in central London, located 2 minutes from Euston Station.

www.micentre.com

Nottingham Conference Centre

Nottingham Conference Centre is a dedicated, year-round contemporary conference facility located at the heart of Nottingham city centre. Our event spaces include flat floor lecture theatres, naturally-lit meeting rooms and executive boardrooms. Whether you need a room for five or 450 our all-inclusive day delegate rates and flexible room layouts make us an ideal venue for all types of events, conferences and functions.

www.nottinghamconferencecentre.co.uk

Old Town Hall Stratford

An historic venue, right in the heart of Stratford, the Old Town Hall is full of Victorian charm and splendour. A prime location with excellent transport links, it has a banqueting hall ideal for special occasions, conferences, exhibitions or concerts and a choice of private rooms for smaller functions and a Victorian courtyard for open-air events.

www.oldtownhallstratford.co.uk

Peckforton Castle

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www.peckfortoncastle.co.uk

The Priory Rooms Meeting & Conference Centre

Conveniently located in the heart of Birmingham City Centre, The Priory Rooms is a hidden gem offering state-of-the-art conference facilities in delightful courtyard surroundings. Our commitment to the environment is reflected in everything we do, from our use of Fairtrade refreshments, to recycling all of our waste packaging and paper. A large proportion of our trading profits are donated to charity and make a valuable contribution to the local community. Whether it’s a conference, seminar, presentation, training session or workshop, our nine versatile rooms are totally flexible and can host anything from two to 180 guests.

www.theprioryrooms.co.uk
Venues & Conferences

Radisson Edwardian Heathrow

The four star Radisson Edwardian Hotel Heathrow is an airport hotel that feels like anything but. Dramatic spaces, distinctive design and dedicated service come together in a location where London meets the world. There’s a distinctively individual feel refreshing for a venue of this scale, with public areas featuring oriental artefacts and original art - an inspiring environment for events of every size and style. Conveniently located close to Heathrow Airport where the M25 joins the M4, there are also frequent tube links from Heathrow Terminals 1, 2, 3 on the Piccadilly Line. With 459 bedrooms, two restaurants and bars, 42 flexible meeting spaces from one-to-one meetings up to a maximum capacity of 700, advanced guest technology, complimentary high speed wireless throughout and car parking for 550 this is a venue that’s utterly unique.

www.radissonedwardian.com

Ripley Castle

The castle may be ancient but its business ethos is impecably modern and the facilities second to none whether it is for a large conference, dinner, or small meeting, and you won’t find many castles with plug-in internet access. We pride ourselves on our excellent cuisine and service and affordable prices!

www.ripleycastle.co.uk

Robinson Executive Conference Centre

The Robinson Executive Conference Centre is a premier, 4 star equivalent, dedicated, residential conference and training centre ideal for product launches, annual conferences, sales meetings, GP briefings and clinical trials. Set in 350 acres of distraction-free surroundings, the centre provides an environment conducive to learning, thus allowing clients to comply with Clause 19 of the ABPI’s Code of Practice. The centre has 27 conference and training rooms accommodating from 2 – 270 delegates, 120 refurbished, executive, ensuite, double bedrooms and specialises in providing a bespoke conference and training service to meet any pharmaceutical organisation’s requirements. There is ample free parking available and free onsite wi-fi access.

www.wybostonlakes.co.uk

Royal College of Physicians

Rich in history, yet designed for the needs of today, the College is an award-winning modern building overlooking Regents’ Park. The impressive facilities include auditoriums, meeting and dining facilities, as well as a private garden. The facilities are further enhanced by a rare Heritage Collection, making it a genuinely unique venue.

www.rcpevents.co.uk

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Located in the heart of Edinburgh this stylish venue offers comprehensive facilities from lecture theatre, meeting rooms, to the historic Great Hall and Georgian rooms; a choice of flexible spaces for conferences, meetings, product launches, exhibitions, dinners and social events. As a leading venue for international medical symposium it is a perfect setting for a pharmaceutical industry event.

www.rcpe.ac.uk/conferencing

Radisson Edwardian Heathrow

Jane Bosworth | +44(0)2087 577 993 | hotelradisson.com

Ripley Castle

Jenny Carter | +44(0)1423 770952 | enquiries@ripleycastle.co.uk

Robinson Executive Conference Centre

Ewart Monday/Julie White, National Sales Managers | +44(0)845 2300 666 | sales@wybostonlakes.co.uk

Royal College of Physicians

Natacha Cuenuod, Sales & Marketing Manager | +44(0)20 7034 4900 | events@rcplondon.ac.uk

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Lorraine Deane, Senior Events Support Coordinator | +44(0)131 225 7324 | events@rcpe.ac.uk
### Royal Pharmaceutical Society

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Helen McEvoy, Sales and Conference Manager | +44(0)207 572 2264 | enquiries@rpharms.com

www.rpsconferences.co.uk

### Venue Cymru

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Adrian LaTrobe | +44(0)1492 879771 | adrian.latrobe@venuecymru.co.uk

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www.wasing.co.uk

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