

Vienna, 19 April 2022

## **Double gold for Austria Center Vienna at prestigious German Stevie® Awards**

**The Austria Center Vienna has won a pair of Gold Stevie® Awards, taking first place in the Covid-19-related Communications or PR Campaign of the Year sub-category for the testing and vaccination lanes operated on behalf of the City of Vienna, while the Hybrid Circle was named Brand Experience of the Year. The winners will receive their awards at an online ceremony on 24 May.**

“I’m very proud that we have won two international awards at once. The Covid-19 pandemic has been extremely demanding for all of us. So I’m delighted that our comprehensive communications campaign for the testing and vaccination lanes operated on behalf of the City of Vienna is held in such high regard. We quickly realised that this crisis would also bring about fundamental changes in the event industry, so in parallel we put our heart and soul into developing innovative hybrid event formats. And the Hybrid Circle has enabled us to take interactive customer events to a whole new level,” said Susanne Baumann-Söllner, Managing Director of the Austria Center Vienna.

### **Gold for communications campaign for Covid-19 testing and vaccination lanes**

The Austria Center Vienna set up Europe’s first Covid-19 testing lane in September 2020. Originally intended as a safety measure for large-scale events, the facility at the venue grew to become Austria’s largest testing and vaccination centre. In contrast to its core business of staging large-scale international events, in this mega-project the Austria Center Vienna focused on communications aimed at a target group that it traditionally has had little contact with: the residents of Vienna. A clearly defined communications strategy was devised in consultation with the client, the City of Vienna, and implemented in partnership with the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Vienna. A comprehensive package of communication measures was put together, ranging from initial information posted on the Austria Center Vienna website, clear signage and guidance systems on site, support for media events and proactive communication on social media, through to assistance for the City of Vienna complaints management unit provided by the Austria Center Vienna’s in-house ombudsman service.

### **Best practice: major players join forces to create exemplary solution**

Above all, the panel of judges singled out the impressive joint solution developed by several major organisations to ensure the smooth provision of tests and vaccinations to the people of Vienna, calling it “exemplary” and “a masterstroke”. According to one judge, it was “an outstanding feat of logistics and communications, something which we would have liked to have seen more of in Germany”. In addition, the strategic approach featuring an entertainment element was seen as a “refreshingly positive emotional USP for such a serious topic”. Another panel member highlighted the imaginative nature of the campaign: “the great effort involved in bringing all the different aspects to life is what makes this initiative unmistakable and exemplary”. The campaign’s success is reflected in the figures: over 3.6 million visitors to the testing and vaccination facility, 5 million-plus website visits, thousands of branding and

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orientation signs, tens of thousands of positive reviews on social media, hundreds of press events and more than 4,000 reports in the media. “Achieving the highest possible vaccination rate in a city of two million people calls for the very best logistics and communications solutions. At the City of Vienna’s Public Health Services department, we’re delighted that our cooperation with the Austria Center Vienna was such a great success. At the Austria Center Vienna we reached out to millions of people using various forms of communication. This played a decisive part in enabling the capital to stem the spread of the coronavirus so effectively,” commented Jochen Haidvogel, head of the City of Vienna’s Public Health Services department (Municipal Department 15). “We’re proud to have supported the City of Vienna on such a vital task and made a crucial contribution to fighting the pandemic,” Baumann-Söllner added.

### **Best brand experience of the year: Hybrid Circle**

Hybrid event formats have been in the ascendancy for a number of years now, with the coronavirus pandemic elevating the trend to the new industry standard. “We took the frequent criticism about the discernible separation between on-site and online participants very seriously, and developed the Hybrid Circle in cooperation with our partners Media Apparat, Flave and AV-Professional. It’s a new format that moves us away from lecture-style keynotes in favour of real discussion, so it combines the best of both worlds,” Baumann-Söllner explained. A 360° set-up with several cameras and ultra-large screens creates a unique experience for all participants, both at the venue and online. “The Hybrid Circle shows how we can rethink conventional event formats and combine them with hybrid elements to not only overcome geographical barriers, but also to usher in a new era in event production,” said Andreas Göttl, Managing Director of Media Apparat. In September 2021, the Austria Center Vienna invited a panel of experts to a hybrid event designed to give customers an insight into the new hybrid concept.

### **Judges impressed by innovative new format**

The judges praised the Hybrid Circle, calling it an attractive and integrative format which will definitely have a place in events long after the pandemic. The panel also cited the “first-rate implementation of the hybrid concept and genuine added value compared to pure in-person events”, as well as “the future-proof nature of the new format”. “It’s important to us that the Hybrid Circle is easily scalable. This makes it a meaningful addition to both large-scale conferences and exclusive discussion formats with fewer participants. These plaudits will spur us on to develop even more hybrid formats tailored to the needs of our customers,” Baumann-Söllner noted.

### **About the Stevie® Awards**

Covering a huge range of categories, the German Stevie® Awards are a high-profile business accolade for companies in Europe’s German-speaking countries. Entries are invited from all countries where German is an official language. Organisations from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Switzerland were able to submit entries in over 200 categories, detailing their accomplishments and contributions since July 2019.

### **About IAKW-AG**

Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG) is responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna. The Austria Center Vienna is Austria's largest conference centre, with 19 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 26,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit.

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