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David Gabri, President and CEO of
Associated Luxury Hotels International

Outlook 2011 Brighter Days Ahead

New Strategies and Trends That
Will Impact Your Meetings

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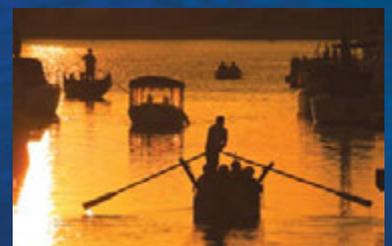
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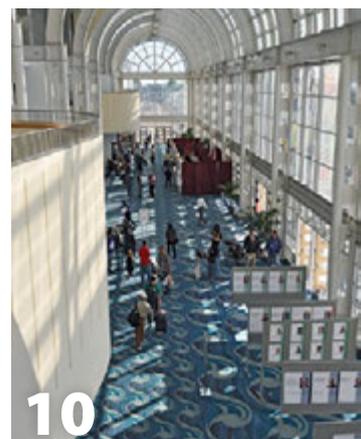
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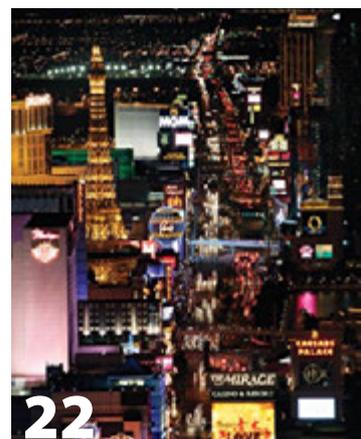
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Brighter Days



The watchwords from last year's Outlook 2010 issue were resilience, flexibility, adaptability and persistence — qualities necessary for associations to continue to move forward in a sluggish economic recovery.

Here we are one year later, and all economic indicators point to a better, but not blockbuster, 2011 — so says Suzanne Cook, Ph.D., senior adviser to the U.S. Travel Association in the November issue of her newsletter, "U.S. Travel Outlook." She recapped research and analysis from the experts who attended U.S. Travel's annual Marketing Outlook Forum, held in Las Vegas in October. Current and predicted rebounds in national convention center attendance, business travel and the lodging industry are good news, Cook says, but "don't confuse this with a return to normal. The 'new normal' we have all talked about so much is stubbornly in place and will continue to evolve." It seems the watchwords from 2010 still apply to 2011.

Cook noted that Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, who spoke at the forum, "advised us to be flexible, patient, creative and willing to embrace new ideas. We need to think positively and continue to find ways to do more with less, and to be less provincial in our thinking. It's not just what's good for our company or our destination, but also what's good for our industry and our country, and our country's brand around the world."

Thankfully, it's easier to be optimistic this year: PCMA's CEO Deborah Sexton noted in a statement, "There continues to be caution in budgets and cost controls...but if we can stay on this positive path there are certainly brighter days ahead for meetings."

In our Outlook 2011 cover story on page 16, David Gabri, president and CEO of Associated Luxury Hotels International and recent recipient of ASAE's "Academy of Leaders Award," said that because meeting and convention demand is gradually increasing — good news for the industry overall — the buyer's market is waning. However, for the immediate future, he counsels, "There's still a lot of opportunity to find values."

It appears that continuing to be flexible, adaptable and persistent is moving us in the right direction.

Heeding Rossi Ralenkotter's advice, planners can begin to think positively and embrace new ideas by reading our Outlook 2011 feature, and they can find ways to do more with less by taking advantage of the value propositions offered by meeting in Las Vegas (page 22), Second-Tier Cities (page 10) and Midwest states (page 28).

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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WEBSITE

www.themeetingmagazines.com

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Harvey Grotsky
cccpublisher@att.net

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Mitch D. Miller
cccdirector@att.net

MANAGING EDITORS

Susan W. Fell
ccceditor1@att.net

Susan S. Gregg
ccceditor2@att.net

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Karen Brost
John Buchanan
Stella Johnson
Andrea Montello
Derek Reveron
George Seli
Steve Winston

PRESIDENT & CEO

Harvey Grotsky

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

David A. Middlebrook
cccoperations@att.net

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394
561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509

NORTHEAST

Jeffrey Posner
516-594-2820 • Fax: 516-594-2826
prijeff@aol.com

FLORIDA/CARIBBEAN

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

SOUTHWEST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

SOUTHEAST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

MIDWEST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

WEST

Marshall Rubin
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907
mrubin@westworld.com

CANADA

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
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ASAE Purchases Convene Green Alliance

ASAE has acquired the Convene Green Alliance (CGA) from IMN Solutions, an association, foundation and meeting management company. IMN Solutions created the CGA in 2008 based on a vision to launch an organization that would advance green meetings, develop best practices and share good ideas. CGA has grown to more than 1,000 individual members representing hundreds of associations, as well as more than 40 corporate partner members. CGA has created and developed a wide range of resources to support the burgeoning interest in green meetings, holding regular "Focus Forum" events in the Washington, DC, area featuring leaders in the green meetings arena. CGA also provides a wide range of best practices and resources on its website, convenegreen.com. ASAE is now in the process of assessing CGA programs and resources before announcing specific program initiatives. For more information, visit ASAE's FAQ page at asaecenter.org.



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

Now You SEMA, Now You Don't.

When The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) Show brought more than 100,000 industry leaders to the Las Vegas Convention Center in November, they left behind little evidence that they were ever there — and that's a good thing, environmentally speaking. The Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) recorded its highest percentage of recycled

materials from a major trade show during this premier automotive specialty products trade event, at 86 percent. "We are very proud to have diverted more than 58 tons of waste from the show floor during SEMA," said Taryle Spain, director of client services for the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCA), operators of the LVCC. "We have made a commitment to being an environmentally friendly facility, and our recycling program has had great success." The Las Vegas Convention Center recycled more than 1,250 tons of waste in the past year. lvca.com



100 Percent Wind-Powered Hotel.

The InterContinental New York Barclay, New York City's landmark historic hotel, is now supported by 100 percent wind energy. Sterling Planet, a leader in the renewable energy market, supplies the 685-room luxury hotel with wind energy through renewable energy certificates (RECs). The Barclay is among the first New York Hotels to source

100 percent wind energy. Sterling Planet will provide the InterContinental New York Barclay with more than 6.3 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of Green-e Energy-certified RECs from nationwide wind resources to offset 100 percent of the hotel's conventional electricity. Wind power is a particularly favorable renewable option because the operation of wind generators produces zero emissions. These RECs offset approximately 8.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide. The environmental benefit is equivalent to not driving 865 passenger cars for one year or 499 households' annual electricity use. sterlingplanet.com, intercontinentalnybarclay.com

PCMA Announces 2010 Achievement Award Winners

CHICAGO, IL — The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) recently announced the winners of the 2010 Achievement Awards, who will be recognized at the 55th PCMA annual meeting: Convening Leaders, January 9–12, 2011 in Las Vegas. "PCMA is proud to recognize and celebrate the achievements of these exceptional members and meetings industry leaders," said PCMA President and CEO Deborah Sexton. "The 2010 Achievement Award winners were selected for their commitment to excellence. They have demonstrated their passion for our industry, going above and beyond what is expected of them, and in doing so have made a significant contribution to their profession and the meetings industry as a whole."

The recipient of the 2010 Distinguished Member of the Year Award is Annette M. Suriani, CMP, director of meetings, Meetings Management Group, Washington, DC. The Distinguished Meeting Professional of the Year is Lora J. Di Padova-Tannehill, CMP, director of scientific meetings, American Society of Neuroradiology, Oakbrook, IL; the Distinguished Convention Service Manager Award winner is Jeffery S. Pinkley, CMP, senior event manager, San Diego Convention Center Corporation, San Diego, CA; the Educator of the Year is B.J. Reed, CMP, APR, professor, University of Wisconsin-Platteville; Outstanding Service to a Chapter winner is Nancy DeBrosse, vice president, Washington, DC, Experient; the Environmental Leadership award goes to the Vancouver Convention Centre, Vancouver, BC; and the Association Management Center, Glenview, IL, receives the Spirit Award. pcma.org

New Survey Says Air Travel Budgets Rising as Discounts Drop

According to *Business Travel News*, a Morgan Stanley survey of 273 corporate travel buyers indicates that air travel budgets and volumes may reach pre-recession peaks by the end of 2012 and suggests that airlines will maintain or even further pricing power and negotiating leverage. Despite the uptick in demand, corporate travel buyers say they will continue to closely manage spend and avoid premium travel. Peak levels could show up sooner if the economic recovery moves along faster and stronger than anticipated. The report noted that more than 70 percent of the survey participants expect to maintain their "existing, conservative" premium-travel policies, with fewer than 10 percent expecting to loosen them.

Polito Named Chair of IAEE

DALLAS, TX — Vinnie Polito will serve as chair of the board of directors of the International Association of Exhibitions



Polito

and Events (IAEE). Managing director of Westport, CT-based VP International LLC, Polito has more than 20 years of experience in senior leadership positions. Polito said.

"This is a progressive and important time for the trade show and events industry. In 2010, we have rebounded strongly from the economic slowdown of 2009, and I look forward to continued and sustainable growth in 2011."

Other members include Chair-Elect Doreen Biela, CEM; Secretary/Treasurer Robert Kolinek, CEM, CMP, president and CEO of Helen Brett Enterprises Inc.; and Immediate Past Chair Chris Meyer, CEM, CMP, vice president of sales for the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority. iaee.com

Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center Groundbreaking Set for January 14



Renderings of Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center

CLEVELAND, OH — According to Positively Cleveland, the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center is set for January 14, 2011 at 11 a.m. on the Cleveland Malls. The event will feature remarks from civic, business and government leaders. Construction is scheduled to begin on January 3, and the facility is expected to open in the fall of 2013. The 100,000-square-foot medical mart and adjoining convention center with 230,000 square feet of exhibit hall space will be located in downtown Cleveland. The facility will also include more than 92,000 square feet of dedicated meeting rooms and a Grand Ballroom overlooking Lake Erie. clevelandmedicalmart.com, positivelycleveland.com

Hilton Anatole Unveils New Look



DALLAS, TX — Five years in the making, Hilton Anatole's \$120 million transformation is now complete. The iconic Dallas property completely transformed its 1,606 Asian-inspired guest rooms, common areas and 600,000 square feet of meeting and event space. In addition, the AAA Four Diamond Hilton Anatole opened three new dining options, updated its high-speed Internet access and introduced an Executive Lounge on the 25th floor, with panoramic views of the Dallas skyline. The Anatole's 600,000 square feet of meeting and event space also received a facelift. A new conference registration area and separate meeting planner offices were added to the redesigned Atrium II. Prefunction areas in the Tower, along with 17 breakout rooms and six major ballrooms, were renovated to include new carpet, lighting, architectural appointments and modern touches on furniture and artwork. The space also features updated audio-visual and IT capabilities. hiltonanatolehotel.com

Cathy Breden, CAE, CMP



Using Digital Tools to Boost Exhibition Marketing Performance

One just needs to look at the education programs of two industry associations to know that there is a high level of interest and need for association event planners to understand the evolution of digital technologies and, most important, how to use these tools to increase the success of their events. For example, the International Association of Exhibitions and Events' (IAEE) Expo! Expo! Annual Meeting and Exhibition (December 7–9, 2010) in New Orleans scheduled more than 15 sessions, and

+ Exhibiting Marketing Insights 2010." The study contrasts the findings with a similar study, conducted by CEIR in 2009, and explores how digital media tactics are being used to deliver results. The results of the 2010 study demonstrate the need for associations to focus resources on creating a digital marketing program for their events. Industry organizations such as IAEE have developed resources for using digital media tactics.

Small associations with already stretched staffs and resources might struggle with creating a digital strategy for events; however, it is important to develop one. The CEIR study showed that 54 percent of respondents have a digital marketing strategy and 11 percent plan to have one in place by year end. And although e-mail marketing is used by 57 percent of associations in promoting the event, only 12 percent use social media. When asked what types of digital marketing are included in the event's promotional efforts, 57 percent of event organizers said they use digital tactics to extend the reach of their marketing efforts, with 17 percent responding that it is to engage the target audience.

Clearly, association organizers must develop a strategy for using digital media including which channels are most effective. Perhaps more important, clearly defined goals and an understanding of how they will assess the success of the strategy is necessary. If internal resources do not exist, consider outsourcing to an expert the development and implementation of a digital strategy (Figure 1).

the Professional Convention Management Association's annual meeting (January 9–12, 2011) collaborated with the Virtual Edge Institute to co-locate an entire educational component with its annual meeting.

This increased interest is documented in a study conducted by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), in conjunction with George P. Johnson Experience Marketing, "Digital

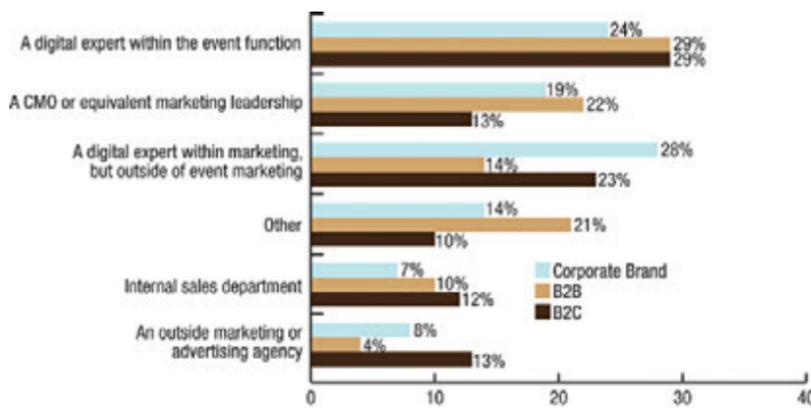


Figure 1 Results from CEIR study respondents who answered the question: How are decisions made with regard to digital marketing practices at your organization?

The CEIR study showed that 54 percent of respondents have a digital marketing strategy and 11 percent plan to have one in place by year end.

With two audiences to serve — the attendee/buyer and the exhibitor — associations also need to understand if and how each audience uses digital media, as well as their level of comfort in using newer technologies. It is also important to understand how they prefer to receive information and when. Especially for organizations not comfortable with or who do not use technology on a day-to-day basis, it will be important to provide some basic information on using digital media. Many continue to use the tried-and-true methods of promotion, the event websites, print advertising, direct mail, etc. (Figure 2).

A CASE STUDY

The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) has recognized that social media is a growing and effective way to communicate with current and prospective members, the media, and anyone interested in the learning and development profession. "We provided our 2010 International Conference & Exposition exhibitors with the Social Media Strategies for Exhibitors so they could utilize this form of communication during the conference and benefit from the added attention the association would be receiving from attendees and others following the conference through social media outlets without attending the event," said Stacey L. Mills, CMP, senior event manager, expositions for ASTD. "Many of our exhibitors did utilize the suggested sites, and the feedback we received was very positive. The exhibitors especially appreciated

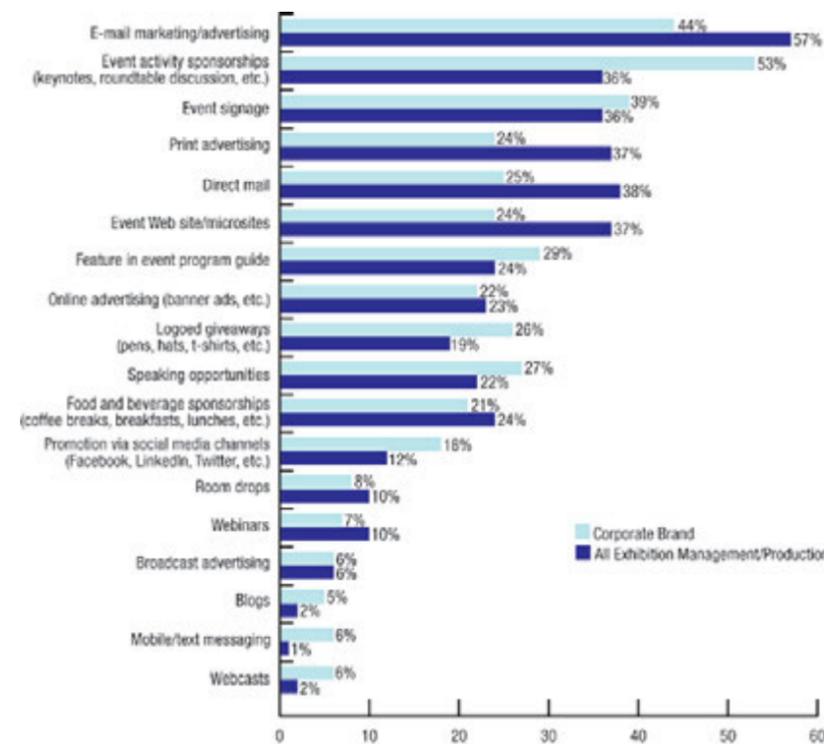


Figure 2 Results from CEIR study respondents who answered the question: Which of the following traditional and digital sponsorship options represent the largest percentage of your event/exhibition budget? Total > 100%

being able to communicate their presence and products/services in a more casual/non-traditional format, which extended beyond just their physical booth, including pre- and post-show."

ASTD created a social media primer for its exhibitors with information on how they can benefit from utilizing social media. A breakdown of the most popular social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) was explained and detailed information provided on how to best leverage the sites for conversations about the exhibitors' booths and offerings. ASTD made a point to let their exhibitors know that creating a dialogue is not meant to simply be an advertisement. Effective engagement using social media benefits everyone — the exhibitor by creating a dialogue, the attendee/buyer is better informed, and the association benefited from creating a community around its event — before, during, and following the event, which results in extending the life of the event.

Understanding how digital marketing tactics can be used to build a conversation and community around an event will go a long way in ensuring its success. For a copy of "Digital + Exhibiting Marketing Insights 2010," visit ceir.org.

Cathy Breden, CAE, CMP, is Executive Director of the Center for Exhibition Industry Research. Breden also serves as Chief Operating Officer of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events. cbreden@ceir.org, cbreden@iaee.com

Sensational Second-Tier Cities

Find Top-Notch Facilities and Value From Coast to Coast

By Steve Winston



Donald "Charlie" Palochko
Director of Business Operations
Moose International
Mooseheart, IL

"When we realized we had to relocate almost 3,000 people who had been booked at the Opryland, we nearly lost hope. But Nashville never did. And this event ended up being one of our most successful conventions ever."

Many of us can probably remember a time when "second-tier" cities were often lacking in quality meeting, lodging and dining facilities. But that's no longer true.

For one thing, second-tier cities realize the economic potential of the mid-sized meetings market and eagerly court association gatherings, which provide a significant boost to a city's revenue. And, for another, they've come to realize that today's meeting attendee is often tomorrow's tourist — plus family.

These cities may offer less capacity, but the affordability and first-rate facilities they offer have planners giving them a second look: Airfares are often lower; in-town transportation costs are lower; and so are prices for hotels — many of them in the luxury category — meeting spaces, restaurants and entertainment, without compromising on quality. Regional meetings benefit also as ease of access via automobile is another consideration.

Best of all and what tops a planner's list, is the high level of personalized service second-tier cit-



The grand reopening ceremony at Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center (above) recalled the flood of 2010, which forced this hotel and others to close temporarily. The Nashville CVB stepped in to help Moose International find alternate housing and meeting space for its 8,000-attendee annual International Convention.

ies can offer an association convention that is the only game in town.

NASHVILLE'S LEGACY

Donald "Charlie" Palochko has a whopper of a second-tier-city story.

Palochko, director of business operations for Moose International, had tied up the last loose ends for his annual International Convention, to be held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, TN, in early July.

But then Mother Nature intervened. Nashville

was hit with devastating floods in May. The Gaylord Opryland was one of the casualties, suffering damage massive enough to close it down. So only a month or two before his meeting — and with 8,000 attendees registered — Charlie Palochko was faced with a tough decision.

"We were facing a nightmare-scenario," he said. "But then the Nashville people — in the midst of all their misery — made an incredible effort. They worked night and day for two months to make alternate housing and meeting arrangements. In so doing, they showed us how much they wanted us there. They became so much more than just a host... they became a partner." Somehow, Nashville pulled it off, even though it took 41 hotels to make arrangements to house 8,000 attendees. And, in pulling it off, Nashville showed its commitment to the entire meetings industry.

Nashville is easily accessible from most of the country and offers 22,000 hotel rooms. And, in the Music City, there's plenty to do, eat and listen to.

The Nashville Convention Center — where the Moose International meeting was finally held — has 25 meeting rooms. The new 1.2-million-square-foot Music City Center will open in 2013 with 350,000 square feet of exhibit space, 90,000 square feet of meeting space and a 57,500-square-foot Grand Ballroom, the largest in the city.

The legendary Gaylord Opryland is open again, having completed renovations to its 2,881 guest rooms and 600,000 square feet of meeting/event space. A new 800-room Omni Nashville Hotel, located across from the Music City Center, is coming in 2013. It will offer 80,000 square feet of meeting space. And the Sheraton Nashville Downtown Hotel (474; 25,000) is undergoing a major renovation.

Nashville really comes alive at night, when the sounds of country and western, bluegrass, R&B and jazz boom out from a hundred doorways along legendary Beale Street or Second Avenue.

"When we realized we had to relocate almost 3,000 people who had been booked at the Opryland," Palochko said, "we nearly lost hope. But Nashville never did. And this event ended up being one of our most successful conventions ever."

THE HIGH DESERT

As you descend over Albuquerque International Sunport, you'll probably pass over the towering



Photo courtesy of Craig Neal, Diamond Level Service LLC

Sandia Mountains just to the east, while looking out at thousands of square miles of seemingly endless high desert to the west, punctuated by purple mesas and mountains.

Albuquerque has roughly 16,000 hotel rooms and well over 1 million square feet of meeting space. The Albuquerque Convention Center has more than 600,000 square feet of meeting and exhibition space. In addition, Albuquerque offers some very unusual meeting spaces. The Anderson-Abruzzo International Balloon Museum, the largest hot-air ballooning museum in the world, accommodates groups of up to 1,000 in its indoor and outdoor spaces. The National Hispanic Cultural Center has 90,000 square feet for meetings/events, and the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center has 24,000 square feet of space.

The New Mexico hotel group called Heritage Hotels has two Albuquerque properties: The Hotel Albuquerque, in the historic Old Town district, has 208 rooms and 61,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor meeting space; and the 140-room Nativo Lodge is decorated in a pueblo motif. The luxurious Hotel Andaluz, located downtown, is the only AAA Four

Diamond Hotel in Albuquerque, with 107 residential-style guest rooms and suites, and can host meetings of up to 150. And outside of town, on the Santa Ana Indian Pueblo, is the prestigious Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, with 350 guest rooms and 70,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space.

Church Street Café in Old Town proffers authentic Southwestern specialties and locally brewed beers. Tucanos Brazilian Grill offers stacks of churrasco (specially grilled meats). And High Finance Restaurant, atop 10,600-foot Sandia Crest (reached by aerial tram), offers spectacular nighttime views of the city below.

The American College of Genetics convened at the Albuquerque Convention Center for their Annual Meeting last spring.



Jane Dahlroth
Meetings, Conventions and Exhibits
Manager
American College of Medical Genetics
Alexandria, VA

"We met in the Albuquerque Convention Center. ...We were really pleased at the reasonable rates, the proximity of the hotels to the convention center, the incredible natural beauty and the historic multicultural environment."



Abby Tammen, CMP
Associate Executive Director
National Association of College
Auxiliary Services
Charlottesville, VA

“We had 578 attendees and 172 exhibitors there for our 42nd Annual Conference in November. Both figures were significantly higher than the year before — and we think it was because of the Colorado Springs location.”

The National Association of College Auxiliary Services held its Annual Conference last November at The Broadmoor, which offers 60,000 square feet of exhibit space at Broadmoor Hall (below).



Photo by Julie Ahlgren

Jane Dahlroth, meetings, conventions and exhibits manager at the American College of Medical Genetics, brought 1,700 attendees here in March for the organization’s Annual Meeting. And her post-meeting surveys yielded such rave reviews that she’s planning on coming back.

“We met in the Albuquerque Convention Center, and stayed in three different hotels,” Dahlroth said. “And we were really pleased at the reasonable rates, the proximity of the hotels to the convention center, the incredible natural beauty and the historic multi-cultural environment.”

BALTIMORE IS BACK

Baltimore’s mid-Atlantic location makes it easily accessible from anywhere on the East Coast. And this accessibility extends to its downtown/Inner Harbor areas, which are not only walkable but are also serviced by the “Charm City Circulator,” a free bus service linking downtown hotels and the Baltimore Convention Center.

The convention center has 300,000 square feet of exhibit space and 85,000 square feet of meeting space. It’s connected to the Hilton Baltimore (757; 60,000) via pedestrian skybridge. The classic Tremont Plaza Hotel (303 suites) is completing a renovation, and its Grand Historic Venue has 45,000 square feet of meeting space.

Planners can rent out the Baltimore & Ohio

Railroad Museum for receptions and banquets. The National Aquarium, right on the water in the Inner Harbor, also has reception and banquet facilities, and an auditorium seating 250.

Coming June 21–23, 2011, AIBTM (America’s Meetings & Events Exhibition) is expecting more than 3,000 national and international meeting and event planners, including 2,000 Hosted Buyers conducting either domestic or both domestic and international business for three days of education sessions and networking at the Baltimore Convention Center.

The city’s slogan for meeting planners? “In Baltimore, you’re just two feet away – your own two feet.” That’s Baltimore’s way of saying that you can cut down on transportation costs here, because of the “walkability” factor.

MEETINGS IN THE MOUNTAINS

Colorado Springs, of course, has one of the most magnificent settings in America, with 14,115-foot Pikes Peak visible from just about anywhere in town. In addition, it offers 14,000 hotel rooms, more than 500,000 square feet of meeting space...and one of America’s legendary hotels: The Broadmoor is aglow in Western ambience and elegance, and it boasts 185,000 square feet of meeting space to go with its 744 accommodations.

The city also has six other full-service hotels that host meetings, among them the Crowne Plaza Hotel (500 guest rooms; 50,000 square feet), and the Cheyenne Mountain Resort & Conference Center (316 guest rooms; 40,000 square feet of IACC-certified meeting space), currently finishing a \$23 million renovation.

In a city set amidst the Rockies, you’d expect some interesting meeting places, and Colorado Springs doesn’t disappoint. The Royal Gorge Bridge and Park, south of town, has the highest suspension bridge in North America (and meeting space).

Must-dos include Pikes Peak Cog Railway – highest in the world – which will bring you to the top.

Colorado, of course, is environmentally conscious. The Broadmoor is LEED-certified, the Cheyenne Mountain Resort is going “green,” restaurants such as The Craftwood Inn (local game specialties, upscale Western ambience) are going green, and there are recycling bins all over downtown.

“In addition to The Broadmoor being a five-

diamond, five-star experience, they also know how to put on a meeting,” said Abby Tammen, CMP, associate executive director of the National Association of College Auxiliary Services (NACAS). “We had 578 attendees and 172 exhibitors there for our 42nd Annual Conference in November. Both figures were significantly higher than the year before – and we think it was because of the Colorado Springs location.”

MEETINGS, SOUTHERN STYLE

Baton Rouge, LA, is known for its Cajun tradition, Zydeco music, Creole cookin’ and great affordability for meeting planners. Louisiana’s capital has more than 10,000 rooms and great meeting spaces. The Baton Rouge River Center, on the banks of the Mississippi, offers more than 200,000 square feet of new and renovated space, including a new 70,000-square-foot Exhibition Hall.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel Executive Center has 32,000 square feet for meetings and 294 guest rooms. And the Belle of Baton Rouge Casino & Hotel (300; 42,000) was recently renovated.

One of the most popular meeting spaces is the Old State Capitol building, from the flamboyant Huey Long era, with meeting spaces in the old House and Senate chambers. Another is the Rural Life Museum, where 1,000 attendees can stroll through working fields and elaborate gardens. Culinary teambuilding exercises are offered at the Louisiana Culinary Institute. And for a trip back to the Old South, attendees often travel to the Nottoway or Houmas House plantations.

Great restaurants here include Boutjins Cajun Restaurant, with classic “Loo-siana” seafood and live Cajun or Zydeco music. Two elegant Cajun restaurants Juban’s and Mansurs on the Boulevard can accommodate group dining.

Joe Cappuzzello is president and CEO of Bank Travel Conference, an association of travel directors from 3,500 banks. He held the group’s Annual Meeting at the Baton Rouge River Center last February, with about 500 attendees.

“We thought Baton Rouge was head-and-shoulders above the other cities we were looking at,” Cappuzzello said. “There’s a genuine Southern hospitality there. It’s a very historic, colorful area. The CVB people and the convention center people had a very can-do attitude. And it doesn’t hurt to be in the South in February, either!”



Photo courtesy of Morningstar Products Rand Larsen

KING OF THE NORTHWEST

Seattle’s setting is breathtaking: a mass of futuristic skyscrapers fronted by Puget Sound and backdropped by the snowcapped Olympic Mountains, crowned by 14,410-foot Mount Rainier.

There are nearly 34,000 hotel rooms here. The new \$185 million tower at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue opened last year adding 351 guest rooms and 53,000 square feet of space for meetings. The two-year-old four-diamond Hyatt at Olive 8 (346 rooms; 11,000) is Seattle’s first LEED-certified hotel.

More than 8,000 rooms are within walking distance of the Washington State Convention Center, which includes 206,000 square feet of exhibit space and more than 100,000 square feet for meetings and banquets. The convention center just debuted its new LEED Silver-certified Conference Center at Convention Place in July, with 71,000 feet of flexible meeting/event space. Combined with the convention center, planners now have a total of 414,722 square feet to work with.

In Seattle, meetings can also take place at the Olympic Sculpture Park on the downtown waterfront. And the Museum of Flight holds receptions and dinners amidst treasures such as a real Concorde jet and the original Air Force One.

Getting around Seattle is easy since the 2009 opening of the Link Light Rail system, which connects Sea-Tac Airport to downtown. And Seattle boasts an outdoor-minded citizenry that has long been a dedicated steward of the local environment.

Steve Pampinella is vice president/team director for ConferenceDirect, one of the largest

The General Meeting of the International Electrotechnical Commission in Seattle last October included this President’s Dinner at the Museum of Flight.



Steve Pampinella
Vice President/Team Director
ConferenceDirect
Phoenix, AZ

“Seattle really offers everything you could want in a convention city. It’s easy to get around. Meeting facilities are excellent. And it has an exciting downtown, with all kinds of dining, shopping, entertainment and recreational options.”



More than 3,800 attendees from 40 countries met at the Long Beach Convention Center for this year's Annual International Meeting of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America.

third-party meeting planning organizations in the country. In October, he held the 74th General Meeting of the International Electrotechnical Commission, an international organization that publishes International Standards for electrical-related technologies, at the Washington State Convention Center. Attendance totaled 3,300 delegates from 78 countries.

"Seattle really offers everything you could want in a convention city," Pampinella said. "It's easy to get around. Meeting facilities are excellent. And it has an exciting downtown, with all kinds of dining, shopping, entertainment and recreational options.

"And it doesn't hurt, either," Pampinella added, "that it has spectacular views of mountains and water just about anywhere you look!"



Keith Schlesinger
Director of Meetings & Conventions
ASA/CSSA/SSSA
Madison, WI

THE BEACH AND THE TRACK

Daytona Beach, FL, is known for a famous race-track...as well as a famous beach (23 miles of it). Northeast of Orlando, the coastal city has 12,000 hotel guest rooms in the area, 2,000 of them within walking distance of the Ocean Center.

The Ocean Center meetings and conventions facility recently completed an \$80 million expansion, and now has more than 200,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space. And right across the street is the area's second-largest meeting space, the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort, with 744 rooms and 60,000 square feet for meetings.

At the Daytona International Speedway, the Daytona 500 Club can accommodate banquets for, well, 500 attendees, of course. The Historic Bandshell on the

beach accommodates events, as does Destination Daytona, which has two hotels, offbeat shops (many with racing items and gear), an English Pub, and the world's largest Harley-Davidson dealership.

Daytona's the home of the LPGA headquarters, with two championship golf courses, and great tennis at the headquarters of the United States Tennis Association, Florida Section. And the area has several hotels that are members of the Florida Green Lodging Program.

Daytona Beach is affordable. And it's within driving distance of most of the Southern states.

THE 'REAL' LONG BEACH

Most of us tend to think of Long Beach, CA, as part of the Los Angeles megalopolis. But this vibrant city is a genuine meetings destination in its own right.

Many downtown storefronts have welcome signs for meeting attendees. Long Beach is convenient to three airports. It's right on the waterfront, and it's been rated as one of the most walkable cities in America. It's home to one of the most interesting hotels/meeting spaces in America, the Queen Mary. And it's a city that's easily navigated, thanks to the free "Passport" buses downtown.

The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center just underwent an \$8 million restoration project, and now showcases more than 400,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space. More than 3,000 of the city's 5,000 hotel rooms city-wide are within walking distance of the convention center. The 199-room Hotel Maya, now under the DoubleTree brand, recently underwent a \$20 million renovation, and now has 20,000 square feet of space for meetings. The legendary Queen Mary boasts 314 Art Deco staterooms, along with 80,000 square feet of meeting and function space.

Keith Schlesinger, director of meetings and conventions for three affiliated associations (American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America) recently brought 3,800 attendees from 40 countries to Long Beach in November, for their Annual International Meeting.

"When I first visited Long Beach," Schlesinger said, "I saw a walkable city in which you don't need taxis to get around. I saw a beautiful waterfront and beach. I saw a clean, safe, affordable city. And

I saw a populace that was genuinely welcoming to the meetings industry, and extremely service-oriented. And that's why we're booked again for 2014."

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

Plano, about 30 miles from DFW Airport, has 4,300 hotel rooms, nearly 300,000 square feet for meetings, more than 700 restaurants and easy access to all the attractions of the Metroplex. Plano also boasts a record of hosting productive meetings.

The biggest meeting venue is the 86,400-square-foot Plano Centre. In addition, the Dallas/Plano Marriott at Legacy Town Center, now being renovated, offers 404 rooms and 32,000 square feet for meetings.

Some planners opt for more unconventional spaces, such as the legendary Southfork Ranch, made famous by the popular television series "Dallas." Southfork offers 64,000 square feet of meeting/event space. Oak Point Amphitheater, surrounded by Texas limestone, can accommodate 1,000 attendees. And many organizations hold teambuilding exercises at

Arbor Hills, a 200-acre nature preserve with three distinct ecosystems.

"We brought 1,200 attendees to the Plano Center in February for our Region-3 Annual Meeting," said Geneva Day, region advisor for the Texas Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. "And we were very impressed with their ability to stage productive meetings. Plano's easy to get to. It's easy to get around. And the CVB bent over backwards to meet our expectations...even to the extent of volunteering to judge some of the contests we staged. We had extremely positive responses to our post-meeting surveys on Plano."

From coast to coast, outstanding second-tier cities await like hidden gems to be discovered and enjoyed by attendees. For association meeting and convention planners, they stand ready to rival big-city quality delivered with personalized small-town service and support.

AC&F



Geneva Day
Region Advisor
Texas Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America
Austin, TX

"We brought 1,200 attendees to the Plano Center ...And we were very impressed with their ability to stage productive meetings. The CVB bent over backwards to meet our expectations."



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Outlook 2011

Brighter Days Ahead

By George Seli



David Gabri
President and CEO
Associated Luxury Hotels
International
Orlando, FL

“More than 53 percent of our hotels have more business on their books now going into 2011 than they did a year ago going into 2010.”

Before looking ahead, it's valuable to take stock in where we've been. Recessions change things for meetings, and the latest one is just another, albeit particularly striking, example.

Associations, delegates and exhibitors all start to apply more scrutiny to their investments, whether leasing a convention center, paying a registration fee or renting booth space. ROI has reared its shrewd head before as a result of recessions, going back many decades. “We have been studying the impact of recessions on the industry throughout the modern age since WWII,” said Steven Hacker, CAE, president of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events. “And notwithstanding the fact that this was our severe toothache, the impact is similar to prior recessions.”

Hacker gives an example from the exhibitor's point of view: “Exhibiting companies don't abandon worthwhile events, but they take less space, fewer staff, cut offsite events for clients — logi-

New Strategies and Trends That Will Impact Your Meetings

cal things. They may also be more discriminating about which events they will participate in. So if a company were to participate in 35 events in a typical year, they may take a really hard look and say, “These six events are not really worth our investment right now.” Similar frugality came into play in the case of attendees, who reflected the changed mindset of the American consumer: “We're seeing a lot of things take place now that are not characteristic of American consumers,” Hacker noted. “There's an enormous drive to reduce their debt, whereas five years ago it wasn't about anything but consumption, irrational in many respects.”

Accordingly, delegates have been more selective in which conventions they'll attend, what tier

of hotel they'll accept and so forth. So in terms of exhibitor and attendee behavior, “nothing that we saw in this edition of recession was different except for the depth and breadth of the recession itself,” Hacker concluded. “In prior recessions there may have been a lot of industries that were not directly affected or that may have had a glancing blow, but this was unique, this was the Katrina of recessions, almost nothing escaped.”

SURGING ATTENDANCE AND BOOKING ADJUSTMENTS

Going into 2011, many sectors are seeing signs of recovery, though some are still struggling, such as homebuilding and real estate. Attendance at the respective trade association conventions will be affected in turn: Some members may decide participation would strain their reduced budget, while others may decide that the educational and networking opportunities are especially valuable during trying times. “It's important to understand that the exhibition industry is nothing more than a mirror of the economic circumstances in the industry or industries that event serves,” Hacker said.

As that mirror image is generally looking better for associations, they're experiencing a surge in attendance, and many planners will have to readjust the booking approach they had last year. “With all of the issues that were occurring in 2009 they were very cautious,” noted David Gabri, president and CEO of Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI). “And one of the things we recognized is that they booked their traditional meetings in smaller, more conservative blocks and expected extraordinary value not only in rate but also importantly in the area of terms and conditions (particularly attrition and cancellation policies).”

But looking ahead a couple of years, those conservative blocks oftentimes won't do. “For ALHI all the business we have coming in this year, more than 50 percent of the programs exceeded their blocks, which is a very good sign. So I want to give advice that planners make sure they're booking appropriately, because come 2012–2014, it may not be easy to get the inventory they need at the last moment, especially as business and leisure travel come back.”

For now, the general consensus is that it is still a buyer's market, and while many associations are seeing a surge in attendance, great deals on room rates tend to exacerbate the familiar “booking outside the

block” problem: The block rates that planners secured several years ago may not compete with current rates some properties are offering, particularly in markets glutted with inventory, such as Orlando and Las Vegas.

There is evidence that the buyer's market is already beginning to shift, however. For example, according to the ALHI's 2009 client survey, nearly 100 percent of respondents indicated it was a buyer's market. “This year 63 percent said buyer's market,” noted Gabri, who recently received ASAE's “Academy of Leaders Award,” given to an industry partner who has demonstrated exemplary support of ASAE and the entire association community.

But there is still plenty of opportunity to find good rates and availability, which is one reason many associations are able to book some of their programs shorter term. “It's not uncommon for associations to be booking 30 days out as opposed to two or three months out,” observed ASAE President and CEO John Graham, CAE. “Some of it's based on whether people think they have the dollars. But they're also doing it because they can. Why make a commitment six months out if you don't have to?”

For programs that use convention centers and must be booked years in advance, many associations are capitalizing on the chance to lock in good rates (and contract terms) while hotels are still hungry for business. “More than 53 percent of our hotels have more business on their books now going into 2011 than they did a year ago going into 2010,” said Gabri. “That means 47 percent are either the same or less, so there's still a lot of opportunity to find values. But when we look out two years into 2012, 79 percent are stronger. There will be an increase in demand in all sectors, individual business travel, leisure travel as well as meeting and incentive groups, and there's a finite inventory with no new construction coming up. The pipeline of major meeting and convention hotels has dropped to a trickle from its boom years in '07 and '08, and then finishing up in '09. I personally don't see that shifting until 2012, and then it takes 24–36 months or more to actually open a property you start.”



Steven Hacker, CAE
President
International Association of
Exhibitions and Events
Dallas, TX

“Exhibiting companies don't abandon worthwhile events, but they take less space, fewer staff, cut offsite events for clients — logical things. They may also be more discriminating about which events they will participate in.”



Peter Hutchins
Vice President of Knowledge Initiatives
ASAE
Washington, DC

“If you try (social media) for a meeting, that gives you a six-month use of the tool focusing on one aspect of what your organization’s doing, and determine from there whether you’re satisfied with the level of interaction or engagement back from the community at large.”

Since the recession, many planners have accommodated attendees by contracting with more lower-tier properties, and to some extent that trend continues. “There’s certainly a movement to recalibrate your room block to make sure that not only do you have four- and five-star hotels in the block but that you have two and three star,” said Hacker. “A three-star hotel might translate into Embassy Suites, Courtyard by Marriott, Hilton Suites. Attendees get free breakfast, valued at \$20–\$30 a day, free Internet, that’s \$10–\$15 a day, and so on.”

But it should be borne in mind that while the buyer’s market lasts, good values are similarly available at luxury properties. In fact, Gabri argued that “four- and five-diamond properties have had the most significant change in value for the buyers. If a mid-tier hotel is \$150, now it’s down to \$129. But if a luxury hotel that’s \$350 is now \$199, that’s a huge value for what you’re getting,” he said. “There’s a lot of benefit from being in a quality, distinctive facility for a meeting or convention because that becomes

a bit of your backdrop; you don’t have to create a lot of décor when you’re doing receptions and events. And it creates more enthusiasm to draw attendees. They are expecting an experience, and that’s part of what links them into the association.”

SOCIAL MEDIA

Apart from a quality ambience for the face-to-face meeting, another enthusiasm-builder is the virtual ambience, specifically social media. The use of tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube to complement conventions is only going to continue to grow next year. Pre-event, interaction via these platforms creates anticipation and even optimizes face-to-face time. “In terms of Facebook, we see people trying to be more social with each other: ‘I’m going to show up early. Is someone else going to be there?’ Or, ‘I’m a foodie who’s looking for other foodies to talk about digital strategies,’” described Peter Hutchins, ASAE’s vice president of knowledge initiatives. The ROI of these tools is also manifest when attendees discuss particular issues and problems via social media. “With

LinkedIn we see more of the full-fledged discussions, where it’s not about connecting with people in the face-to-face meeting, it’s ‘I’m really struggling with implementing such-and-such. Has anybody else done this before who’s willing to share their experience with me?’”

Hutchins also pointed to SlideShare as an up-and-coming tool that can enhance the educational opportunities of the meeting. “SlideShare is a way that PowerPoint presentations can be shared by the creator. I can post mine, and if you’re trying to create a similar presentation or you’re looking for an idea of where to begin, say on knowledge management, you can go to SlideShare, search ‘knowledge management,’ and get a list of presentations from different people on the topic,” Hutchins explained. “It’s meshing well with people’s need at the moment, which is not just to be given a way to read more about an issue, but actually shown how to do something. Which is exactly what YouTube is doing, the more how-to videos. You see more audiences gravitating to the tool as a way to change out your garbage disposal or write a communication plan or do transitions in PowerPoint. Whatever it is, people want to see it in action, and SlideShare enables us, for a community that does spend a lot of time at meetings and creating PowerPoint presentations, to share that basic learning with each other.”

Another social media tool becoming increasingly popular is Yammer, which is “probably the best example of a Twitter functionality that can be confined to inside an organization or to a predetermined grouping of people,” Hutchins noted. Both corporations and associations can be concerned with the privacy of content exchanged online during the course of an event. “Trade associations specifically deal a lot with worrying about anti-trust issues, fear that something they could say may be misconstrued as collusion,” he said.

So the issue for many associations now is not whether to integrate social-media components into their meetings, but which tools, for which purposes, and to what extent. Granted, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube are all free services, but “it does require more resources the more you’re in these tools,” said Hutchins. “And I think those decisions about how much you’re willing to give as an organization to them should be based on the level of engagement you see with them. For us where we saw a quick ROI was LinkedIn. We’ve had a pretty

steady count of 150–200 individuals a month since we launched the group interested in joining.”

ASAE launched its Twitter and Facebook presence in conjunction with its annual meeting about three years ago. “For us, starting it around an event gave us the ability to try the medium and not feel we were committing to it on a larger scale,” said Hutchins. “If you try it for a meeting, that gives you a six-month use of the tool focusing on one aspect of what your organization’s doing, and determine from there whether you’re satisfied with the level of interaction or engagement back from the community at large.” Currently, ASAE collects the various social-media portals in one place on its “annual meeting hub.”

HYBRID MEETINGS

A distinct but related trend from social media integration is the hybrid meeting, where part of the attendee base participates virtually, getting session content through live broadcasts and streaming video, for example. Graham sees a possible advantage here for those who do attend in person, essentially making the event more manageable: “It’s potentially going down the route where attendees will want face-to-face meetings to be smaller, so that they can network more easily, or shorter because people feel short of time.” The virtual piece is additive, not a replacement, he feels. “Everybody’s concern about online learning 15 years ago was that it’s going to replace face-to-face,” said Graham. “It clearly didn’t and is not, except in one category, which is

the one-off type meeting where you have a half-day or two-hour meeting. People just aren’t doing that anymore by and large. That can be done through the magic of technology.”

During the recession the unique niches of both virtual learning and face-to-face were apparent, Hutchins observed. “Two things happened. Face-to-face meetings became more important to people because they were really trying to establish that professional network. But at the same time, the idea of ‘I need this information and I need it now’ became more prevalent. So we saw an upturn in smaller modular learning where you could pick a specific topic and whenever that was relevant to you, you could at least get some type of information, via WebEx for example.” Said Graham, “Clearly we’re moving toward mass customization: I want what I want, when I want it, in the format I want to receive it. And I think that particular mindset is not exclusive to a younger generation.”

SR AND GREEN INITIATIVES

Social responsibility, however, does tend to be especially prioritized by the under-35 crowd, Graham noted. “I think you’re going to see a continued evolution and migration to greener and greener meetings, and more and more giving back



John Graham, CAE
President and CEO
ASAE
Washington, DC

“Clearly we’re moving toward mass customization: I want what I want, when I want it, in the format I want to receive it. And I think that particular mindset is not exclusive to a younger generation.”





Tracey Messina Buonforte
Executive Director
Convene Green
Arlington, VA

“When you have a huge citywide basing their decision largely on green initiatives in the city and you can leverage that, the city really is motivated to make those changes.”

to the community. The recession has coupled with creating a more conservative, less consuming public, and so what people are looking for now is real value and authenticity. That means there’s a greater meaning to the get-together than just the content and the networking.” Both green practices and volunteering opportunities surrounding the event add that meaning. Tracey Messina Buonforte, executive director of the Convene Green Alliance (CGA), confirms that many members now simply expect their meetings will be green. “Three years ago some organizations had a membership that was demanding that these changes be made, and three years later we’re finding that it’s really becoming something that is no longer a choice but something everyone has adopted.”

Founded in 2008 by IMN Solutions, CGA (covenegreen.com) was recently sold to ASAE. CGA includes more than 1,000 individual members representing hundreds of associations as well as more than 40 corporate partner members. “Our underlying mission is to effect positive change in the association and hospitality communities. What we’ve found is that the more associations or meeting planners that are making sustainable demands of facilities and other industry suppliers, the quicker that change is made,” Buonforte explained. “So when you have a huge citywide basing their decision largely on green initiatives in the city and you can leverage that, the city really is motivated to make those changes.”

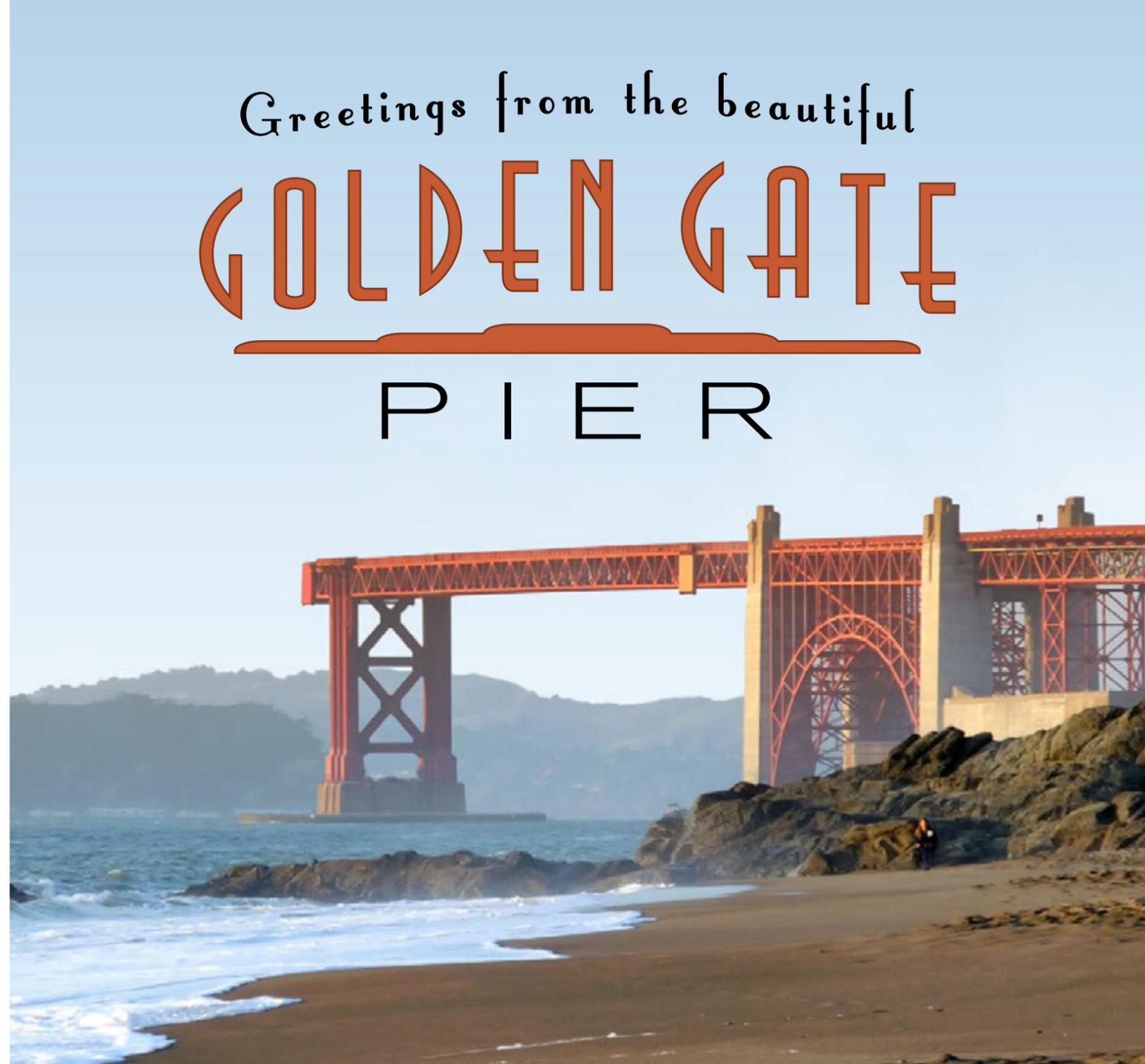
As for association groups’ own green practices, the discussion going into 2011 has reached well beyond avoiding bottled water and excessive printed materials. It’s now about perfecting green practices,

and sometimes unexpected issues that come up using green products. Buonforte gave an example: “We had one association that was utilizing for their badge stock a paper that was made out of seeds. It was certainly biodegradable; you could plant it in your yard. But when the organization tried to implement it at an international meeting, some of their attendees who had left their name badges in their belongings were stopped at customs where they needed to declare they were bringing in fruits and vegetables. So those types of anecdotes are I think the most beneficial to our members, because there are a million vendors who are trying to sell you green products, and it’s interesting to hear feedback on their use.”

Just as it’s not wise to blindly purchase green products, neither is it wise to blindly follow green practices. “Every organization’s different. If your attendees are elderly, then probably suggesting that they avoid shuttles in a large city is probably not a good idea. What might be a good idea is selecting a city where the hotels are closer to the convention center,” said Buonforte. “So you really have to look at the needs of your attendees; it’s not one size fits all.”

What will apply across the board for association meetings next year is a weakening of the buyer’s market in the lodging industry. But that’s natural as demand increases. In a national survey commissioned by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), the PCMA Education Foundation and American Express, conducted from April to May this year, respondents (505 professional meeting planners, 56 percent of whom were association planners) indicated they booked a net increase of 24 percent more meetings for 2011 over 2009. They also expected a net increase of 38 percent in attendance in 2011 over 2009. And one out of four planners expected their total annual budget for offsite meetings to increase this year over last, compared to only 8 percent who had that expectation in 2009.

“While it’s been a difficult 18 months for our industry, I’m encouraged to see both actual business as well as business sentiment improving,” said Deborah Sexton, PCMA president and CEO in a statement. “There continues to be caution in budgets and cost controls, which is to be expected, but if we can stay on this positive path there are certainly brighter days ahead for meetings.” AC&F



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Las Vegas

A Shining Star in the Meetings Market

By Derek Reveron

The Entertainment Capital of the World is back on top of the world. Somehow, resilient Las Vegas persevered and morphed its preposterous “boondoggle” perception into this serious tagline: “the smart place to do business.” All the numbers, from occupancy to number of conventions, are up. CityCenter is one year old, and the new Cosmopolitan Las Vegas just opened. Las Vegas remains the top convention, meetings and trade show destination in North America. It’s a given that most associations increase their average attendance when they hold meetings and conventions in Las Vegas, and the city continues to improve and upgrade so there is always something new and exciting for attendees to see and experience.

The future for meetings is bright. Here’s a sample of what’s coming to Las Vegas: In March, Conexpo-Con/Agg 2011 is expected to attract about 140,000 attendees. Roughly 40,000 people are expected to attend the International Air-Conditioning, Heating, Refrigerating Exposition in January 2011. The first IMEX America meetings industry convention and trade show will be held at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in October 2011. IMEX is holding the show in partnership with Meeting Professionals International (MPI). IMEX America expects to host up to 2,000 meeting and incentive buyers, one of the largest-ever hosted buyer gatherings at a U.S. trade show.

SPACE GALORE

No destination can top Las Vegas when it comes to providing a plentiful supply of spacious convention and conference venues. Las Vegas offers more than 10 million square feet of exhibit and meeting space. The Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC), owned and operated by the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA), is one of the world’s largest convention facilities. It offers 2 million square feet of exhibit space and 144 meeting rooms totaling more than 241,000 square feet. Expansion of the LVCC remains on hold with no plans yet to revive the project, said LVCVA spokesman Jeremy Handel.

Located at the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, the Sands Expo Center and Venetian Congress facility offer a total of 1.8 million square feet of meeting and event space. The Mandalay Bay Convention Center provides about 1 million square feet of exhibit space and a 100,000-square-foot ballroom without pillars. MEET, a new high-tech meeting venue, offers 30,000 square feet of meeting space, a multimedia training center and an outdoor pavilion that can host 475 people. MEET’s Illumivision Light Wave fixtures allow groups to brand events by changing colors inside and outside of the building.

Is it a buyer’s or seller’s market today? Lisa Meller, CMP, president and CEO of Meeting Perspectives Inc., an Irvine, CA-based meeting planning firm, answered, “It’s somewhere between a buyer’s and seller’s market. The room rates and contracting terms are certainly more flexible than they have been in years and Vegas has come a little more in line with some other destinations. It’s not like years ago where you might not get the same attention

if your group wasn’t big enough. Now, small associations have an equal shot at having fabulous programs and feeling like they’re special.”

Meller added that value is available for savvy meeting planners who can negotiate: “Las Vegas is the biggest value we have seen in a long time, and room rates are the lowest we have seen in years. For groups that may not have been able to afford Vegas in the past, this is the opportunity to do it, and the amenities haven’t changed,” said Meller.

Value was the key reason why the Sacramento, CA-based Marina Recreation Association (MRA) held its Educational Conference and Trade Show in Las Vegas in November 2010. The three-day event took place at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino and attracted 159 attendees and 54 exhibitors. Mariann Timms, operations administrator for the MRA, plans four meetings a year for the organization, including the annual conferences and trade show. Timms said that great values were available at several hotels, including the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino. “The Rio really worked with us on food and beverage and audio-visual. I thought we got a great room rate. We’re a small, not-for-profit association, so we have to keep an extremely tight budget. They worked within my budget projections so that we could keep the registration price down,” said Timms.

Several other factors played a role in choosing the Rio, which is a Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment property. “The other thing we liked was, even though it was off The Strip, it offers free shuttle service to other properties. I liked the layout of the hotel. It’s quite a walk from the casino to the convention hall, so it helps keep people down to business,” said Timms.

The annual post-conference survey included a record number of positive comments about the food. The MRA was so pleased with the results of the meeting that the organization’s board of directors has voted to return its Educational Conference and Trade Show to Las Vegas in 2011. The MRA plans to

submit RFPs to several hotels in the city, including the Rio, said Timms.

Las Vegas also attracts meetings and conventions that, in turn, attract other meetings and conventions. For example, Meller planned a three-day meeting of a financial services trade association in Las Vegas to coincide with another convention and trade show.

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas opened December 15, adding nearly 3,000 more guest rooms to Las Vegas’ inventory.



Photo courtesy of The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas



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Mariann Timms
Operations Administrator
Marina Recreation Association
Sacramento, CA

“The Rio really worked with us on food and beverage and audio-visual. I thought we got a great room rate. We’re a small, not-for-profit association, so we have to keep an extremely tight budget. They worked within my budget projections so that we could keep the registration price down.”

“We chose to piggyback on another industry-related association event. We knew everybody was already coming into town, and we knew attendance was going to be big. So we planned our event for the days immediately preceding it,” said Meller. The financial services trade association’s three-day meeting, held at the Bellagio, attracted about 150 attendees. “The Bellagio’s service was fabulous. I was impressed that for the small size of our group we felt important. One of my biggest concerns was that we would get swallowed up and not matter, and that wasn’t my experience,” Meller added.

RESORT FEES: NEGOTIABLE OR DEAL-BREAKER?

More planners must consider whether to make room in their budgets for resort fees. A growing number of Las Vegas hotels are either adding or raising resort fees, which are extra hotel charges for services and amenities such as phone calls, pool access, Internet access, fitness club use and newspapers. Las Vegas resort fees vary widely, ranging from around a few dollars per night to \$25 or more. Visitors typically are required to pay resort fees even if they don’t use the services covered by fees. According to hotel industry financial analysts, properties institute resort fees to increase revenue. The fees can increase the revenue of a Las Vegas resort company by millions of dollars per year.

While meeting planners aren’t happy about paying resort fees, some see the charges as simply additional items to be negotiated. “I don’t think any planner likes them. You have to be upfront during your RFP and site selection processes on whether or not it’s a deal breaker. But for many groups, resort fees can be modified, waived or customized. So it’s just another talking point,” said Meller. Timms

takes a harder line toward resort fees. “Resort fees would definitely be a deal breaker. I never pay resort fees. It has to be negotiated down as part of the overall price. And I won’t have it broken out separately,” she said.

One collection of properties that doesn’t charge resort fees is using the strategy to its marketing advantage. The Caesars Entertainment website touts “No Resort Fees” and provides a link to information on potential savings.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

The **Las Vegas Convention Center** is upgrading its wireless capability to meet the increased demand of more users with more types of electronic devices. The number of wireless access points will increase by 30 percent and interference will be reduced. In other news, the LVCC joined the International Association of Congress Centres (IACC) to enhance its role as an advocate for the convention industry. “Participating with the (IACC) and its members will put the Las Vegas Convention Center on the world stage in promoting and developing our industry,” Terry Jicinsky, senior vice president for operations for the LVCVA, said in announcing the membership.

In resort and hotel property news, **Wynn Las Vegas** has completed the renovation of some of its guest rooms and plans to renovate all 2,716 rooms before the end of 2011. The project includes new furniture, wallpaper, carpets and finishes. Wynn Las Vegas and Wynn’s adjacent **Encore Las Vegas** offer a combined 4,750 rooms and 260,000 square feet of meeting space, including 35 meeting rooms and three ballrooms. Wynn also sports an onsite 18-hole championship golf course.

The Tropicana Casino & Resort has undergone a \$180 million renovation designed to give the property a South Beach flavor. The project included the Tropicana’s 1,658 rooms and 140 luxury suites, its four-acre pool and the 50,000-square-foot casino. The hotel’s conference center, also part of the renovation, now offers more than 100,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas opened on December 15. The Cosmopolitan is part of Marriott International’s Autograph Collection of upper-upscale and luxury independent resorts and hotels, and the first in Las Vegas. Located on The Strip, the 2,995-room hotel features two 50-story



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towers, 10 three-story suites, and 150,000 square feet of meeting space.

Dolce Hotels and Resorts plans to re-brand the former Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas, which closed in May 2010, and reopen the property during the first quarter of 2011. The Mediterranean-style resort occupies 15 acres of the 3,600-acre Lake Las Vegas master-planned development. The 349-room property features 32,000 square feet of meeting space and an 11,841-square-foot ballroom.

After expanding its casino to 55,000 square feet, **South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa** now has one of the largest casino gaming floors in the U.S. Located off The Strip, South Point provides 2,163 guest rooms and 170,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.

pools on-property by introducing five "Garden of the Gods" pools, some with "swim-up" gaming. Caesar's provides 3,292 guest rooms and more than 300,000 square feet of meeting space. All eight Caesars Entertainment properties total more than 1 million square feet of meeting space and 24,000 guest rooms and suites.

In 2010, MGM Mirage changed its name to **MGM Resorts International**. MGM's properties include **Mandalay Bay, Bellagio, MGM Grand, Monte Carlo, The Mirage, Excalibur, New York-New York, Circus Circus and Luxor**. MGM and partner Dubai World also operate properties in CityCenter, the \$8.5 billion hotel, shopping and entertainment complex that just celebrated its first anniversary. CityCenter's centerpiece, **Aria Resort & Casino**, offers 4,004 rooms, 300,000 square feet of meeting space and a 150,000-square-foot casino. The property's 1,840-seat theater is currently home to the Cirque du Soleil show "Viva Elvis." **Vdara Hotel & Spa** provides 1,495 rooms and 10,000 square feet of meeting space. The 392-room **Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas** provides more than 12,000 square feet of function space. Crystals is a luxury shopping center that is growing by leaps and bounds. Thirty new stores have joined the original 20: They include jewelers Cartier and Tourbillon; clothing and accessories stores Hermes, Lanvin, Prada and Gucci; and restaurants Mastro's Ocean Club, Social House and Puck Pizzeria/Cucina.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) announced that it had reached a 10-year agreement with **Las Vegas Sands Corporation** to add its **Venetian Resort Hotel Casino** and **Palazzo Las Vegas** to the IHG portfolio of properties. The two hotels provide a total of 7,100 guest rooms. Combined with the nearby **Sands Expo and Convention Center**, the three structures offer 2.2 million square feet of meeting space. **Blue Man Group** performs in the Venetian's 1,760-seat theater, and features customized shows for groups.

The variety of properties concentrated in Las Vegas is a magnet for meeting planners. "There are so many great options in so many categories in the heart of the destination, whereas many other destinations have fewer options that can accommodate your group," said Meller. That, together with the entertainment, will continue to set Las Vegas apart from other destinations, she added. AC&F

Harrah's Entertainment Inc. changed its name to Caesars Entertainment. Reflecting the change, Las Vegas Meetings by Harrah's Entertainment is now known as **Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment**. Caesars recently announced that it will continue its "8-Stop Strategy," which mixes and matches facilities and venues for groups among properties using one contact, contract and minimum. Caesars is also continuing its Meeting Diamond programs that provide VIP benefits and priority services; and its alternative venues program, which permits planners to apply part of spending in restaurants, lounges and nightclubs to their food-and-beverage minimum.

Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment includes these eight properties: **Bally's Las Vegas, Flamingo Las Vegas, Imperial Palace, Harrah's Las Vegas, Paris Las Vegas, Imperial Palace, Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino and Caesars Palace**.

Caesars Palace has increased the number of

"There are so many great options in so many categories in the heart of the destination. ...That, together with the entertainment, will continue to set Las Vegas apart from other destinations."

Lisa Meller, CMP
President and CEO, Meeting Perspectives Inc.
Irvine, CA

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The Midwest

Something for Everybody

By Derek Reveron

The heart of the nation offers many big-city destinations that attract some of the nation's largest conventions and groups. The Midwest offers stellar cities from Milwaukee, to Oklahoma City with distinctive venues, cultures and entertainment. Midwestern cities embrace groups of all sizes as they continue to expand and modernize convention centers, venues, hotels, downtown areas and infrastructure. Midwest cities offer convenient access for associations and other groups with attendees spread around the nation. Here is an overview of some of the Midwest's most popular destinations.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Located along Lake Michigan less than a two-hour drive from Chicago, Milwaukee describes itself as a "Great Place on a Great Lake" and is the 22nd largest city in the U.S. Milwaukee is home to breweries and known as "the beer capital of the world," but the city offers far more. After years of urban revitalization, Milwaukee is a modern up-and-

coming city that offers first-class meeting amenities, culture, entertainment and activities.

Pat Marks, president of Milwaukee-based Destination Management Services Inc., has planned a variety of activities in Milwaukee for a national association that will meet in nearby Lake Geneva next summer. During the five-day meeting, the 400 attendees will tour Milwaukee's Harley-Davidson Museum, visit a brewery and enjoy a function at Ten Chimneys, an estate occupied by two famous Broadway actors during the early 1900s. The group will also enjoy golfing, horseback riding and boating at Lake Geneva, located an hour's drive from Milwaukee. "If a group goes to Milwaukee, they have that downtown experience. If they go to Lake Geneva, they get the lake country experience. There are two different flavors. Many groups like to have both experiences," said Marks.

Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport offers convenient access and affordable fares. Milwaukee offers plentiful meeting space in the downtown area. Located 10 miles from the airport, the Midwest Airlines Center provides 667,475 square feet of meeting space and 188,695 square feet of exhibit space. The U.S. Cellular Arena provides 24,000 square feet of exhibit space and 1,800 square feet of banquet space.

The Milwaukee Art Museum offers several spaces for events, including the 265-seat Lubar Auditorium. The Milwaukee Public Museum showcases more than six million artifacts. Not far away is the Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion, which was built in 1892 by the beer company founder. The mansion can accommodate groups up to 125 guests.

In June, the Hilton Milwaukee City Center was the headquarters hotel for the annual convention of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), which attracted about 900 attendees. Why did the organization choose the Hilton?

"Mostly it comes down to room rates," explained Nancy Macklin, director of events for the HLAA. "We have a lot of seniors and we're trying to attract a lot of younger adults that don't have as much disposable income, so we try to keep the room rates down. We use about 27,000 square feet of exhibition space and we generally have six or seven concurrent breakout sections." Activities included dinner at the Harley-Davidson Museum and a visit to Comedy Sports Milwaukee, an improvisational comedy club set up with a screen providing captioning for people with hearing loss.

Long before the meeting, the Greater Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau provided Macklin with invaluable assistance. "When I came for a planning trip, I was up in the air about what to do for offsite activities. One of the representatives



Photo courtesy of the Greater Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau
Milwaukee's Harley-Davidson Museum promises groups "bold, customizable, and just flat-out fun events... that will deliver an out-of-the-ordinary experience."

took me all over the place, and she was a wealth of knowledge about the city. Anything I wanted to see, she set it up for me and helped me follow up to get bids. She also set up volunteers to help with registration activities," said Macklin.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Indianapolis, the nation's 13th largest city, has been implementing a downtown revitalization program that is adding new hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities and transportation services.

Located downtown within a 15-minute drive from the airport, The Indiana Convention Center is undergoing an expansion that will increase exhibit space from 403,000 to 747,000 square feet. The facility will become the nation's 17th largest convention facility. Combined with nearby Lucas

"One of the (CVB) representatives took me all over the place, and she was a wealth of knowledge about the city. Anything I wanted to see, she set it up for me and helped me follow up to get bids. She also set up volunteers to help with registration activities."



Nancy Macklin
Director of Events
The Hearing Loss Association of America
Bethesda, MD

Oil Stadium, the two facilities offer about 3.4 million square feet of exhibit and meeting space.

Indianapolis is constantly increasing its supply of more than 33,000 hotel rooms. Many of the city's downtown hotels are connected by skywalks to the Indiana Convention Center and Circle City Mall, an entertainment and shopping complex. The JW Marriott Indianapolis recently completed a major exterior construction project and now offers 1,000 rooms and 104,000 square feet of meeting space. The hotel is one of five Marriott properties that comprise Marriott Place Indianapolis, a unique grouping of Marriott properties.

Indianapolis' expanding hotel and convention space played a major role in enabling the city to negotiate long-term deals to host several annual conventions held by the Future Farmers of America (FFA), an organization with more than 500,000 members. Indianapolis went all out to land the FFA's conventions because the organization is headquartered in Indianapolis, attracts more than 50,000 attendees to conventions and is the largest annual youth convention in the U.S. In 2005, the FFA signed a seven-year deal to meet in Indianapolis through 2012. After that, the FFA will meet in Indianapolis every three years through 2023. This year's three-day FFA convention, held in October, used 130 hotels, the convention center, Lucas Oil Stadium and other meeting facilities.

Indianapolis' expanding convention facilities played a key role in attracting the FFA. "It was one of the biggest pieces. It's going to provide more space for our career show, which will double in size next year," said Dale Crabtree, director of the FFA's convention awards recognition and events management division.

Efforts by the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association also played a key role. "They went out



Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Authority



Chief Tom Wallace
Conference Director
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
Columbus, OH

“Anything we asked them to do, they did. We wanted to have fireworks because it was the 100th anniversary of the association. ...They allowed us to do it outdoors after a gala banquet where we had music and dancing. They...provided staff that we had at our beck and call. The Kalahari chefs held cooking classes for the spouses.”

and secured what hotels offered and helped us negotiate seven-year contracts with hotels and parking venues, which you don't always see. A lot of big conventions are in and out in one year and start over with another destination. But they were vital in helping hotels understand the magnitude — that the meeting represents \$40 million in annual income for the city. They also provided a tremendous volunteer base. They are doing a number of other things to keep us there,” said Crabtree.

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Columbus is an up-and-coming destination that attracts more than 55 million visitor trips a year. Port Columbus International Airport is located 10 minutes from downtown. Columbus offers culture, recreation, historic neighborhoods and a growing supply of meeting facilities and hotel rooms. Columbus offers more than 23,482 hotel rooms city-wide, 3,256 in downtown and is increasing its ability to offer downtown hotel space to conventions and groups. A groundbreaking was held in July for the Hilton Columbus Downtown, a convention headquarters property that will sit across the street from the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The 532-room hotel, which will feature 22,800 square feet of meeting space and a 12,000-square-foot ballroom, is scheduled to open by fall 2012.

Connected and/or adjacent to 1,552 hotel rooms, the Greater Columbus Convention Center offers 410,000 square feet of exhibit space, three ballrooms and 65 meeting rooms. Other downtown-area convention venues include Nationwide Arena, a multipurpose venue adjacent to the Greater Columbus Convention Center that accommodates up to 20,000 people, and the Franklin County Veterans

Memorial, which provides 110,000 square feet of exhibit space. Outside of downtown, the Ohio Expo Center offers 1 million square feet of flexible meeting space. Columbus offers a variety of special venues. The Columbus Museum of Art features European and American works and hosts groups of up to 500 attendees for a reception or 200 for a sit-down dinner in spaces such as Derby Court and the Sculpture Garden. Located on the campus of The Ohio State University, the Ohio Union recently opened in 2010 and offers 34 unique event spaces encompassing more than 318,000 square feet of space, including a 1,700-square-foot grand ballroom.

Columbus offers an endless variety of entertainment venues, restaurants, retailers and art galleries that appeal to all ages. German Village, a 233-acre restored neighborhood is home to authentic German restaurants, worldly shops and gardens. The Arena District, located downtown, is an entertainment center replete with restaurants, bars and shops near Nationwide Arena. *Golf.com* has voted Columbus (Jack Nicklaus' birthplace) one of the top golfing cities in the U.S.

Columbus also offers a variety of attractions that appeals to groups. Experience Columbus, the local CVB, has put together some 57 Experiential Tours perfect for board meetings, teambuilding, spouse tours and offsite events. These tours provide carefully designed experiences, giving groups unprecedented backstage access to area attractions, teaching them a new skill or even helping them create something special to take home. Experiences range from arts and culture, sports, and culinary affairs to gardens, history and more.

About 110 miles from Columbus, Sandusky is home to one of Kalahari Resorts' two Midwestern locations. Since opening in 2005, the 100,000-square-foot resort has spent \$77 million on expansion efforts that include an outdoor waterpark. The park opened its Safari Outdoor Adventure Park, which offers climbing walls, ziplining and a ropes course. The resort's Adventure Animal Park, which opened in 2009, features African animals. Groups can meet at the resort's 100,000-square-foot convention center, which is adjacent to a hotel with 884 guest rooms.

In July, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association (OFCA) held its annual five-day conference at the Kalahari Resort in Sandusky with about 900 in attendance. “It's an excellent place to have meetings. They have multiple rooms for workshops and functions. It's

very easy to have things going on at the same time. And the prefunction area is large,” said Fire Chief Tom Wallace, conference director of the OFCA.

The Kalahari's staff was very accommodating. “Anything we asked them to do, they did. We wanted to have fireworks because it was the 100th anniversary of the association. They had never had fireworks at the property, but they allowed us to do it outdoors after a gala banquet where we had music and dancing. They set up a special registration area, and provided staff that we had at our beck and call. The Kalahari chefs held cooking classes for the spouses,” said Wallace.

There is also a Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, which features more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space and a hotel with 752 guest rooms.

TOLEDO, OHIO

Located along the Maumee River, Toledo is about an hour's drive away from Detroit Metro Airport and about a three-hour drive from Columbus. Toledo is a mid-sized city with big-sized meeting space, venues, restaurants and attractions. SeaGate Convention Centre, located downtown, offers 75,000 square feet of exhibit space and 23 meeting rooms. The Centre is adjacent to the Park Inn Toledo and three blocks from the Crowne Plaza Hotel, which together offer more than 600 guest rooms. Another facility, the Huntington Center, is an 8,000-seat arena that features sports and special events. The center's Club Level Lounge and the Aquarium Lounge can accommodate receptions and dinners for groups of up to 600 people.

Toledo certainly has its share of unique venues and attractions. The Toledo Museum of Art's Glass Pavilion offers more than 5,000 glasswork displays and accommodates groups of about 300 attendees. Nearby in Fremont, the 31-room Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, dedicated to the former U.S. president, includes a museum, library and 2,000 artifacts. A 132-seat auditorium and outdoor space can host groups of more than

400 guests. Wildwood Preserve Metropark offers special event space for up to 150 attendees at the Manor House, Farmhouse and the Ward Pavilion. The Valentine Theater can seat approximately 100 guests in the lobby, and the iconic Maumee Indoor Theatre also offers three distinct spaces for events.

The Toledo Zoo is home to more than 6,000

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Dale Crabtree
Director, Convention, Awards,
Recognition and Events Management
Future Farmers of America
Indianapolis, IN

animals. Meeting planners can rent space in the zoo’s Arctic Encounter Exhibit, the Aquarium, the African Lodge and the Nairobi Events Pavilion. Located just off I-75 on the banks of the Maumee River, the Toledo Hollywood Casino will open in 2012 with 5,000 slot machines, table games, restaurants and entertainment.

OKLAHOMA CITY

Greater Oklahoma City offers a blend of Old West tradition and modern urban culture. During fiscal 2010, the Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau booked 208 meetings and conventions, up three percent over 2009. The number of room nights booked by the CVB increased 7 percent. Bookings included the 2012 Pre-Paid Legal Services International Convention, with 12,000 attendees.

The Midwestern roots of Oklahoma City are on full display in its special venues. The American Banjo Museum features more than 300 banjos. Groups can view exhibits and watch live banjo performances, which can be reserved for groups. In addition, the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is a must-see when visiting the city.

Oklahoma has held onto its tradition as home to cowboys, cattle drives and stockyard auctions. Historic Stockyards City is a district featuring restaurants, shops and a variety of businesses related to the cattle industry.

In the city’s Adventure District, a horse racing track and 20-screen theater complex provide entertainment. Another dining and entertainment district, called Bricktown, features dozens of restaurants and shops as well as the Harkins Theatre and AT&T Bricktown Ballpark.

ST. LOUIS

St. Louis sits at the intersection of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, which play a key role in the attractions the city provides for groups. St. Louis has been undergoing downtown renovations that make the destination even more inviting to meetings and conventions. St. Louis offers more than 37,000 hotel rooms amid a city full of culture and high-rise buildings. Lambert-St. Louis International Airport provides convenient access to the city, and the downtown America’s Center Convention Complex features ample meeting space for large or small groups. The center offers groups 502,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 28,000-square-foot ballroom and more than 80 flexible meeting rooms. There’s also the Edward Jones Dome, home to the National Football League’s St. Louis Rams.

The city’s iconic 630-foot Gateway Arch monument is a must-visit for attendees. Located on the Mississippi riverfront, the arch is taller than the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument. After taking a tram to the top of the arch, on a clear day visitors can see as far as 30 miles. Underneath the Arch, attendees can visit the Museum of Westward Expansion and two movie theaters.

The Saint Louis Art Museum rivals some of the best in the nation and features more than 30,000 works, including art by Van Gogh and Picasso. Earlier this year, the facility began a 200,000-square-foot expansion project that will add new galleries, public space and 300 parking slots. Space is available for group rental, but not during the expansion project. Another facility that hosts groups is the Saint Louis Science Center, which features a 13,000-square foot exhibition hall and a rooftop terrace.

St. Louis’ Kiel Opera House is being restored/renovated and renamed The Peabody Opera House. Set to open in fall 2011, the facility will offer theater seating for 3,200 people. Located downtown, Union Station is a restored train station that was once the busiest in the nation. Now, the station is a preserved structure home to a variety of restaurants, shops, entertainment spots and railroad artifacts.

AC&F



Photo courtesy of Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau

The annual Oklahoma Restaurant Convention & Expo, held in the fall at the Cox Convention Center, attracts more than 8,000 attendees.



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PLEVA



GREEN



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The Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Catherine Pleva** as sales manager targeting medical, pharmaceutical, agriculture and manufacturing market segments. With 15 years of sales and event experience, Pleva most recently served as sales and local marketing manager for Boi Na Braza Churrascaria, Cincinnati, OH. **Jennifer Green** was named senior sales manager, responsible for national associations, scientific, engineering and environmental meetings. She most recently served as director of special events for Major League Baseball's Cincinnati Reds.

The Greater Columbus Convention Center has promoted **Kristy Yonyon** to sales manager, responsible for the state government, state association and multi-level marketing sales markets. She was hired in 2006 as an event coordinator.

Andrew Pena was named director of sales and marketing for the new Dallas Marriott City Center, Dallas, TX. He formerly served as director of sales and marketing when the property was The Westin City Center.

Visit Newport Beach Inc., Newport

Beach, CA, has named **Hillary Burton** as national sales manager responsible for the Northwest U.S., Northern California, Hawaii and Alaska markets. **Amanda Kliem** was appointed as national sales manager responsible for the Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Northeast U.S., Nevada, Utah, Colorado and Canadian markets. Burton formerly served as senior convention sales manager for the Sacramento (CA) Convention & Visitors Bureau. Kliem most recently served as group sales manager for Pelican Hill Resort, Newport Beach, CA.

The Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, The Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM, has named **Jessica Wax** as senior sales manager, responsible for the Northeast and mid-Atlantic region. She was sales manager at La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, NM.

The Minneapolis (MN) Convention Center has named **Katie Smith** as director of sales and marketing. She most recently served as sales manager at the Minneapolis Convention Center for Meet Minneapolis.

Visit Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, has named **Will Trokey** as Washington, DC-based national sales manager. He

previously served as regional sales manager for Visit Baltimore.

Visit Baltimore has added two new national sales managers. **Sheila Provenzano** was named national sales manager for the Midwest region, based in Chicago. She most recently served as group sales manager for Hilton Hotels in San Juan, PR. **Jennifer Lutz** was named national sales manager for the mid-Atlantic region. She was opening senior sales manager for the Hotel Monaco in Baltimore. AC&F

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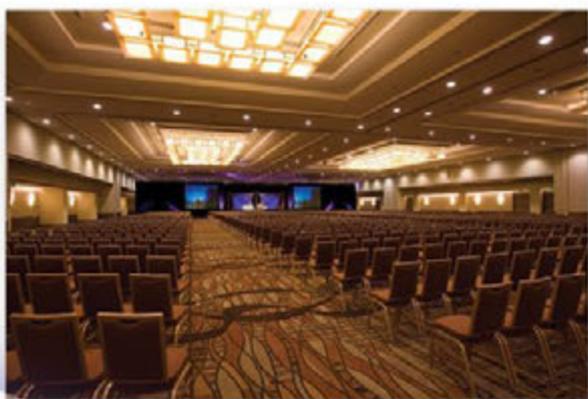
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Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa & Convention Center	409-741-8484	moodygardens.org	Jamie Weir	jweir@moodygardens.com
NYC & Company	212-484-1218	nycgo.com/meetingplanners	Jerry Cito	conventionsales@nycgo.com
Ocean Reef Club	800-843-2730	oceanreef.com	Richard Weinstein	ORCSales@oceanreef.com
Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau	405-297-8912	visitokc.com	Elizabeth Richardson	erichardson@okccvb.org
The Peabody Orlando	407-352-4000	peabodymeetings.com	Sheri Wallen	info@peabodyorlando.com
Plano Convention & Visitors Bureau	972-941-5844	planocvb.com	Mark Thompson	markth@plano.gov
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club	800-234-7842	pontevedra.com	Tony Fitzjohn	sales@pvresorts.com
Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel	770-953-4500	renaissancewaverly.com	Group Sales	atlr.leads@renaissancehotels.com
Reunion Resort	888-418-9614	reunionresort.com	Mary Hutchcraft	mhutchcraft@reunionresort.com
Rosen Centre Hotel	407-996-9939	rosencentre.com	Todd Frappier	sales@rosenhoteles.com
Rosen Plaza Hotel	407-996-9939	rosenplaza.com	Victoria Hall	sales@rosenhoteles.com
Rosen Shingle Creek	407-996-9939	rosenshinglecreek.com	Leslie Menichini	sales@rosenhoteles.com
Royal Caribbean International	800 762-0458	royalcaribbeanincentives.com	Lori Cassidy	royalmeetingsandincentives@rccl.com
San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau	415-227-2616	onlyinsanfrancisco.com	Lysa Lewin	llewin@sanfrancisco.travel
The Scottsdale Plaza Resort	480-922-3300	meetatplaza.com	Kelly Moenter-Nofal	meet@scottsdaleplaza.com
Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau	206-461-5800	visitseattle.org	Jerri Lane	conventions@visitseattle.org
Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino	954-797-5502	seminolehardrock.com	Mark P. Tascione	mark.tascione@seminolehardrock.com
Sheraton Boston Hotel	617-236-6033	sheratonbostonhotel.com	Frank Guzzi	frank.guzzi@sheraton.com
The Shores Resort & Spa	386-322-7262	shoresresort.com	Group Sales	salesadmin@shoresresort.com
South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-797-8050	southpointmeetings.com	Maureen Robinson	sales@southpointcasino.com
Station Casinos	702-495-4247	stationcasinos.com	Michael Toney	michael.toney@stationcasinos.com
Talking Stick Resort	480-850-7777	talkingstickresort.com	Group Sales	sales@talkingstickresort.com
Universal Orlando Resort	888-322-5531	uomeetingsandevents.com	Group Sales	meetings@universalorlando.com
The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino	702-414-4202	venetianpalazzomeetings.com	Chandra Allison	chandra.allison@venetianpalazzo.com
Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-700-7702	vbmeetings.com	Al Hutchinson	ahutchin@vbgov.com
Walt Disney World Resort	321-939-7112	disneymeetings.com	Anne Hamilton	meetings@disneyworld.com
Washington Hilton	202-328-2080	hiltonsofcd.com	Group Sales	dcawh-salesadm@hilton.com
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	westin.com/lasvegas	Sandra Horvath	shorvath@westinlv.com
The Westin La Cantera Resort	210-558-2229	westinlacantera.com	Patty Pedraza	patty.pedraza@westin.com
Wynn/Encore	888-320-7117	wynnmeetings.com	Steve Blanner	hotelsales@wynnlasvegas.com



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