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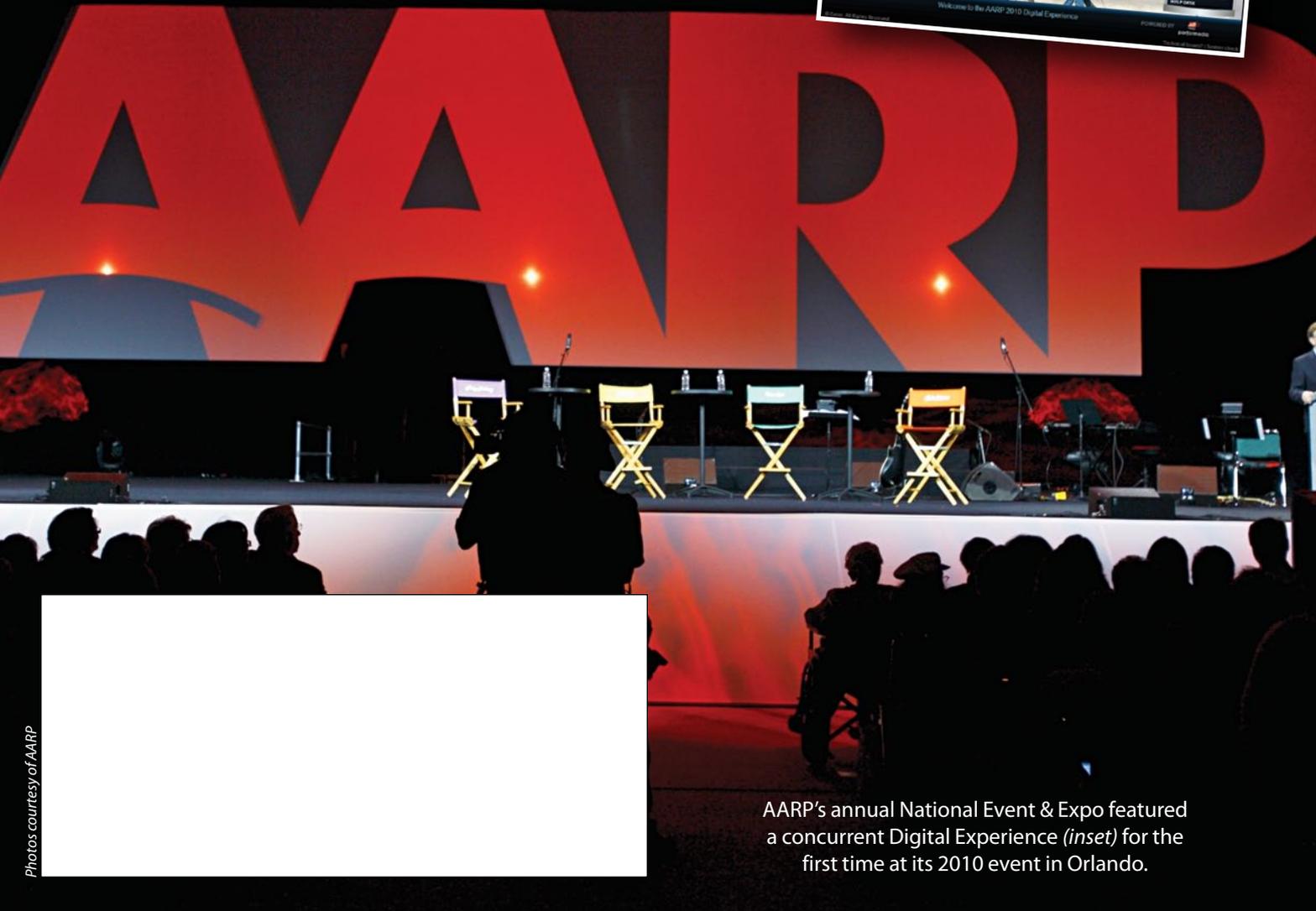
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2011

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

Not Your Father's Trade Show

New Trends and Tactics to Boost ROI

PAGES 10, 14, 18



Photos courtesy of AARP

AARP's annual National Event & Expo featured a concurrent Digital Experience (*inset*) for the first time at its 2010 event in Orlando.



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Embracing Change



Feeling somewhat like the fabled Rumpelstiltskin, the meeting and convention world has awakened on the other side of the recession to a much different world. Impressively, the exhibition industry remained not only steady throughout unprecedented depressed times, but is back on the rise again, according to The Center for Exhibition Industry Research's most recent Index report.

But radically changing times have necessitated finding new ways to achieve ROI. As Linda Schwartz notes in her column on page 8, it's not your father's trade show anymore.

Our issue explores the many new trends and tactics that associations now need for success, from hybrid events (page 14), to hosted buyer programs (pages 8 and 10) to mobile apps (page 18) that enhance engagement by capturing crowd/event interaction.

The main obstacle to all of this change is fear. And we all know what happened in Egypt — even a 7,000-year-old governing institution could not prevail over the collective power of the people, who were galvanized by social media and the Internet. John H. Graham, president and CEO of ASAE notes in "The State of the Trade Show" on page 10, "Convention and trade show attendees will not shy away from praising and/or criticizing your efforts. While the feedback may not always be positive, it's low-hanging fruit, really. We all need to do a better job of engaging this audience based on the feedback we receive." He adds, "Very little new funds and investments are coming into our sector these days, and competition is high. Associations must continue exploring ways to increase the value and ROI for attendees, exhibitors and advertisers in 2011."

But even with a world of change spinning ever faster with bottom-up event planning and virtual attendance, there is one steady constant at its center, according to Douglas L. Ducate, president and CEO of The Center for Exhibition Industry Research, who told us: "Perhaps the most important reason for the continuing success of the exhibition business is the fact that it is the last bastion of face-to-face marketing. ...Suppliers today are in constant electronic contact with their customers. However they periodically feel that pang of uncertainty when they have not seen their customers in some time. The scheduling of regional and vertical events along with the annual cycle of most industry exhibitions provide the opportunity to restore, reassure and renew that all-important personal customer bond that can only be done face-to-face."

Words of wisdom to keep in mind as we wake up to the possibilities of a changing world with our eyes wide open.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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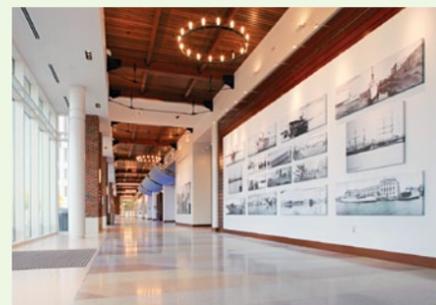
Los Angeles Convention Center Wins Gold



The Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC) has recently received the prestigious Gold level certification in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) as awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), making it the largest convention center in the nation — 4.1 million sf — to achieve this milestone. "Being awarded the LEED Gold Certification for

Existing Buildings shows how committed the team at the Los Angeles Convention Center is to ensuring they achieve the highest environmental standards and we congratulate them," said Mark Liberman, president of LA INC. "The LEED-EB Gold standard...will help LA INC. sell and promote the city's environmental prowess to businesses and associations that focus on a city's environmental product during their decision-making process." www.lainc.us

Visit Orlando Gives Back. In 2010, Visit Orlando, through the generosity of its team members and partners, contributed more than \$515,000 to Orlando's local community through fund-raising, marketing and in-kind support. The contributions ranged from clothing and holiday gift drives, educational initiatives, to cash contributions from events such as Visit Orlando's Annual Golf Tournament and the Heart of Florida United Way Employee Drive. In total, Visit Orlando rendered marketing and in-kind support to Central Florida arts and cultural groups totaling more than \$374,000 and more than \$141,000 in fund-raising and donations to not-for-profits and community groups. "Orlando's Travel and Tourism industry has a big heart and Visit Orlando is committed to corporate social responsibility by supporting local organizations and developing programs that improve our community for the greater good of all residents. I am proud of our partners and our employees' charitable efforts for giving back to Central Florida residents and living up to our global campaign 'Orlando Makes Me Smile,'" said Gary Sain, president & CEO of Visit Orlando. For more information, go to www.VisitOrlando.com/cvb.



Eco-friendly Wilmington Convention Center Opens. The Wilmington Convention Center, North Carolina's newly opened 107,000-square-foot building, which is pending LEED certification, captures the essence of the historic riverfront and railroad that established Wilmington, while maintaining an eco-friendly, innovative design. The building sits on a reclaimed

brownfield site along the historic downtown Riverwalk and features a Low-VoC white roof which uses less energy to cool the facility by reflecting heat from the sun. In addition, strategically placed, high-performance windows conserve energy and help with solar gain during colder months. Other features include: water-saving devices that cut consumption by 48 percent; interior finishes made from recycled content; a green cleaning and maintenance program; a filtrations system to protect the Cape Fear river; natural lighting through floor-to-ceiling windows; and more. www.capefearcoast.com

IMEX America Attendance Set to Exceed Expectations

LONDON, ENGLAND — Organizers of IMEX America, America's new worldwide exhibition for the meetings, incentive



Bloom

travel and events industry, announced that because of enormous demand from suppliers across the industry, they are forecasting attendance of

more than 1,500 exhibiting companies from across the world. The event will be held October 11–13 at the Sands Expo in Las Vegas. The program expects more than 2,000 hosted buyers, the largest hosted buyer program ever to be delivered in North America, of which 80 percent will be from North America and 20 percent from the rest of the world, with representation from more than 100 countries.

Ray Bloom, IMEX group chairman, said, "We are delighted with the response from the industry to IMEX America. Our strategic partnership with MPI has been instrumental in delivering our message to the industry and will be of enormous importance in attracting top buyers to the show. MPI will be key to underpinning the educational elements of the show through the MeetDifferent Day of Education and Innovation and their Power Keynotes each morning. With education an increasingly important element in the delivery of value to buyers and suppliers, MPI's contribution will be of vital importance." www.imexamerica.com

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Association Management Companies Project Higher Demand in 2011

PHILADELPHIA, PA —AMC Institute, the trade association that represents the association management company industry, released survey results that show nearly half of AMCs are hiring, and requests for proposals (RFPs) for full-service management held steady or grew in 2010 for more than 75 percent of responding AMCs. For 2011, AMCs project a greater number of full-service and outsourced management clients. "Amid growing inquiries and an expanding client base, our takeaway is that the Association Management Company model continues to be an invaluable resource for associa-

tions," said John Dee, COO and CFO of Bostrom and AMC Institute board president. "By design, AMCs deliver customized services, senior leadership and strategic planning for the future, while being mindful of the ROI." As of year-end 2010, 78

percent of AMCs expect their number of full-service clients to grow in 2011. Fifty-two percent anticipate that outsourced management clients would grow in 2011. AMCs also expect existing clients to expand their scope of work, via added programs and services. www.amcinstitute.org

Las Vegas Betting On 1 Million More Visitors in 2011

LAS VEGAS, NV — Rossi Ralenkotter, the president and chief executive officer



Ralenkotter

of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), said he expects 1 million more visitors this year than the 37.3 million visitors in 2010, according to a report in the *Las Vegas Sun*. Ralenkotter made the predictions during the 2011 Preview Las Vegas, an annual forecast event sponsored by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce. "Granted, people aren't spending as much, but we have turned this around substantially," Ralenkotter said. "It's a testament to the brand of Las Vegas."

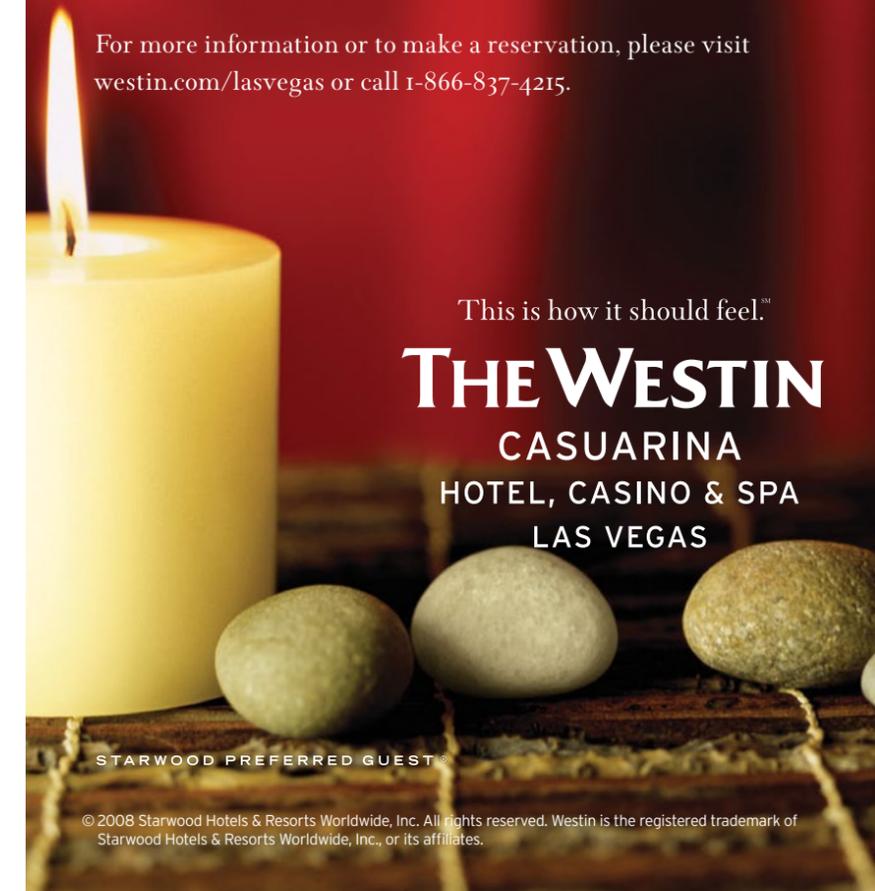
Jeremy Aguero, a principal at Applied Analysis, forecasted that volume would improve along with the economy and from more convention business and international travel. He predicted that the average daily room rate would increase by 5 percent, and said major casinos would be profitable for the first time in three years. www.lvcva.com

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Linda E. Schwartz

When buyers arrive at the hosted event, they find a markedly different atmosphere on the show floor than at a typical trade show. While there certainly are booths and pavilions, the show has a more business-focused, upscale and exclusive feel.

Hosted Buyer Programs: Not Your Father's Trade Show

Trade shows, in one form or another, have existed since the beginning of recorded time. Whenever and wherever a few people gathered to display their wares for trade or sale, a trade show was born. The reason to exhibit has always been the same: to put sellers and buyers together to facilitate commerce. Most of today's trade shows are not all that different from trade shows from 20 or even 40 years ago. Exhibitors purchase a booth, display their wares and wait for prospective buyers to come. Booth personnel abide by a mostly unwritten code of conduct: do not sit down, do not eat in your booth and stand near the aisle to entice people to enter your booth for a closer look at your product.

But with soaring costs for travel, lodging, transportation, personnel and booth space, many exhibitors are cutting down on the number of trade shows they are willing to attend. If a show is not "a good show," resulting in tangible sales, it likely is eliminated from next year's list. How can this trend be reversed? According to Craig Hoffend, trade show specialist at IMEX America, "the wave of the future is the hosted buyer program."

Hosted buyer programs differ from traditional trade shows in a number of ways. The most obvious is that only pre-qualified buyers are invited to attend the program, and once a buyer qualifies, his or her travel and lodging costs are paid for. The team at IMEX is now in the planning stages for the

IMEX America Hosted Buyer Program, which will take place in Las Vegas on October 11–13, 2011. This program will bring together more than 2,000 of America's and the world's top-spending meetings, incentives and association buyers — the largest-ever hosted buyer gathering at a U.S. trade show. Eighty percent of attendees will be from the U.S., all of whom place business both in domestic and international markets. The remaining 20 percent will come from the rest of the world and have a special interest in buying in the U.S.

HOW IT WORKS

Once a hosted buyer has been invited to the show, he or she must commit to make and attend a minimum of four individual appointments with exhibitors per day. Attendees make appointments using an online diary that has search facilities by exhibitor, category, country and region, allowing buyers to book appointments in advance. Buyers also complete an online profile indicating what types of meetings they are looking to book, which allows exhibitors to invite buyers to a personal meeting. For example, a buyer looking to book a meeting for 1,000 at a luxury resort in Thailand could receive invitations from a number of hotels in that area of the world.

When buyers arrive at the hosted event, they find a markedly different atmosphere on the show floor than at a typical trade show. While there

certainly are booths and pavilions, the show has a more business-focused, upscale and exclusive feel. Exhibitors usually are seated on a sofa or at a table in their booth space, speaking with potential buyers. Refreshments are served, from cappuccino with a vendor from Italy to sushi with a Japanese exhibitor and margaritas at a Mexican pavilion. Hosted buyers are not aimlessly wandering the aisles, pausing here and there for a moment. Every participant in the show has somewhere to go and someone to meet with. As might be expected, exhibit space for a show of this type is more expensive than a typical trade show, with booth fees ranging from \$92 to \$110 per square foot for the Las Vegas event. However, Hoffend notes, "it's not what it costs, but what the results are."

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Some trade show organizations currently are investigating the feasibility of virtual hosted buyer programs. As virtual trade shows have grown in popularity and success over the last decade, virtual hosted buyer programs appear to be a natural next step. A virtual program might work well for senior level executives who have buying power but tend not to travel to other types of trade shows. The downside is that a virtual event typically is not as satisfying as an in-person experience, especially for VIP attendees who are used to face-to-face negotiation and deal-making. Indications

are that those most likely to participate in virtual hosted buyer programs are individuals who already are active online via Twitter, LinkedIn, online forums or other social media platforms. The event could be made more compelling by including a live-streamed keynote speaker and a cash honorarium to potential buyers.

Whether live or virtual, hosted buyer programs offer another option to the trade show industry, where the definition of "a good show" is happy exhibitors who have increased their sales and happy buyers who have found what they were looking for. As Hoffend notes, "with pre-qualified buyers, exhibitors at the show know that they will maximize their revenues. It's a win-win situation for everyone."

Following are the four major hosted buyer events taking place in 2011:

- **AIBTM, June 21–23, Baltimore, aibt.com**
- **MPI-WEC, July 23–26, Orlando, mpiweb.org**
- **The Motivation Show, October 4–6, Chicago, motivationshow.com**
- **IMEX America, October 11–13, Las Vegas, imexamerica.com**

Linda E. Schwartz, senior director, marketing and communication services for SmithBucklin, an association management company headquartered in Chicago, has worked with associations and their members for more than 30 years to develop, implement and manage a broad range of membership programs.

The State of the Trade Show

Trends and Tactics to Boost ROI

By Mickey Murphy

What are the hot trade show trends for 2011? While things could not have been rockier for meeting and event planners and their sponsoring organizations since the economy went off a cliff in December 2007, trade shows and exhibit events are rebounding. The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) Index report for the third quarter of 2010 showed positive growth in all metrics for

Preliminary data for the fourth quarter shows that the positive trend is continuing.

When we interviewed John H. Graham IV, CAE, president and CEO, ASAE, Washington, DC, last fall, he was hoping for a rosy 2011: "So far, many factors point to a quick rebound: The market is closing in on a second-best year ever; job boards are starting to list more open positions, and meeting attendance is slowly going up. However, economic recovery is still the elephant in the room. Despite all signs pointing in the right direction, recovery won't knock on our door as soon as we'd like it to.

"Associations are typically a late indicator of the economy, and it may take some time before we see any tangible changes," Graham continues. "Once the economy improves, associations representing sectors impacted the most will also improve as their members regain their business and continue their association membership and professional development. This will only lead to growth in meeting attendance. Our sector, specifically association trade shows and conventions, is heavily dependent on the hospitality sector, which also happens to be one of the hardest hit during the down economy. We need to be patient."

Mikki Rogers, vice president in charge of site selection for Marietta, GA-based Strategic Solutions, observes, "For a variety of reasons, trade shows overall are shrinking in size, year over year in most cities. Although the downturn in the economy has had a negative impact on overall trade show business, destinations, such as Las Vegas and Orlando, have seen flat to moderate increases in attendance

the first time since the first quarter of 2008. The report showed that in the third quarter of 2010 compared to the same period in 2009, professional attendance was up 6.6 percent; net square feet of exhibit space and number of exhibiting companies showed 5.2 percent growth; and projected revenue also showed positive growth of 5.6 percent.



The Orange County Convention Center projects a 5 percent jump in the number of trade shows held at the center in 2011.

in their trade show business, with renewed confidence for future growth.

"Some of the numbers for these types of destination cities can be attributed to suppliers staying on top of competitive positioning...along with attendees seeking ways to connect business travel with personal vacation or downtime," says Rogers. "This all assists in capturing room nights and attendance for trade shows."

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT LETTERS

When the economy is stressed, as it has been for the past few years, return on investment (ROI) becomes the key consideration for expensive initiatives and activities. What are the ramifications for trade shows? "Companies are very ROI-focused," says Rogers. "Current financial circumstances and restrictions dictate that only essential employees from each organization are cleared to travel to trade shows. In many cases, the number of days out of the office has been decreased in order to achieve spending less and gaining the most for dollars invested."

What about perception issues? "The appearance of opulence is under scrutiny and high-dollar-valued investments for meetings and trade shows are questionable," says Rogers. High-end hotels are being forced to decrease room rates in order to be more competitive to ensure they participate in trade show room blocks.

"In addition, mega-associations' rotation schedules, which are booked 10 years or more in advance — although they have recently had fall-off in attendance — are still moderately strong for destination cities," says Rogers. "Some organizations that have a four- or five-city annual rotation calendar, have cut locales that are not major destination cities from their rotation schedules in order to maintain attendance."

"Organizations are finding new ways to invest their money," says Bana Q. Yahnke, CAE, CMP, director of marketing and membership, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America Inc. (FCCCLA), Reston, VA. "As budgets get tighter, exhibitors are evaluating the value of a trade show by taking a closer look at their return on investment. I've spoken with several exhibitors who are now looking at creative ways to utilize their exhibit budget in other sponsorship opportunities that may provide them with greater exposure to meeting attendees."

Rogers stresses that associations and trade show exhibitors can only achieve superior ROI through careful planning and attention to details. "As in any business process, planning is a key instrument to attaining success," says Rogers.

"Exhibitors are requiring and scrutinizing attendee lists prior to traveling to trade shows," says Rogers. "Potential customers are identified and targeted prior to making travel plans and the authorization of the number of company participants to send to particular shows. In order to maximize the representatives' time while on the trade show floor, attendees only visit priority customers. The only deviation would be vendor booths that have taken the time to be creative and offer items that enable people to perform their jobs easier."

THE OCCC BAROMETER

The most obvious barometers for trade show activity are major convention centers. The second largest exhibit facility in the U.S., right behind McCormick Place in Chicago, is the mammoth Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) in Orlando, FL. It features 2.1 million square feet of exhibition space. Kathie Canning, OCCC's deputy general manager, reveals, "A slight increase of 5 percent is expected in 2011 over 2010 in the number of convention/trade shows as well as the number of convention/trade show delegates. This figure is a projection based on what is currently booked at the Orange County Convention Center, as well as business that is currently being negotiated. Changes in the meetings industry and the state of the general economy are also taken into consideration when preparing these projections.

"While some show managers are executing long-term contracts, some are delaying signing contracts based on the uncertainty of their industries," Canning continues. "According to the CEIR Index 2009, some industry sectors have been hit harder than others, including consumer goods, automotive and construction.

"One of the biggest challenges facing the trade show industry going forward is spending," says Canning. "A slowed economy continues to be the greatest barrier to the trade show industry.



Kathie Canning
Deputy General Manager
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, FL

"While some show managers are executing long-term contracts, some are delaying signing contracts based on the uncertainty of their industries."



Show Floor Buzz

Ron Adler, president of Adler Display Baltimore, tells AC&F what's new on the trade show floor.

Fabric graphics. Color printing on fabric is of phenomenal quality now, and you can print very large images. Stretching fabric around various shapes of aluminum frames and using it as a large backdrop is also very trendy now (pictured above).

Modular displays. Many exhibitors need to modify the size or structure of their exhibit from show to show. Where the traditional custom-built provided a single option for exhibiting, the new modular designs allow for alterations that can maximize whatever space someone has.

Technology. Show promoters are tweeting up-to-the-minute information, attendees are staying connected to what's happening in and around the show, and exhibitors are incorporating Web and multimedia into their exhibits. We can use video and the Internet to allow visitors to quickly get a feel for products and services. Wi-Fi connections at the show allow requested information to be delivered as soon as the same day. And tweets and reminders help everyone remember to keep their commitments. — MM

Without a strong and viable business environment, there will be marginal growth in the 11 trade show industry sectors. ...When uncertainty and risk are assumed to be at their greatest, exhibitors reduce their presence and manage their resources more tightly."

SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the most notable trade show trends in recent years is the use of social media by exhibitors to increase attendance and enhance the attendees' experience.

For example, Susan Friedmann, CSP, president of The Trade Show Coach, Lake Placid, NY, described the use of Twitter at trade shows. "Exhibitors can let people know that they are at the show and what is happening at their booth. Doing so serves as an introduction, a 'please come

by.' Thanks to Twitter, you can do things instantly from the booth to attract attention. For example, you can have a contest. The message: 'Come by the booth and show this Twitter message to the attendant and win a prize.'"

Says Canning, "Social media has increased and lengthened the impact of events. Attendees now have the ability to be actively engaged with the event and other attendees from the minute they first learn about it. They can follow an event's progression through the entire planning and execution process. In many instances, social media contribute to the substance of the events, which makes them even more valuable to younger attendees."

ASAE's Graham feels that associations and exhibitors need to use social media not only to broadcast messages to trade show attendees, but to find out what is important to them. "Beyond finances and economy, we need to do a better job listening to our members and event attendees even more so than we have in the past, not only via surveys and in-person discussions but also by incorporating online and mobile channels," says Graham.

"I strongly believe that we need to embrace social media and use them to benefit our organizations, especially during events," Graham notes. "However, many organizations are not tapping into these resources. Convention and trade show attendees will not shy away from praising and/or criticizing your efforts. While the feedback may not always be positive, it's low-hanging fruit, really. We all need to do a better job of engaging this audience based on the feedback we receive."

Canning says that convention centers and other large event facilities now work overtime to meet the expectations of younger attendees. "Convention centers are working to appeal to the new generation of attendees and exhibitors through connectivity," says Canning. "Gen X attendees expect to send and receive information with ease. Convention centers need to ensure that they are meeting these needs by keeping up with the latest technologies and incorporating mobile tools for accessibility, that is, mobile websites, way-finding applications, destination applications and so on.

"Additionally," she says, "the creation of cyber cafés in the concourses or public spaces support shows by being youth-friendly."

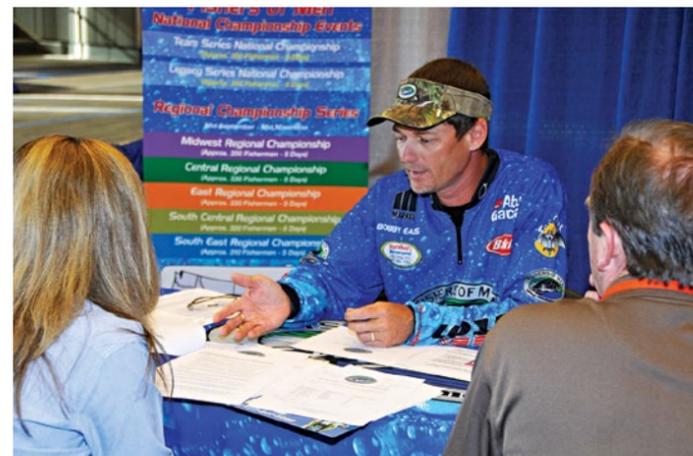
HYBRID EXPERIENCES

An increasingly popular way to maximize engagement and ROI is to introduce a virtual component into major trade shows and conventions. The aim is not to rob attendance from the face-to-face event, but to enhance it. One notable recent successful marriage of virtual and live events was the Professional Convention Management Association's Annual Meeting, Convening Leaders in January, which for the first time launched a virtual environment, PCMA365. In addition to the record-breaking live attendance of 3,743 meetings industry professionals, 632 virtual attendees logged on and accessed live broadcasts of sessions and programs. (For more information on hybrid events, see page 14.)

GREEN TRADE SHOWS

Association planners and their organizations work hard to develop green meetings and events, and so do the facilities where such events are held. "We are working closely with show managers to help facilitate more sustainable conventions," says Canning. "Show organizers are requesting convention center sustainability policies as part of the RFP process. As a result, convention centers now work diligently to implement these initiatives.

"For example, by having show managers recycle all pre- and post-show materials, the venues and



At the 2010 NASC Sports Event Symposium's "Sports Marketplace," NASC member-host organizations met in pre-scheduled, one-on-one appointments with owners of sporting events looking for cities to host their tournaments.

clients perform as partners in support of these efforts. Allowing for community donations of post-show materials and assisting clients with corpo-

rate social responsibility initiatives throughout the community also helps to facilitate more sustainable conventions. Tools such as 'green checklists' also help in this effort."

HOSTED BUYER PROGRAMS

The standard trade show model is that association members pay fees to attend the event, and exhibitors pay fees to rent the space for their booths. New contracts and sales leads are a hit-or-miss proposition. Hosted-buyer programs are invitation-only events in which attendees must demonstrate that they are bona fide industry buyers. Those who are will have some or all of their expenses — airfare, hotel, meals and so on — subsidized by the show. In return, exhibitors get the opportunity during the show to make appointments for specific meeting times with these buyer attendees. In effect, a hosted buyer program represents a "reverse trade show." (For more information on hosted buyer programs, see page 8.)

The Cincinnati, OH-based National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC), has been offering reverse trade shows since the late 1990s. "Having appointments where the buyers are in the booths and sellers come to them, allows our attendees and exhibitors to connect in pre-qualified one-on-one appointments, thus delivering increased ROI for both parties," says Beth Hecquet, CMP, NASC's director of meetings and events. "With the addition of two receptions held on the trade show floor, our attendees have the ability to meet with every exhibitor."

Achieving ROI for associations and trade show exhibitors — particularly in today's economic climate — definitely requires inventive approaches such as hosted buyer programs and others. "We need to prepare for challenges ahead," says Graham. "Very little new funds and investments are coming into our sector these days, and competition is high. Associations must continue exploring ways to increase the value and ROI for attendees, exhibitors and advertisers in 2011." AC&F



John H. Graham IV, CAE
President and CEO
ASAE
Washington, DC

"I strongly believe that we need to embrace social media. ...While the feedback may not always be positive, it's low-hanging fruit, really. We all need to do a better job of engaging this audience based on the feedback we receive."

The Best of Both Worlds

Boosting Live Attendance with Virtual Events

By Steve Winston



Jenny Provenzano, CPP
Senior Director of Education and Vendor Relations
American Payroll Association
San Antonio, TX

“This new system was a tremendous benefit to our members, who got a taste of the experience of attending the physical event, even though they couldn’t attend the week-long conference in DC.”

When economic realities of the recent past resulted in reduced attendance numbers at their conventions and events, the American Payroll Association (APA) banked on technology to conjure up better numbers. The 22,000-member association based in San Antonio decided to make its 2010 Annual Congress & Expo available even to those who couldn’t be there physically. They streamed the meeting live to members who could participate by simply sitting in front of their computers. In doing so, APA joined a growing list of associations who are now conducting “hybrid” meetings — meetings offering both live and virtual components.

APA put a lot of thought into the decision. And they put a lot of thought into follow-up of the decision, as well.

To put on the event, the APA enlisted the help of Menlo Park, CA-based Unisfair, which develops and produces interactive virtual events and permanent virtual websites for companies and associations involved in marketing, training and recruiting. Unisfair reports the following numbers from APA’s hybridized 2010 Annual Congress & Expo, which took place in May at the Gaylord National Hotel & Convention Center in National Harbor, MD:

- Attendance at the live event was 2,669.

- Attendance online was 1,921 live (during the event).
- Virtual attendees had the opportunity to access information about the event even after it was over, with an on-demand option at the website that had been set up for the meeting.
- Online participants stayed an average of more than four hours.
- They downloaded 9,493 pieces of information.
- After-meeting surveys indicated a very high degree of satisfaction for virtual attendees.

EXHIBITORS BENEFIT, TOO

“This new system was a tremendous benefit to our members, who got a taste of the experience of attending the physical event, even though they couldn’t attend the week-long conference in DC,” says Jenny Provenzano, CPP, senior director of education and vendor relations for the American Payroll Association. “It also proved to be a tremendous benefit to the dozen exhibitors at the event. We wanted to increase lead-generating opportunities for our vendors, and it was very successful from that perspective.”

Provenzano first came up with the idea, and sold it to senior management at APA. Along with colleague Shannon Dewey, she worked with Unisfair for six months to develop a fully interactive, two-day, hybrid training event that provided a wide range of educational and training activities to the live and on-demand virtual attendees.

“We found it to be a win-win proposition,” Provenzano says. “With recent economic times and budget cutbacks, many people can’t afford to physi-



Photo courtesy of Unisfair



cause you can even track leads generated. And virtual attendees can still learn after

the meeting ends, because of the on-demand component for months afterward. This method offers excellent tools to measure your success.”

It also offers an experience that replicates the “physical” in some ways. Many hybrid sites, for example, have a physical layout, with a registration room, conference hall, breakout rooms, lounge areas, networking rooms, etc. While sitting at your desk, you can virtually wander through all the facilities. You can attend live speeches, and many of the workshops (but, generally, not all). And you can “leave” the meeting, at the end of the day, with the same “handouts” that the physical attendees received.

“Sometimes association management is afraid that giving people the opportunity to attend an event virtually would have a negative effect on physical attendance,” Arslaner says. “But, in fact, it’s just the opposite. Results so far indicate that when virtual attendees see how great the event is, they want to be there in person at the next event.”

AARP’S DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

It would be a mistake to assume that AARP, with 40 million members aged 50 and over, might lag behind in the technology arena. The largest association in America actually is a driver in hybrid meetings innovation.

The organization’s annual National Event & Expo, held in Orlando in late September, attracted a whopping 24,000 physical attendees. But the event — Orlando @ 50+ — also has attracted a total of more than 10,000 virtual attendees, both during and since. And most sessions of the conference attracted more than 1,000 virtual attendees. AARP’s Digital Experience was a first for the 10-year-old National

Attendance at The American Payroll Association’s 2010 Annual Congress and Expo combined nearly 2,000 who participated virtually (above) and more than 2,600 who attended in person at Gaylord National (above left).



Brent Arslaner
Vice President of Channels
Unisfair Inc.
Menlo Park, CA

“Results so far indicate that when virtual attendees see how great the event is, they want to be there in person at the next event.”

AARP



AARP's annual National Event & Expo featured a concurrent Digital Experience for the first time at its 2010 event.



CB Wismar
Vice President, AARP Events
AARP
Washington, DC

“Our membership is so enthused about the concept that we may start publicizing the virtual aspect earlier next time. And we don’t believe that it will affect attendance at the physical event at all.”

Event & Expo. It allowed virtual attendees to participate in live or on-demand sessions, which remain available online for an additional six months. In addition, virtual participants accessed the exhibition floor and visited virtual booths where they communicated with exhibitors via text, audio or video chats,

and viewed and downloaded exhibitors’ content. “When you talk about AARP, you’re talking about a mass market,” says CB Wismar, vice president, AARP Events. “If you have a diverse membership — and a widespread membership — hybrid meetings can allow people from all over to share in the experience. It allows people thousands of miles away to ask questions and receive answers online. It allows them to attend many of the sessions live. And it allows them to experience at least some of the energy and excitement.”

In the post-9/11 environment, Wismar pointed out, the meetings industry was devastated. The economic crash of the past few years had the effect of putting a double-whammy on the industry. Wismar noted that face-to-face meetings are always best, but the new reality in the economy has sparked a new reality in the meetings industry: Though people need to be at their organization’s meetings — to learn, to network with their peers, and to emerge with a sense

of excitement and enthusiasm about the future — not everyone can physically get to the meetings. Hybrid meetings allow everyone to participate to some extent.

“You do have to walk something of a tricky line,” Wismar says. “You don’t want to cannibalize attendance at the physical event. But we did want to publicize the hybrid option for people who couldn’t make the live one. We waited until about 30 days before the meeting,

and then we used our website, our various state headquarters and media coverage to increase exposure of the virtual aspect. But our membership is so enthused about the concept that we may start publicizing the virtual aspect earlier next time. And we don’t believe that it will affect attendance at the physical event at all.”

ASAE’S FIRST HYBRID EVENT

Tammy Blossil is vice president, online learning for ASAE, which represents 11,000 associations and 22,000 association executives. For the first time last August, ASAE’s Annual Meeting & Exposition went hybrid, offering the Virtual Annual Meeting as well.

“We’re completely taken with the concept,” Blossil says. “It helps bring your message to a wider audience, and that’s always a good thing. In this day and age, not everyone can afford to travel to our meetings. But that doesn’t mean they shouldn’t have an opportunity to attend on their own computers.”

There were 5,000 attendees at the physical event, and 240 online attendees. And the organization expects the online component to grow substantially in the coming years. Like other associations, ASAE found that travel was the biggest reason why members could not attend the live event. But anyone can make the 10-foot journey to their desks.

Organizations are finding an additional bonus, as well. Virtual technology enables highly accurate measurement and tracking results, with more information on those who attend virtually versus physically. According to experts, this is a great advantage for vendors at the events, as well, who now have the opportunity to reach thousands of people they couldn’t reach before.

“Our membership loved the option of being able to participate in the meeting without even being there,” Blossil says. “In fact, in the surveys we did, our virtual event got higher marks — believe it or not — than the physical event. The virtual event got an average 4.3 rating on a scale of 1–5.”

A WORLD OF NEW OPTIONS

The virtual experiences created by firms such as Viva Creative and Unisfair are beyond even the wildest dreams of techies only a few years ago.

“Now, we have the ability to give virtual attendees a total experience that can be almost like being there,” says Evan Chapman, president of the virtual solutions division of Viva Creative, a Rockville, MD, firm that helps bring meetings “alive” for virtual attendees. “It

will never be as desirable as being there. But it’s the next best thing. We can even have a registration area, give you a badge, etc. You can experience many of the things that a physical attendee will experience, without leaving your office or home.

Chapman continues, “Right now, the three main factors driving cost for virtual events are related to platform (technology and bandwidth), event management (project management and support), and production (video and graphics). It’s very hard to project costs in the future, because there are so many factors involved — not the least of which is what you’re trying to accomplish virtually. But we’re hopeful that the costs will eventually go down.”

Chapman believes that exhibitors love the new technology, because it provides better data collection and lead generation, and lowers their travel and lodging costs. And it enables them to be in more than one place at the same time.

“The biggest fear we see among our clients contemplating a virtual event,” he says, “is that a virtual component will cannibalize attendance at the live event. But, in reality, the opposite is true. The interactive capabilities of the virtual experience and the feeling of excitement that’s being communicated from the live event are actually driving more people to consider attending the physical events.”

HYBRID DOS

- Do make sure you have rich media-design and content capabilities.
- Do think about your virtual attendees’ needs for communication and networking.
- Do think of ways to integrate virtual attendees into the physical event. For example, make sure your speakers know they’ll also be addressing attendees who may be thousands of miles away.
- Do attend at least five or six virtual events from different vendors to identify your likes and dislikes.
- Do set some tangible, specific benchmarks for your virtual event. For example, consider selling multiple sponsorship packages, with different sponsors for each “room.”
- Do make sure you have a strategy in place — and a position statement — that clearly outlines your goals, as well as the needs and expectations of your membership.

“The three main factors driving cost for virtual events are related to platform (technology and bandwidth), event management (project management and support), and production (video and graphics).”

HYBRID DON’TS

- Don’t set too high a cost — or, perhaps, any cost — for your first virtual event.
- Don’t waste too much time in the decision process if you’re going to end up doing it, anyway.
- Don’t try to squeeze all your planning as well as your own learning curve into fewer than six months.
- Don’t assume that your suppliers have unlimited time to educate you while they’re busy constructing your virtual website.
- Don’t second-guess your decisions after you’ve made them, especially because of anxiety. Just use whatever mistakes you make as lessons for the future.
- Don’t forget to get explicit buy-in — for every aspect — from senior management.
- Don’t market your virtual event more than a month or two before the physical event. But don’t start promoting it too late, either. The right timing tends to increase attendance virtually without cannibalizing it physically.



Evan Chapman
President, Virtual Solutions
Viva Creative
Rockville, MD

ASAE’s 2010 Annual Meeting & Exposition included a virtual component for the first time.



Photos courtesy of ASAE



The Boston Convention and Exhibition Center offers the myBCEC app developed by Swift Mobile. The app allows users to navigate the facility, staff and services, and provides information about hotels, transportation, retailers, restaurants and more.

By Derek Reveron

Meetings to Go

Mobile Apps That Click With Attendees and Planners

exhibitor information and floor plans. They could also get information about the facility and destination. Everything you would typically see in our hard copy onsite guide we had in our mobile app.”

The app was produced by **Boopsie Inc.**, a Palo Alto, CA-based provider of mobile apps for conferences and trade shows. Boopsie provided the app in different versions, called “flavors,” for BlackBerry, iPhone and Android smart phones. Attendees also could access a Web-based version of the app online. The app was a hit, with more than half of attendees using it. NFPA will use an app again at this year’s conference in Anaheim, CA.

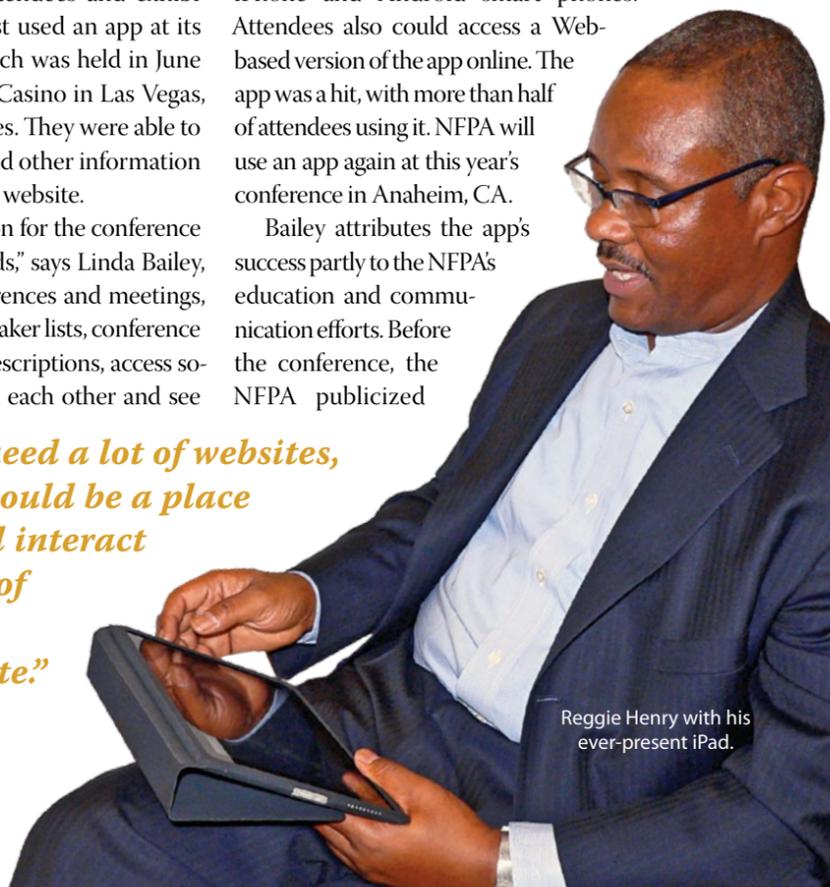
Bailey attributes the app’s success partly to the NFPA’s education and communication efforts. Before the conference, the NFPA publicized

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is among the associations leading the way in using mobile software applications for attendees and exhibitors. The NFPA first used an app at its 2010 Conference & Expo, which was held in June at the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, attracting about 5,000 attendees. They were able to access the conference guide and other information by downloading an app from a website.

“We put all of the information for the conference in the palms of attendees’ hands,” says Linda Bailey, CMP, division manager, conferences and meetings, for NFPA. “They could view speaker lists, conference schedules, session times and descriptions, access social media, communicate with each other and see

“Just like an association doesn’t need a lot of websites, it doesn’t need a lot of apps. It should be a place for people to get information and interact with the association in a variety of ways. It should be a face of your organization just like your website.”

Reggie Henry, CAE
Chief Information Officer, ASAE, Washington, DC



Reggie Henry with his ever-present iPad.

the app in e-mail blasts and the association’s magazine and other publications. During the conference, NFPA posted signs that provided information about the app, and Boopsie CEO Greg Carpenter attended the general session to introduce the product and answer questions about it.

The NFPA turned to apps to help attendees be more efficient and eventually reduce paper conference guides. “So far, we have done it in parallel with paper guides to help people transition from them,” says Bailey. “But we may reduce the size of our onsite guide this year, and the goal is to do away with hard copies. Several of our board members were very pleased that we went this route, and that it showed how progressive our association is in keeping up with the times.”

Mobile apps help planners stretch budgets and maintain and build membership by keeping attendees engaged with association conferences and services. The growth in apps use will be one of this year’s top meetings technology trends, according to Corbin Ball, CMP, CSP, a consultant, writer and speaker specializing in events and meetings technology.

“The year 2010 has seen hundreds of new mobile phone apps benefiting meeting planners, attendees and exhibitors — and many more are in the pipeline,” says Ball. “Smart-phone ‘microcomputers’ are increasingly being used for networking, lead exchange, electronic ticketing, way-finding, audience polling, surveys, pocket programs, pocket exhibit guides, course notes/literature collection and much more. The year 2011 will see many of these tools working into mainstream conference use and many new ones emerge.”

AN APP-ALANCHE?

Reggie Henry, CAE, chief information officer for ASAE, speaks frequently to large and small associations about technology issues and tracks the number of companies that specialize in producing mobile meeting apps. “At my last check there were at least 15 companies. But most meeting planning companies that provide registration or meeting planning services and software are also developing mobile apps. Within a few years, they will be a standard offering from meeting planning companies that serve associations. I’d say that one in four associations I visit use an app or mobile Web presence for meetings. That’s due to a lack of knowledge about apps and misperceptions about the complexity and cost. But that will

change as perception catches up with reality and more apps are produced,” says Henry.

Experts predict that there eventually will be an app for every planner, attendee and exhibitor activity. “As more developers and publishers enter the meeting planning industry, there will be more and more apps created with unique functionality to help us excel as meeting planners,” says Kirsten Strand, CMM, CITE, BSc and CEO of Canada-based Invenia incentive. “The demands and requirements of meeting planners are constantly changing. There are definitely apps that would benefit meeting planners that do not exist yet.” Invenia and IMEX Group founded *meetingapps.com*, which provides access to several hundred meeting-related apps in 26 categories, including meeting management, conferences, destinations, hotel search, venues, air travel, risk management, audio-visual and green tools.

Use of meeting apps will grow along with the use of smart phones. Overall, smart phones comprise about one-third of the mobile phone market, according to a recent survey by Nielsen, an audience measurement and research company. According to a survey of more than 1,000 hosted buyers at IMEX in Frankfurt in 2010, 57 percent of respondents use BlackBerrys, 31 percent use iPhones and 24 percent use Nokia phones. Now that Verizon offers the iPhone, surveys indicate that as many as half of BlackBerry and Android users may switch to the iPhone. “People in the meetings industry tend to be business travelers and they have a high adoption rate of smart phones” says Ball. “But people are resistant to change and everybody’s not anxious to download the latest meeting app. I think it will take a couple of years for apps to work itself into mainstream planning, but it’s well on the way.”

LARGE ASSOCIATIONS LEAD THE WAY

Large associations are leading the way in using meeting apps. The National Association of Realtors (NAR) began using a mobile app at the organization’s 2009 Realtors Conference & Expo in San Diego in November. The NAR expanded app use to its May 2010 Midyear Legislative Meeting & Trade Expo in Washington, DC. The NAR is further expanding app use to its 2011 AE Institute meeting in Dallas in



Linda Bailey, CMP
Division Manager
Conferences and Meetings
National Fire Protection Association
Quincy, MA

“They could view speaker lists, conference schedules, session times...social media... exhibitor information. ...Everything you would typically see in our hard copy onsite guide we had in our mobile app.”

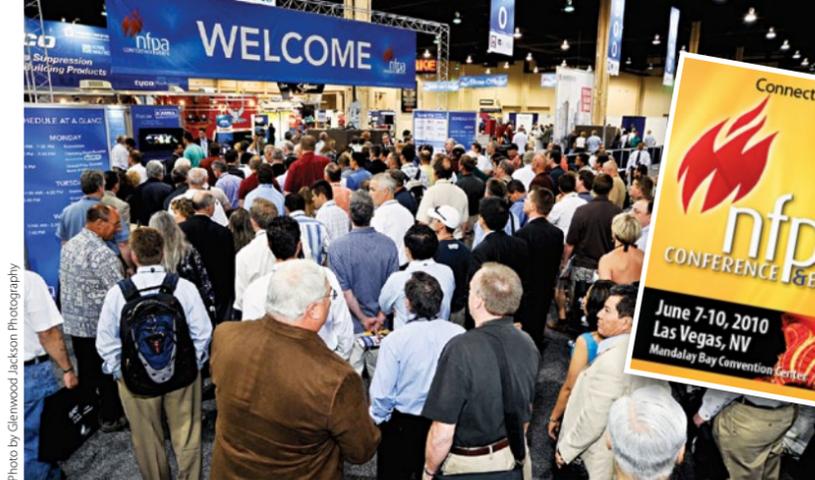


Photo by Glenwood Jackson Photography

The National Fire Protection Association's first foray into using a mobile app for its conference guide was at its 2010 Conference & Expo at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

March. The NAR's apps include a conference guide and information about the meeting venue and destination. Members helped drive the move to apps. "Partially, it was member interest and requests because more of them are using mobile phones and tablet computers. And there was more member interest in wanting information in portable format," says Roz Kriener, NAR director, conference programs.

While the apps are designed for attendees, NAR's conference planning staff also found the tools useful. "As a planner, it was very helpful to look up something on the fly rather than carry a book to look it up," Kriener explained. "Many of the staff used their devices when somebody asked a question rather than having to radio to someone or find a paper copy of a

"As more developers and publishers enter the meeting planning industry, there will be more and more apps created with unique functionality to help us excel as meeting planners."

Kirsten Strand, BSc, CITE, CMM
CEO
Invenia Incentives
Vancouver, BC



Photo by Glenn Gordon O'Hanrahan

guide." The NAR doesn't plan to phase out paper convention guides yet because many members still want printed versions available, she adds.

ASAE provides one multifaceted app for meeting planners, attendees and exhibitors who attend the organization's largest meetings — the Annual

Meeting & Exposition, the Technology Conference & Expo and the Springtime Expo. The app allows attendees to access program guides, research speakers, receive real-time alerts on schedule changes and view comments about sessions on Twitter feeds. Attendees also can locate exhibitors alphabetically and by category, plot routes through exhibit halls and access descriptions, e-mail, phone numbers and Web addresses of exhibitors.

At the 2010 Technology Conference & Expo, more than half of attendees downloaded the app. ASAE eventually will provide the app for all of its large meetings. Henry advises associations to provide one basic app in different smart-phone flavors. "Just like an association doesn't need a lot of websites, it doesn't need a lot of apps," Henry says. "It should be a place for people to get information and interact with the association in a variety of ways. It should be a face of your organization just like your website."

Other examples:

Digestive Disease Week's 2010 annual conference in New Orleans, which attracted about 20,000 attendees, successfully used an app created by **Ascend Integrated Media** and **Handmark Inc.** The app provided a variety of information, including the latest papers and research introduced by presenters.

Attendees at MPI's July 2010 World Education Congress in Vancouver, BC, used a mobile app by **QuickMobile Inc.** The app allowed attendees and exhibitors to access trade show listings, venue information, an attendee database, event schedules, speaker profiles and a Twitter feed.

MORE MEETINGS APP PROVIDERS

A growing number of companies provide a variety of apps available for attendees, planners, exhibitors, venues, hotels, CVBs and convention centers. Here's a sampling of what's available:

Certain Software Inc. recently introduced **Certain 6.0**, an app that allows planners to access event registration information and provides real-time data on meetings and conventions to attendees. The application also allows planners to manage event registration, marketing, transportation, budgeting and post-event feedback.

Heathcote Media Group provides the **Super Planner**, which includes several tools that allow planners to calculate venue capacity, catering, staffing, food and beverage and audio visual needs.

Bartizan Connects provides **iLeads**, which manages trade show leads and allows exhibitors to qualify, survey and collect information about prospects.

MacroView Labs produces apps for associations, trade shows, corporate meetings and events, convention centers, DMCs, venues and hotels. The company's hotel clients provide the apps to planners to access information about meeting space, guest rooms and attractions. Planners can then add meeting-specific information to the app, including registration data, attendee lists, speaker bios, session schedules, surveys, videos and exhibitor information. Attendees access the information using an online passkey. "The growth engine for us has been events that have more than 300 to 400 attendees," says Aron Ezra, CEO of Macroview Labs.

SwiftMobile Inc. specializes in apps for venues, custom events, convention centers, businesses, associations and trade shows. CEO Kathleen Gilroy believes that it's important for meeting app producers to educate potential customers. "We differentiate our products around education. One thing that has become clear is that there is a big educational process needed for people running meetings and their customers. We're building tools and materials and content to help them manage the process of going mobile," says Gilroy.

The education tools will include information about using apps profitably. "For associations and venues, they really need to feel they will recoup investment or make a profit," Gilroy adds. Some associations, mostly larger ones, are already making profits from selling advertising on apps. One of SwiftMobile's customers, a large medical association, started using apps at its annual conference in 2010 and sold about \$30,000 in advertising. This year, the association expects to sell more than \$60,000 in advertising, mostly to pharmaceutical companies, Gilroy explains.

Companies that specialize in apps for mobile meeting and convention guides include **Core-Apps**, **Ootoweb**, **EventKaddy** and **Ativ Software**. The **ActivTouch** smart-phone application by Montreal-based **Sherpa Solutions** won first place in the 2010 WorldWide Technology Watch for "highlighting mobile technology's potential to transform events and trade shows." **ShowGuide** by **Rivermatrix Technologies Inc.** permits conference attendees to view information about exhibitors, sessions and education courses as well as exhibit floor maps. Mobile



"The growth engine for us has been events that have more than 300 to 400 attendees."

Aron Ezra
CEO
MacroView Labs
San Francisco, CA

meeting guides can start as low as \$2,000 to \$3,000 and cost up to several thousand dollars.

SITE SELECTION APPS

There are also apps that help planners search hotels and venues for room space, availability and pricing. **5StarHotels** provides descriptions and information on services and amenities for more than 2,000 luxury hotels worldwide. **MyMobile Travel**, an app by **Primus Productions Inc.**, allows users to research and book rooms and meeting space in more than 100,000 hotels. **Venues by Net121 Ltd.** enables planners to access a database that matches their space and room requirements with specific facilities.

Many CVBs are also providing their own apps. Users can access information about the destination, venues and special promotions. Planners also can access virtual tours, videos and GPS technology to navigate the destination. For example, last year, the Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau (CCTB) began providing **SCVNGR**, a game that can be used on mobile devices, to groups holding conventions and trade shows. In September, the International Manufacturing Technology Show (IMTS) used **SCVNGR** games designed to familiarize attendees with McCormick Place.

The ability to communicate and engage with association membership is paramount regardless of budget constraints. The power — and bottom-line economy — of mobile meeting technology not only ensures that the conversation continues before, during and after meetings and conventions, but provides enhanced ROI and ROE to attendees and exhibitors alike. And let's not forget making meeting planners' logistical lives a whole lot easier.



MacroView Labs builds apps and mobile sites for association meetings and conferences, association and corporate brands, hotels and venues such as convention centers.

AC&F

The Show Goes On... Healthcare Exhibitions Rebound

By George Seli

For associations that run exhibitions in the healthcare arena, it's been a little easier to declare "the show must go on" despite the recession. Healthcare companies have in some cases pared down staffing at booths, or decided to exhibit at fewer shows in their niche throughout the year. But overall, healthcare has not nearly been as impacted by the economic downturn as industries such as construction and real estate, and so many associations still enjoy a vibrant show floor. "Our research indicates that healthcare has been one of the most resilient of all of the industries," says Terry Campanaro, vice president, client relations, healthcare with Las Vegas, NV-based Global Experience Specialists, GES. "But every company is looking at their show schedules with increased scrutiny. They're regularly modifying, taking out or adding shows, looking at their booth sizes. They're all trying to demonstrate a strong return on investment."



Terry Campanaro
Vice President, Client Relations, Healthcare
Global Experience Specialists, GES
Las Vegas, NV

"Every company is looking at their show schedules with increased scrutiny. They're regularly modifying, taking out or adding shows, looking at their booth sizes. They're all trying to demonstrate a strong return on investment."

The shows least likely to be taken out of companies' schedules are of course the major ones, such as the American Association of Orthodontists' Annual Session. Its exhibition of about 350,000 gross sf and around 4,000 exhibitors "continues to grow," says Chris P. Vranas, executive director of the St. Louis, MO-based association. "Although it's been slower growth in the last couple of years, we're not losing anybody. Our larger vendors, the major manufacturers who bring a couple hundred salespeople, have been cutting down a little bit on staff, but not that much because this is the largest orthodontist program in the world. And they have not been

cutting back on what they've been buying for their booths or spending to build them. It's been pretty consistent." In contrast, Vranas points to a series of smaller AAO meetings held in the fall that "have not been faring as well." The data suggests that exhibitors are deciding to focus investment on the major program, he says.

ATTENDANCE IMPROVING

Similarly, the Annual Meeting and Exposition of the Washington, DC-based American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is the premier national event in its field, drawing about 7,000 U.S. pharmacists. "We're starting to see the 2008 attendance numbers coming back, which is a good sign," says Windy Christner, CMP, senior director, meetings and exhibitions. Like Vranas, Christner points to a minor reduction in exhibitor staff sizes that persists since the height of the recession, but the most important thing is that the APhA is "still contracting for the same amount of space as we did a few years ago (about 150,000 gross sf)." What is more, "we're also seeing a couple of new exhibiting companies that haven't been with us for a couple of years come back." What hasn't quite rebounded, fortunately, is rates at convention centers and hotels. "With the exception of some key cities, I'm finding that there is definitely flexibility in pricing at convention centers and still with hotel rates," she says. "But I think that trend is about to end, so it's time to take advantage and book as far out as you can with guaranteed rates."

MARKETING APPEALS

If attendance numbers still aren't ideal, it's also time to ramp up marketing efforts to members and exhibitors. In general, a more personalized approach seems to work best, both in terms of programming and method of outreach. As to the first, Vranas gives

an example: "We now have several programs within the program, appealing to residents, younger orthodontists, those looking into their retirement phase, etc. So we haven't been doing a cookie-cutter program, but rather appealing to all the demographic groups within the membership." As to the second, Christner explains that "the personal touch is back, especially with exhibitors. We're talking voice-to-voice with more of our exhibitor partners." When it comes to e-mail communications, it's key to avoid information overload, she feels. "We want to make sure they know everything they need to know about the meeting, and we market our reputation and the advantages of being at the meeting. But we don't want them to see another e-mail from us and think, 'Oh good Lord, not another one,' and then delete it. So we're trying to come up with a good balance of polite but effective marketing."

In marketing to exhibitors, one valuable point to bear in mind is that many companies are trying to lock in good pricing for the future, just as associations are trying to do the same with regard to meeting facilities. John Rutkauskas, executive director of Chicago, IL-based American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), notes that the association has recently had success in securing multiyear commitments from exhibitors by offering packages at reduced prices. "Coupling multiyear commitments seems to be a positive trend for us," he says. "I think that many of our vendors believe that probably within two to three years they'll be back out of the bottom of the economy, and they're trying to lock in good competitive rates right now."

Good rates certainly contribute to ROI for exhibitors insofar as they keep the investment down, but at the same time they're trying to bolster their return by ensuring the booth has the most effective staff, if a leaner one. "Companies are spending more money on staff education, how to work an exhibit booth more effectively, because it's very different than what they do every day in making field sales calls," Campanaro says. "In addition, some of them are hiring staff to work the booths because many have cut down significantly on their field sales staff; therefore, there are fewer available bodies to bring to a convention."

Campanaro has also observed exhibitors staffing booths with retired reps, who bring extensive experience in pharmaceutical sales and conventions. "They have done a lot of training, so they understand the particular nuances or messages that the exhibiting company wants to be able to demonstrate," she says. "And they're very good at bringing traffic to the booth."

TRAFFIC DRIVERS

Maximizing traffic flow on the show floor is really a joint effort between the exhibitors and the host association, and Campanaro notes an increase in organizers' efforts within the last two years, corresponding (perhaps noncoincidentally) with the tightening of PhRMA guidelines, which limited gift-giving at booths to strictly medically relevant items. One example of these efforts is "passport programs" that encourage attendee traffic. "As a delegate comes in they get their registration materials, and with that they'll get a passport, which is a sponsorship item that many of the exhibiting companies can participate in," she explains. "And so if the delegate visits these four or six or however many designated exhibits throughout the show floor, they can qualify for a special medical educational journal or something very medically relevant that has a high perceived value by the physician."

The APhA uses a similar approach to encouraging broad booth visitation by delegates: "We have



John Rutkauskas
Executive Director
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
Chicago, IL

"Coupling multiyear commitments seems to be a positive trend for us... Vendors believe that... within two to three years they'll be back out of the bottom of the economy, and they're trying to lock in good competitive rates right now."

At a client's healthcare exhibit, Las Vegas-based Global Experience Specialists, GES set up these touch screen information stations, which provide a unique approach to highlighting information and guiding attendees throughout the exhibit's product offerings.



Photo courtesy of GES

stations around the hall where they have to go and get a sticker at each one in order to be eligible for a prize. That way we know they're covering the hall," says Christner.

Another traffic driver that has proven very effective is increasing dedicated exhibit hall time. The AAO began implementing this practice several years ago, with dedicated hours from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lectures could go on throughout the day beginning at 7 a.m., but "we cut off that two-hour period every day so there's nothing conflicting with the trade show," says Vranas. "We also extend the trade show for an hour after all the scientific lectures are over for people to come in, and we don't start the trade show at the crack of dawn because we know folks aren't going in there."

The dedicated hours are also convenient for delegates. "One of the reasons we went to the dedicated hours is our members complained there were too many activities on top of each other. So we've actually streamlined it so they don't have to make as many choices." Aside from session-related competition to the exhibit, there may be competition from recreational activities, especially in certain locales. "When we go to warm weather or tropical venues like Orlando, Hawaii and San Diego, we condense the amount of exhibiting time because we know people are going to be out and about. We intensify it and do our best to get individuals in those halls, and exhibitors really appreciate that," says Rutkauskas. "And our members respond: If we decrease the number of hours they will be going in there."

There are also a variety of incentives that can be deployed to draw attendees to the show floor. Some are practical, such as placing Internet stations or a member-services pavilion in the center of the floor, as the AAO does. Others are educational, such as placing poster areas in closer proximity to the exhibits, or social, such as congregation spaces. And other incentives are based on that perennial crowd-pleaser: food.

"One of the mundane things that works for us is having F&B in key places so that folks will migrate to those points, particularly if it's free F&B," says Rutkauskas. The APhA, for example, offers



The exhibit hall at the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) 2010 annual meeting and exhibition in Washington, DC.

complimentary dessert in the hall on the last day, which is typically the slowest day, Christner relates. It has also combined product theaters with complimentary lunch (limited to 100 delegates) and has found that approach "very successful, we fill every time slot," she says. However, the combination may work a little too well sometimes. "One challenge we have is that the exhibitors without product theaters sometimes complain that people get drawn to the back of the hall," she adds.

Depending on the layout of the convention center, the APhA may also do registration, a cybercafe and posters in the hall "so the ebb and flow is continual," says Christner. And this year's convention in Seattle will see the opening reception take place in the exhibit hall for the first time. The exhibitors will already be at their booths, and the idea is to introduce delegates to the exhibit and create "another opportunity to pull people in and discuss what they're going to be doing over the next three days." (The strategy isn't quite a cost-saver for the association, she notes, as the rental fee avoided by not renting a separate venue for the reception is essentially offset by décor expenses for the hall.)

While the tighter PhRMA guidelines that went into effect in 2009 did lead to a concern that booth visitation would be reduced by the "no gifts" policy, APhA exhibitors have found that the result has been visitation by more "serious" attendees, namely those not merely interested in giveaways, Christner observes. "There's a higher quality of person that will come to the booth. They're not just coming for the tchotchke, they're coming to talk to the rep

about their product or service," she says. "The reps I think are starting to see that and really appreciate it. So I don't think the exhibitors have lost much of anything except spending money on tchotchkes."

In general, GES has seen evidence that compliance and adjustment to the stricter guidelines is now unproblematic for exhibitors. Says Campanaro, "2009 was definitely a learning year where exhibitors worked closely with their own regulatory and legal departments to understand how the stricter code impacted them, and then modified traffic builders, analyzed results and perfected their program. But throughout 2010 we've seen that exhibitors really now have a pretty strong understanding of what's working and have seen some great results."

HIGH-TECH TRACKING

Many exhibitors continue to see great results using RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology to track not only their booth visitation, but visitation to different areas within the booth. "They set it up so they have scanners for different product lines and they can see who and how many people have been interested in a certain product," notes Vranas. Errol Ahearn, executive creative director with GES, described one large pharmaceutical company's enhanced version of this usage of RFID: "When you entered the booth you were given a handheld tablet. You would swipe your badge to 'link' the tablet with your badge, so the exhibitor would know who had this tablet. It would then go through a quick summary of the display, asking what area or product you would like to look at, and then the tablet itself would define a personalized tour of the space. The tablet had RFID on it, so when you approached a particular piece of content or stop along the way, it would know you're within 10 feet of this particular large monitor or video wall, and it would initiate additional content both on the handheld tablet and within the environment. So it became very interactive, very personalized."

In addition, the host association can use RFID to track traffic flow to different parts of the hall and then provide exhibitors that data for ROI measurement purposes. Many healthcare associations, such as the American Diabetic Association and American Society of Radiation Oncology, are also partnering with ethnoMetrics, a consulting firm that provides video analysis of attendee-exhibit interaction, which was acquired by GES. "They try

to understand the why and how of traffic patterns," says Ahearn, "learning when particular booths are busy, post-session visitation, whether activity in the main aisle of the hall was disrupted because of a big keynote speech going on between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. that day, for instance."

Perhaps the most traditional ROI measurement tool, the attendee survey, is also going high-tech as it is increasingly common for the surveys to be sent directly to attendees' smart phones. "As soon as they come out of a seminar they get an e-mail with a link to a quick survey of that particular program, and they can answer it then or when they get back to the office," says Vranas. "Like everyone else, we're trying to go as paperless as possible." That includes the AAPD. "We will share with them in advance a memory stick that has all the lectures and handouts uploaded," says Rutkauskas. "We have historically produced a bound volume for all of our members, but we're migrating to doing less of that."

Alternatively, such materials can be sent to attendees' PDAs via a specialized app for the show, along with an exhibitor directory.

VIRTUAL EXTENSION

When virtual exhibitor directories become sufficiently robust, including exhibitor profiles, extensive product information, a means of virtually communicating with the exhibitor and so forth, we approach what's known as a "virtual exhibition." "One of the things that we've seen in 2010 that will be a continued trend moving forward is the use of virtual exhibitions to extend the face-to-face duration of the show," says Campanaro. "While they'll never replace the face-to-face aspect, there is application and benefit for companies to do a virtual extension. It allows healthcare providers to go back and review what they learned and experienced at the show, and provides options to send materials to those who weren't able to make it to the show." In the age of the "hybrid meeting," it makes sense that hybrid exhibits should also gain prominence, and planners do well to look into that additional avenue of communication between exhibitors and busy healthcare professionals. (See related story on page 14.)



Errol Ahearn
Executive Creative Director
Global Experience Specialists, GES
Las Vegas, NV

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Windy Christner, CMP
Senior Director, Meetings and Expositions
American Pharmacists Association
Washington, DC

"There's a higher quality of person that will come to the booth. They're not just coming for the tchotchke, they're coming to talk to the rep about their product or service. The reps I think are starting to see that and really appreciate it."

Florida

The Sunshine State Looks Better and Better

By John Buchanan

It's no accident that Florida destinations are perennial favorites for many association meeting planners and their attendees. Meeting in Florida affords planners a combination of cost-effectiveness, accessibility, a warm climate and amenities. And, in the middle of a miserable cold and snowy winter, Florida looks better and better.

"Climate, cost and golf are three of our top reasons for using Florida," says Tracy Boleware, vice president, black executive exchange and volunteer programs, at the National Urban League (NUL) in New York. "The others are location, when it comes to airlift, and we also have strong affiliates in Florida, so that helps us plan meetings there. It's also extremely cost-effective as a destination, especially when it comes to getting there with relative ease from just about anywhere in the country. But it's also very cost-effective when it comes to rooms, and food and beverage. But you still get very good service. And there are a lot of things for attendees to do."

John Franco, co-director of meetings and con-

ventions at the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA) in Chantilly, VA, shares those sentiments. "I use Florida in shoulder season — from November to early April," Franco says. "And a lot of those decisions are weather-related. Our folks like warm weather in the winter." He adds, however, that Florida's well-established value proposition is another key element of his equation. "We always get good value for the dollar in Florida," he says, "and that's especially important in these economic times."

Florida also often delivers logistical or geographical benefits. "We have a lot of members in the Southwest," says Lisa DeGolyer, Nolanville, TX-based chief executive, conferences and education, at the Construction Owners Association of America (COAA). "We also have a Florida chapter. And we typically hold one of our three major national meetings in November, and Florida gives us a nice break from the weather in the Northeast or the rest of the country. It's beautiful in Florida that time of year. The weather is fantastic there when it's not fantastic in the rest of the country. And Florida also offers a lot of options, which keeps rates competitive."

Lisa J. Mikita, CMP, CAE, director of conferences and meetings at the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) in Lincolnshire, IL, is another devotee of multiple Florida destinations. "We've always been very pleased with the meetings we've done in Florida," Mikita says, "and we look forward to coming back as often as we can."

ORLANDO

In recent years, Orlando has emerged as a behemoth of meeting destinations, consistently competing against and often winning major association business from other top 10 destinations such as Chicago, Las Vegas and New Orleans. Most im-

portant, Orlando has outgrown its clichéd image as home to Mickey Mouse and theme parks.

The International Sanitary Supply Association (ISSA) now holds its 16,000-attendee annual convention there in a regular rotation with Chicago and Las Vegas.

One of the key reasons is the Orange County Convention Center, where ISSA stages a 600-exhibitor trade show. "On the 1–10 scale, the Orlando convention center is a 10," says Kim Althoff, ISSA's Lincolnwood, IL-based director of conventions and meetings. "It's one of our favorite buildings in the country to work in. It's a very well thought out facility, and the service is excellent. It's a key reason we love Orlando as a destination."

ISSA convened there last November for its five-day event. For the third consecutive time, the landmark Peabody Orlando was their headquarters hotel, located directly across International Drive from the convention center. Just before ISSA arrived, the 1,641-room hotel, with 300,000 sf of meeting space, had completed a \$450 million expansion and renovation that included a new open-air walk-

"In recent years, we had gotten comments from attendees and exhibitors that they wanted more upscale hotels and amenities near the convention center. And Orlando worked very hard to make that happen. Our attendees were very impressed last year."



Kim Althoff
Director of Conventions and Meetings
International Sanitary Supply
Association
Lincolnwood, IL

way connecting the hotel to the convention center. "The people at The Peabody and the service are just excellent," Althoff says.

She also has observed the evolution of Orlando as a major meetings destination over the last decade. "It's exciting to see what has happened around the convention center," she says. "You can walk out of a first-class hotel like The Peabody or the new Hilton convention center property (Hilton Orlando), and

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John Franco
Co-director Meetings and Conventions
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“I use Florida in shoulder season — from November to early April. And a lot of those decisions are weather-related. Our folks like warm weather in the winter. We always get good value for the dollar in Florida, and that’s especially important in these economic times.”

the convention center is right across the street. You don’t get that in Chicago or Las Vegas. In fact, in recent years, we had gotten comments from attendees and exhibitors that they wanted more upscale hotels and amenities near the convention center. And Orlando worked very hard to make that happen. Our attendees were very impressed last year.”

MIAMI

Like Orlando, Miami is a blue-chip brand name in the association meeting industry today. That’s because it offers an eclectic mix of international cultures — especially from Latin America — a globally acclaimed art-and-architecture scene, and the most exciting nightlife in the U.S.

Last October, Mikita used Miami Beach for a meeting for 170 legal administrators and attorneys at the historic Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach hotel, an Art Deco icon that dates back to the golden age of Frank Sinatra. In fact, one of ALA’s nine Florida chapters specifically requested a Miami meeting. “That’s how we ended up there,” Mikita says. “I hadn’t been to Miami since 1994, and I went there on a FAM trip hosted by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. I was very impressed with what they’ve done with the city, especially the area in downtown Miami around the American Airlines Arena.”

Mikita also gives high marks to the CVB. “They were instrumental in setting up a number of appointments for me and helping me make sure I got everything done I needed to get done while I was there,” says Mikita, who plans about 10 meetings a year, including a half-dozen major meetings.

Mikita raves about the 631-room Eden Roc Renaissance, with 46,000 sf of meeting space. The property is nearing the completion of a major his-

toric \$200 million renovation. “The hotel and its history are just fabulous,” Mikita says. “And they did an amazing job with the renovation. It’s a fantastic meeting property.”

PALM BEACH

Palm Beach is another of Florida’s fabled destinations that has legions of meeting-planner fans drawn by its historic glamour and charm.

Last December, Franco hosted a four-day meeting for local SMACNA chapter heads and staff from all over the U.S. and Canada. He used the 379-room PGA National Resort & Spa, with 39,000 sf of meeting space. The newly renovated property, which is located in Palm Beach Gardens, was used by Franco for a meeting six years earlier.

“A lot of our meetings tend to include golf as a part of them,” says Franco, who will plan as many as 70 meetings this year. “So, we like to have golf on property.” At PGA National, he says, attendees get the benefit of an acclaimed championship course — as part of 90 holes on five individual courses.

“Even if golf is not part of your program,” Franco says, “PGA National is a very nice resort and an excellent meeting property. The meeting space is also excellent.” Palm Beach also scores well as a destination with his attendees, he adds. “The service at both the hotel and in local restaurants was really wonderful,” he says.

The town’s Worth Avenue, known as “the Rodeo Drive of the East” for its designer-name luxury shopping and upscale dining, completed a \$15 million renovation that coincides with Palm Beach’s upcoming centennial celebration this year.

DAYTONA BEACH

Farther north and famous for a different reason — its world-famous Daytona 500 stock-car race — Daytona Beach is another well-known Florida destination popular with association meeting planners.

Last September, Wanda Jewell, executive director of the 500-member Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance (SIBA) in Columbia, SC, hosted her annual four-day conference and trade show for 1,000 attendees at the 320-room Plaza Resort & Spa, with 32,000 sf of meeting space, and its sister property next door, the 206-room Plaza Ocean Club, with 7,500 sf of meeting space.

Because her association represents independent booksellers from 11 Southern states, Jewell uses

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Lisa J. Mikita, CMP, CAE
Director of Conferences and Meetings
Association of Legal Administrators
Lincolnshire, IL

"I hadn't been to Miami since 1994, and I went there on a FAM trip hosted by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. I was very impressed with what they've done with the city, especially the area in downtown Miami around the American Airlines Arena."

only independent properties for her meetings. After considering several other Florida destinations, she selected Daytona Beach and her properties based on the bottom-line value she got in her RFP. "Daytona Beach offered me a good price, and the two independent Plaza hotels offered me everything I was looking for in properties." Her event used all of the meeting and event space in both hotels.

"My satisfaction level in the destination was very, very high," Jewell says. "No one ever said no to anything I asked for. And as a destination, Daytona Beach was very affordable. It was also great to be right on the beach. They're eager for the business there, so they're a delight to work with. And they're a particularly great match for a regional association like SIBA."

Daytona Beach now has more capacity for hosting major meetings, thanks to an expansion of the Ocean Center, the area's convention, entertainment and sports complex completed last year.

JACKSONVILLE

Located still farther north, not far south of the Georgia state line, is Jacksonville. Last November, the Association of International Educators (AIE) held a regional meeting there for 600 attendees.

"We looked at multiple Florida destinations and reached the conclusion that Jacksonville was the best choice," says Nasser Pazirandeh, founder and president of Falls Church, VA-based Meeting Insites International, who planned the meeting for the 10,000-member AIE. "They also did a great job during our site visit."

AIE used the 966-room Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, with 110,000 sf of meeting space. "Both the city and the hotel have a lot of appeal," says Pazirandeh, who has also planned meetings in Orlando, Tampa, Miami and Sarasota. The AIE was

his first meeting in Jacksonville. "And it was a very, very good experience," he says. "The Hyatt Regency offers a very high-quality product. It has exceptionally good function space. And this client requires that because they do a lot of breakout sessions."

Most important, he says, "our attendees found Jacksonville very inviting and friendly." In fact, he says, he was actually surprised by how hospitable Jacksonville is, compared to many destinations. "And they're not just putting on a show," he says. "They are genuinely interested in what you're doing, and they're willing to help any way they can. It's part of their culture. And that really helps to make a meeting a success."

TAMPA

Located on the Gulf of Mexico, Tampa is another popular individual destination. It features unique historical flourishes, such as Ybor City, known as the city's Latin Quarter for more than a century.

Last November, DeGolyer hosted 240 attendees for a 2½-day meeting at the 719-room Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina, with 50,000 sf of meeting space.

Normally, DeGolyer issues RFPs to select meeting hotels. But in the tough economic climate of 2009–2010, she had been dispatched to Florida on site inspection trips to find exceptional value. "Then our board said let's just go back to a place where we know we've had success and where we got good value and service," DeGolyer says. "So, we decided to go back to Tampa and the Marriott Waterside," where they had met in 2008.

Although the COAA meeting is a no-frills business conference for construction project owners, Tampa offered a treat for one of the event's highlights — a lecture about and tour of notable construction sites. Last year, DeGolyer's group learned about, then saw, recently completed projects at the Tampa Museum of Art and across Tampa Bay at the University of Tampa. "And we also got to see some phenomenal architecture in the area," she says, "both new and old. And some of our members do restoration of historic sites, so that was very exciting for many of our attendees."

As a result of the positive feedback Tampa generated from attendees, DeGolyer says, it will now be added into a regular every-other-year Florida meeting rotation that includes Orlando. One key reason: In both destinations, COAA finds value, which has become a very important attribute during tough economic times.

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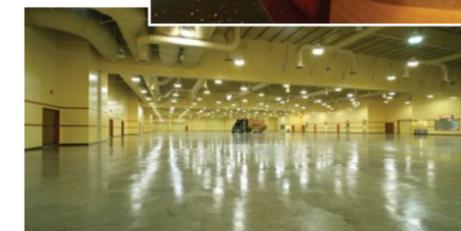
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Washington Hilton	202-328-2080	www.hiltonsofdc.com	Group Sales	dcawh-salesadm@hilton.com
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	www.westin.com/lasvegas	Sandra Horvath	shorvath@westinlv.com
The Westin La Cantera Resort	210-558-2229	www.westinlacantera.com	Patty Pedraza	patty.pedraza@westin.com
Wynn/Encore	888-320-7117	www.wynnmeetings.com	Steve Blanner	hotelsales@wynnlasvegas.com

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DAVIS

Ann Ellison was named sales director for the Chicago national sales office of Disney Destinations. She most recently served as regional director of sales for the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau, based in Chicago.

The San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau recently established a North County specialist sales team, headed by **Jonathan Friedman**, who was named director of sales for the Western region. Friedman was previously the director of sales for the Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows, Santa Monica, CA.

The sales teams at the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center and the Grand Hyatt Denver Downtown have joined forces, with **David Gauthier**, director of sales, named as team leader. He was director of sales at the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center.

Terry M. Beutler, CASE, was named director of sales at the George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX. With more than 30 years of experience in hotel sales and bookings, she had been director of group sales at the InterContinental Hotel near Houston's Galleria.

James Kareka was promoted to director of sales at The Kahala Hotel & Resort, Honolulu, HI. He formerly served as director of travel industry sales at the resort.

Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort and Spa, Beaver Creek, CO, has promoted **Chris Cofelice** to senior sales manager responsible for the Northern Colorado, Washington, DC, and Southeastern U.S. markets. He was sales manager for the Colorado association market.

The Tacoma Regional Convention & Visitor Bureau, Tacoma, WA, has named **Joe Salonga** as sales manager, primarily working with government, education and religious groups; and **Kyla Cavanaugh** as sales manager, primarily working with association groups. Salonga was account executive for Wild Waves Theme Park, Federal Way, WA. Cavanaugh was sales and marketing coordinator at Heritage Restoration, Tacoma, WA.

The Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Monterey, CA, has named **John Ehlenfeldt**, CMP, as regional director of sales responsible for the Southern California and Southwest markets. He most recently was director of meeting and

incentive sales development for the Canadian Tourism Commission.

The Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, in the Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM, has named **Mary Dean Smith** as associate director of sales. She was sales manager for Heritage Hotel & Resort's Hotel Albuquerque.

Beau Rivage, Biloxi, MS, has promoted **Mike Davis** to director of hotel sales and marketing. He was assistant director of hotel sales.

AC&F

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