

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

FEBRUARY 2011 VOL. 29 NO. 2 \$9.00  
www.themeetingmagazines.com

# Corporate & Incentive Travel

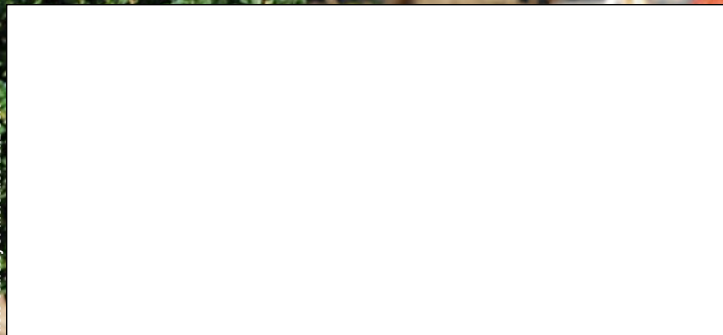
THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

## Impactful Meetings

**CSR Programs Leave a Lasting Imprint**

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Mercedes-Benz USA executives and dealers took time out of their New Orleans sales meeting to “give back,” planting 125 trees in City Park to mark the 125th anniversary of the automobile.



**A Conversation With Industry Leaders** **PAGE 18**



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# Corporate Incentive Travel

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*Hyatt Hotels and Resorts is removing barriers — making its banquet spaces more like restaurants — providing an environment where guests, chefs and service teams can interact.*

Photo courtesy of Hyatt Hotels

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*The Benchmark Conference Plan is available at The Stonewall Resort in West Virginia — an Adirondack-style lodge with two ballrooms, 15,000-sf conference area and a 7,000-sf Exhibition Center.*

Photo courtesy of Stonewall Resort

Corporate & Incentive Travel (USPS 716-450) is published monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies \$9.00 U.S.A. only. Yearly subscription price is \$90.00 in the U.S.A.; Canada and foreign is \$150.00. Back copies \$10.00 U.S.A. only. Distributed without charge to qualified personnel. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Corporate & Incentive Travel, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Nothing contained in this publication shall constitute an endorsement by Coastal Communications Corporation (Corporate & Incentive Travel), and the publication disclaims any liability with respect to the use of or reliance on any such information. The information contained in this publication is in no way to be construed as a recommendation by C&IT of any industry standard, or as a recommendation of any kind to be adopted, by or to be binding upon, any corporate/incentive travel planner or agent. Reproduction of any portion of this publication by any means is strictly forbidden. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited photographs or manuscripts. Subscribers: Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: Circulation Department, Corporate & Incentive Travel, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Provide old and new addresses including zip codes. Enclose address label from most recent issue and please allow five weeks for the change to become effective. Printed in U.S.A. © 2011



## CSR Makes Great Sense

**W**e started covering trends and developments in corporate social responsibility (CSR) several years ago. Nowadays, CSR is recognized as an integral, even vital part of a meaningful face-to-face event in cities all across our nation. The impact of CSR reverberates throughout communities such as New Orleans, which could use all the help it could get after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. Moreover, CSR programs, especially the charitable endeavors, provide attendees with lasting memories garnered from "doing good."



For example, in our cover story in this issue on page 12, "Impactful Meetings — CSR Programs Leave a Lasting Imprint on Communities and Attendees," there are countless examples of successful CSR projects such as the tree-planting event at City Park in New Orleans by the Mercedes-Benz

USA attendees who extended their meeting to plant 125 trees.

CSR has come a very long way in a very short time. Many corporate executives say that their employees now expect a CSR element at every event. They look forward to contributing to the community at large. For instance, Cisco's Lyn Thompson says that CSR "is in the DNA of all of our employees, and every corporate offsite meeting has some kind of giveback option if at all possible." If they run out of time, they make a donation in the employees' names. Cisco also includes philanthropic teambuilding as part of its site visits that lead up to the annual conference. Last fall in New Orleans, Cisco volunteers and vendors even spent a day doing home repair for the St. Bernard Project's Rebuilding Program in the city.

Hotels and destinations have also stepped up to the plate with a full menu of opportunities for companies to make a difference: Ritz-Carlton's Community Footprints offers a variety of "volunteering" service opportunities; Fairmont Hotels and Resorts customizes CSR programs all over the world such as painting schools and planting seeds; and CVBs such as Visit Orlando make CSR happen in their city by providing ideas and connections to the community.

MPI's Manager of CSR & Sustainable Events Roger Simons says, "CSR makes both business sense and moral sense...it's a worldwide and cross-industry growth area."

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher



A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

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# New Class of RCCL Ships on the Horizon

MIAMI, FL — According to *Travel Weekly*, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. is considering ordering a new ship that will signal a new class of ship for the brand: “I have previously confirmed that while we look forward to a period of slower growth, we do not intend to stagnate,” RCCL Chairman Richard Fain recently noted. “We’ve been considering our next new building project, and we feel that the time may now be right with such a move.” The chairman suggested that the imminent order may be for the Royal Caribbean brand and would “probably be the start of a new series of ships which would incorporate our latest learnings about efficiency and about guest amenities.” [royalcaribbean.com](http://royalcaribbean.com)

# World’s Largest JW Marriott Now Open in Indianapolis



JW Marriott Downtown in Indianapolis.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — The 1,005-room JW Marriott Indianapolis Downtown, the “crown jewel” of the 7-acre Marriott Place Indianapolis, opened on February 4. Marriott Place Indianapolis is a collection of five Marriott properties totaling 2,248 rooms. All the properties are connected to the newly renovated and expanded Indiana Convention Center.

In addition to the world’s largest JW Marriott, the group includes the Courtyard by Marriott Indianapolis Downtown, SpringHill Suites by Marriott Indianapolis Downtown, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Indianapolis Downtown and the Marriott Indianapolis Downtown. In addition to 54 meeting rooms and 104,000 sf of event space, the hotel also houses the largest hotel ballroom in the Midwest.

“The Marriott Place Indianapolis hotel complex is an integral component to the city’s overall strategic tourism growth,” said Michael Browning, chairman of the board for the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association. “The Indiana Convention Center’s recent expansion, a new airport, new stadium hosting the Super Bowl, and now touting the world’s largest JW Marriott, Indianapolis has arrived on the national tourism scene and is the envy of destinations across the nation. The city’s overall compact convention package continues to attract new customers, with more hotel rooms connected into our convention center via skywalks than any other city in the U.S.” [jwindy.com](http://jwindy.com)

# ALHI Acquires Hinton + Grusich

WASHINGTON, DC — Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) announced that, effective January 1, 2011, it acquired Hinton + Grusich (H + G) — a merging of two of the largest independent national sales organizations in North America that specifically serve the meeting, incentive/ recognition, convention and exhibition marketplaces exclusively for their hotel and resort member portfolio.

“After 25 years of each successfully and passionately serving the meetings and incentive industry with our national sales responsibilities for our member hotels and resorts, it is a logical step for ALHI and the H + G teams to join forces,” said David Gabri, president and CEO of ALHI. “This is our Silver Anniversary, and we’re blessed to add the incredibly talented and well-respected Hinton + Grusich sales executives and leadership to our ALHI team. The timing couldn’t be better as our nation is recovering, and we feel business is eagerly back in the business of business, including using meetings and conventions to effectively advance their goals and objectives.” [alhi.com](http://alhi.com)

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# NJ Governor Signs Bill to Rescue Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — On February 1, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie signed two bills into law designed to revitalize tourism in “the new Atlantic City.” The laws create a new state-run Atlantic City Tourism District under the control of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority and overhaul casino regulations. Christie also said his administration would take a more active hand in promoting Atlantic City as “clean, safe and economically prosperous.”

In addition, the state is involved in profit-making partnerships with private companies that seek a state sales-tax rebate of at least \$50 million. The partially completed Revel hotel/casino project is the first partner. The arrangement means the state would receive 20 percent of Revel’s partners’ profits known as “success reimbursement payments.” To applause from the more than 100 onlookers and workers at the Revel site where Christie signed the bills, he announced the Revel casino project would have its financing set and construction would resume this month. Opening the casino, would be “an extremely important psychological shift for the city,” said Christie. [revelinac.com](http://revelinac.com)



The Revel hotel casino project is set to resume construction.

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## First Women's Leadership Forum at IMEX in May

FRANKFURT, GERMANY — The first-ever Women's Leadership Forum is set for IMEX in Frankfurt, May 24–26, 2011. Co-presenters Susan Sarfati, CEO of High Performance Strategies and Liz Jackson, president of Jackson Consulting Inc., recently conducted a survey of 140 women currently working in the meetings, events and incentive travel industry. Results of the survey, which also gathered feedback from a small number of men, will help craft the program content. The report indicates that many women share concerns with issues such as time management, assertiveness, ethical business behavior, managing Gen Yers, staff retention and more.



SARFATI

Subjects ranging from “dealing with conflict” to “understanding the differences in male and female leadership types” were at the top of the requested topic list. Jackson said, “By demonstrating how women can overcome barriers and succeed in business and in life, feel good about themselves and reach beyond their expectations, our new Forum will show that women often have more power and potential than they realize. These results make it clear we still have a way to go, but they also demonstrate that women's desire and readiness to improve their skills and remain focused on career development is an essential component of a healthy international meetings and events industry.” Sarfati said, “Now it is not so unusual to see women leading countries throughout the world. The meetings industry is reflecting the same dramatic change as it relates to key decision-makers and a multitude of new opportunities. The 21st century is indeed the century for women to make a major impact, and we need to maximize how we can take advantage of this to move ourselves forward and the meetings industry overall.” The presentation is free. <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/women.html>

## MEETING VALUES



### The Hutton Hotel, Nashville, TN.

Planners are offered The Total Meeting Package rate of \$201, which includes: guest room; meeting space; coffee break service; lunch; basic audio-visual; and one complimentary upgrade with 20 rooms booked. Valid for groups with a minimum of 50 room nights consumed. For more information, contact the sales department at 615-712-2319. [huttonhotel.com](http://huttonhotel.com)

■ **The Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, The Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM.** The Discover Meeting Experience package, valid for new meetings booked between now and August 31, 2011, and held before January 16, 2012, includes: round-trip airfare for meeting planner or person of organization's choosing for bookings of 150 or more; comp welcome reception with culture activity; comp general welcome session and cultural blessing; one suite upgrade per 50 rooms reserved at the set group rate; comp Internet; one cultural VIP amenity per 10 rooms booked for the meeting. 800-554-9288, [tamaya.hyatt.com](http://tamaya.hyatt.com)

■ **The New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA.** The Lucky 11 offer is valid for groups of more than 250 rooms booked between March 31 and May 31, 2011, and consumed by December 31, 2011. The offer includes all of the following perks: 11 percent master bill rebate up to \$25,000; “double-down” attrition allowance of 22 percent; high-speed Internet for \$3.95 per room, an \$11 savings; 11 complimentary parking vouchers; 11 VIP upgrades; \$11 off parking rates for the entire group; 11 complimentary VIP amenities. 504-553-5520, [NewOrleansLucky11.com](http://NewOrleansLucky11.com), [neworleansmarriott.com](http://neworleansmarriott.com)

■ **The Hyatt at Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, CA.** 2011 Hot Dates for groups are: February 11–27, 2011; March 20–31, 2011; April 17–30, 2011; July 24–31, 2011; August 28–September 5, 2011; October 30–November 6, 2011; November 18–26, 2011; December 11–30, 2011. 415-486-4415, [marianne.milton@hyatt.com](mailto:marianne.milton@hyatt.com), [fishermanswharf.hyatt.com](http://fishermanswharf.hyatt.com)

## San Diego Marriott To Achieve Marquis Status



SAN DIEGO, CA — The San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina has begun its transformation into the San Diego Marriott Marquis & Marina. The hotel has earned the Marquis distinction because of its \$200 million renovation, the ideal location near a major city center, 1,362 spacious guest rooms, 160,000 sf of flexible meeting space, a 446-slip private marina and more.

Adjacent to the San Diego Convention Center and steps away from Petco Park, the Gaslamp Quarter and Seaport Village, the renovation includes an updated lobby and concierge level, completely remodeled guest rooms, and a state-of-the-art fitness center overlooking a new pool area, which is slated for completion in April, with private cabanas, cozy fire pits, a poolside restaurant and bar, and a separate play area for kids. Renovations, which will continue through 2013, will include two new 40,000-sf high-tech ballrooms and a luxurious full-service spa. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

## Hotel Monteleone Celebrates 125 Years of Hospitality



NEW ORLEANS, LA — Since its founding in 1886, Hotel Monteleone has made a historical, economical and cultural impact on the French Quarter and the city of New Orleans. As it celebrates 125 years in 2011, the “Grand Dame of the French Quarter” plans a year-long celebration of the people, the community and the employees who have made the legendary landmark a sparkling jewel. The Hotel Monteleone will pay tribute to authors who have stayed at and immortalized the hotel in their works, and thus earned it the prestigious distinction as a Literary Landmark. [hotelmonteleone.com](http://hotelmonteleone.com)

# Events Calendar

**MARCH 23–25, 2011**  
**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONFERENCE CENTERS AMERICAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
The National Conference Center  
Leesburg, VA  
Contact: 314-993-8575  
[www.iacconline.org](http://www.iacconline.org)

**MARCH 27–30, 2011**  
**ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE CONFERENCE AND EVENTS DIRECTORS, INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
Hilton, Located in the Walt Disney World Resort  
Orlando, FL  
Contact: 877-50-ACCED  
[www.acced-i.org](http://www.acced-i.org)

**APRIL 13–14, 2011**  
**HOSPITALITY SALES AND MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL AFFORDABLE MEETINGS MID-AMERICA**  
Navy Pier  
Chicago, IL  
Contact: 914-421-3270  
[www.affordablemeetings.com](http://www.affordablemeetings.com)

**APRIL 27–MAY 1, 2011**  
**INCENTIVE RESEARCH FOUNDATION INCENTIVE INVITATIONAL**  
Aria Resort & Casino  
Las Vegas, NV  
Contact: 314-473-5601  
[www.theirf.org](http://www.theirf.org)

**MAY 24–26, 2011**  
**IMEX — THE WORLDWIDE EXHIBITION FOR INCENTIVE TRAVEL, MEETINGS AND EVENTS**  
Messe Frankfurt  
Germany  
Contact: (011) 44-1273-227311  
[www.imex-frankfurt.com](http://www.imex-frankfurt.com)

**JUNE 2, 2011**  
**DMAI DESTINATIONS SHOWCASE CHICAGO**  
Donald E. Stephens Convention Center  
Rosemont, IL  
Contact: 202-296-7888  
[www.destinationsshowcase.com](http://www.destinationsshowcase.com)

**JULY 23–26, 2011**  
**MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL WORLD EDUCATION CONGRESS**  
Orange County Convention Center  
Orlando, FL  
Contact: 972-702-3053  
[www.mpiweb.org](http://www.mpiweb.org)





Kristin Kurie

# Plan a Green Meeting

## It's the Right Thing to do

I like to walk in my neighborhood when the recycling truck comes through. I like to observe the degree to which my neighbors recycle or don't. We have paper, plastic, aluminum and now cardboard recycling every two weeks. Our family usually has three good-sized bins to offer up. Some of my neighbors have more, but many have less. Which leads me to ask, do they not drink from any bottled product? Do they not read magazines or newspapers in print? Are they leading efficient green lives — drinking tap or filtered water from the refrigerator? Reading only online? Or are they not recycling, throwing their bottles, papers and cans in with their general garbage? I shudder at that thought.

For many of us, recycling has become a daily part of our personal lives. And to some degree in our professional lives. We may recycle paper in the workplace, use a mug or glass to drink with, rather than paper or plastic. Even the ubiquitous plastic water bottle is being replaced by all manner of bottles (the debate rages on about what is the safest and most environmentally sound). Organizations are greening their operations by rethinking their manufacturing and supply chain; building green buildings; going paperless; shrinking greenhouse gas emissions; and encouraging associates to carpool, use mass transit or work remotely.

### The Triple Bottom Line

And why are organizations going green? It would be a bit simplistic to say "because it is the right thing to do," but that is part of the reason. Corporate social responsibility

(CSR) speaks to an organization's effort to be more economically and environmentally sustainable by operating under the premise of the triple bottom line — people, planet and profits.

This is where the meeting planner has a pivotal role. Google "green meetings" and one will find in excess of 4,910,000 entries. Remarkable. This speaks to the burgeoning recognition within the meetings, events and hospitality industry that green is here to stay. It is not a trend but rather a way of doing business. Your questions:

- What's in it for me?
- How do I start, what resources are available?
- How do I find green venues and destinations?
- How can I qualify and quantify outcomes to measure ROI?

**What's in it for you?** Well as someone who works with or for corporations, associations, government entities, not-for-profits, NGOs, it benefits you to appreciate and understand the CSR efforts that may be ongoing within your organization. By so doing, you can demonstrate that meetings and events support CSR efforts, and as such you bring value and a level of expertise to the organization. And this is good for you in your career efforts.

**How do I start and what resources are available?** First, it is important to understand your organization's CSR efforts. What is the organization doing to be more environmentally sustainable in their operations? What do you experience in your work environment? Is the organization high on the learning curve already,

and thereby a green meeting could be an expectation, or at least would be seen as a logical and prudent approach? Or is the organization new to sustainability practices, and as such a green meeting might be perceived as going too far, doing too much? Understanding your constituents is critical.

Resources are quite frankly, endless. Most of the major meetings industry-related associations provide green meeting resources, checklists and links on their websites: International Association of Conference Centres (IACC), [iacconline.org](http://iacconline.org); Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), [pcma.org](http://pcma.org); American

**How do I find green venues and destinations?** Take a look at industry association websites. For example, IACC has a Code of Sustainability that a member property can pledge to, by means of a thorough application and checklist. Property and brand websites detail sustainability practices and operations, as well as how they support green meetings. Finally, there are numerous certifications available to the hospitality industry such as Green Seal, Green Globe, Green Key, and the LEED rating systems of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), [usgbc.org](http://usgbc.org).

**How can I measure ROI?** By conducting a green meeting, your organization will

*Google green meetings and one will find in excess of 4,910,000 entries.*

Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), [ahla.com](http://ahla.com); Convention Industry Council (CIC), [conventionindustry.com](http://conventionindustry.com); Meeting Professionals International (MPI), [mpiweb.org](http://mpiweb.org); and the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC), [greenmeetings.info](http://greenmeetings.info). The EPA ([epa.gov](http://epa.gov)) has information on its site and links directly with BlueGreen Meetings ([bluegreenmeetings.org](http://bluegreenmeetings.org)). Additionally, most of the major hospitality brands and a number of independent properties provide green meeting information on their websites.

not only save resources, but also save on expenses associated with travel and meetings. Even without a comprehensive plan, easy first steps include eliminating bottled water and disposables; producing conference materials, agenda and handouts electronically rather than in print; featuring locally grown foods; and ensuring that the venue enables you to readily reduce, reuse and recycle in meeting rooms and guest rooms. It's the right thing to do for your constituents, the world we live in and the bottom line.

C&IT

*Kristin Kurie is president of The Wilderman Group and a veteran of the hospitality sales and marketing discipline. She has served as a director of the International Association of Conference Centres (IACC) and was active on the marketing and sustainability committees. She received the Award of Excellence from IACC for her years of service to the association and to the conference center industry. Steadfast in her commitment to environmental stewardship, she is an active member of the South Carolina Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, the Georgia Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council and the International Association of Conference Centres. The Charleston, SC-based Wilderman Group is a woman-owned hospitality management company that specializes in meetings and conferences, and civic and community developments. [kristin@thewildermangroup.com](mailto:kristin@thewildermangroup.com)*



# Impactful Meetings



Photos courtesy of Mercedes-Benz USA



Mercedes-Benz USA executives and dealers extended their bi-annual sales meeting schedule in New Orleans by an extra day to plant trees in City Park.

## CSR Programs Leave a Lasting Imprint on Communities — and Attendees

Since when does planting trees have anything to do with selling cars? When it comes to meeting and conference onsite “giving back,” anything goes.

Hans Lupold, special events manager for Mercedes-Benz USA ran a meeting for car dealers in New Orleans in October and incorporated a tree-planting event in City Park. “January 29, 2011 marks the 125th anniversary of the automobile,” says Lupold, “and so we donated 125 trees to the park. Our meeting lasts three days and we were looking for a charitable event. We also wanted to take people out of the meeting rooms. We went to the

CVB and asked about the options. They suggested City Park.”

As a result, 180 meeting attendees stayed an extra day to spend a half day in the park planting. “Everybody participated,” says Lupold, “using the buses which had been used for the conference.”

He says the City Park staff “was amazing in organizing everything — shovels, wheelbarrows. Nobody was just standing around; the trees were there and even the holes were pre-dug.”

Tasks, says Lupold, included everything from digging holes to mulching. “There was one spot for watering plants,”

says Lupold, “and I ended up doing that. Even the president of the company was on hand.”

The teambuilding effect was powerful. “Many of the people knew each other by e-mail but they came from all over the country and many were meeting for the first time,” he says.

All told, Lupold says, the project took about 3½ hours. Afterward, participants enjoyed a picnic. He says the planting event cost much less than a typical meal in a restaurant or hotel ballroom.

According to Lupold, the event took place at a bi-annual sales meeting where products, goals and issues are on the agenda. “It added a lot to the meeting,” he says, “and we’re hoping to do similar activities in the future. We will be posting pictures of the event on our internal communications.”

### Socially Conscious

Planners agree that the movement to onsite Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives is real — if still relatively small. After all, it’s not always easy to carve out even a few hours during meetings that have already been shortened.

Mike Lyons, executive vice president of Newton Square, PA-based AMR Meetings & Incentives, says that onsite CSR emerged as a trend even before the recession. “This is in part because the younger generation is much more socially conscious. We’ve raised a generation of kids coming out of school and saying we need to do things to change the world. We need to be proactive and make a difference in how we help other people.”

The industry, says Lyons, “is asking how it can change the way it does business so meetings can have an impact locally when we go into a market. How can we leave a positive imprint and make an impact on the lives of the less fortunate? We’re staying in nice hotels, and eating in nice restaurants, and poverty is just blocks away.”

Gene Wilks, senior event manager for George P. Johnson Experience Marketing,

## Got Soap?

Those tiny bars of soap and mini bottles of shampoo placed in hotel rooms are a welcome amenity, but unfortunately, millions of pounds of them end up in landfills every day. That fact bothered Florida businessman Shawn Seipler so much that he founded Clean the World, a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to recycling gently used soap and bottled amenities for distribution in Third World countries.

“Each day around the globe, more than 9,000 children under age 5 die from acute respiratory illness and diarrheal disease — the top two killers of children worldwide,” says Seipler, who now serves as the organization’s executive director.

“Both are preventable, in large part by washing with bar soap.”

To date, Clean the World has provided more than 340 tons of soap, shampoo and other hotel amenities to those in need in the U.S. and dozens of other countries around the world. The organization recently distributed 300,000 bars of soap to the residents of Haiti in response to the cholera outbreak.

More than 550 hotels in North America have already partnered with Clean the World to recycle their soap and bottled amenities, and more are being added all the time. A list is available at [cleantheworld.org](http://cleantheworld.org). For meetings held at properties that are not on the list, Clean the World will work with planners to set up a “Donation Station” consisting of two collection bins, one for soap and one for bottled amenities. The organization also will provide signage and website content to help planners promote the program to attendees. For more information on Clean the World’s Meetings Industry Recycling program, call Paul Till at 407-574-8353 or visit [cleantheworld.org](http://cleantheworld.org). As Seipler explains, “Soap brings hope and it saves lives, too.”

— Karen Brost

Clean the World founder Shawn Seipler (right) and Visit Orlando’s V.P. of Convention Sales and Services Tammy Runzler (above) distribute bars of soap on a recent trip to Haiti. (Top) Clean the World signage in hotels alerts attendees to the program.



Photos courtesy of Clean the World

By Harvey Chipkin



does an annual conference for Cisco, the technology company. Leading up to that conference are a series of site visits that include bringing in different vendors, as well as Cisco representatives. For the past three years, Cisco has included philanthropic teambuilding as part of its site visits. Last November in New Orleans, says Wilks, Cisco included a day of home-repair volunteering for the St. Bernard Project's Rebuilding Program for Hurricane Katrina survivors.

Groups of 15 people per house were assigned. According to Wilks, one team did the floors and the other team did spackling, covering up marks on the walls. This was a full-day affair put together by the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"It had a hugely positive effect," says Wilks. "The owner of the house came by, and so it was very personal. We had people from all over the world and this added another dimension. No matter their physical capabilities, we found tasks for everyone. We took video of the day, and we are going to use it at our general session in March."

On the logistical front, says Wilks, "I had to order two minibuses and we brought our own lunch. We worked with the Marriott where we were staying to prepare the lunches."

"This is all increasingly becoming a part of meet-

**Hans Lupold**  
Special Events Manager  
Mercedes-Benz USA  
Montvale, NJ



***"Our meeting lasts three days and we were looking for a charitable event. We also wanted to take people out of the meeting rooms."***

ings," says Wilks, who adds, "I was just in San Francisco at a trade show. They had two different sessions where you could build care packages on the property. One was for blankets for local children; the other was to be shipped overseas."

Lyn Thompson, a program manager with Cisco, says that CSR "is in the DNA of all of our employees, and every corporate offsite meeting has some kind of giveback option if at all possible. Sometimes it's not possible because of the length of the meeting and what needs to be done. If there isn't time we will make a donation in the employees' names."

Kerri Mills, manager of marketing events for Airline Reporting Corporation, a technology company, also runs an annual conference for an association of corporate travel department managers. At the most recent conference in New Orleans, the group decided to give back to the city. Working with the Royal Sonesta Hotel, 35 delegates spent several hours painting equipment and cleaning up at local playgrounds.

According to Mills, "Local people came out of their homes to thank us and to tell us how much it had meant to them. The playgrounds were damaged

by Katrina and our people were thrilled to be able to help. It really was uplifting. We were able to show photos of the event throughout our conference. We will look into doing similar activities in other communities."

Says Lyons, it's been "nice to see in the last two or three

years companies integrating these activities into their agendas. They're asking how they can take a half a day away from a sales meeting, put on jeans and work gloves and go to a neighborhood and do something. It's great for teambuilding and camaraderie."

Many of his clients, says Lyons, "ask us to put this into our proposals. Very popular says Lyons, is bike building where, "Bikes are brought to the venue in boxes. Teams are broken into three or four people, and they build their bike together. That's where the teamwork comes in. It's all incorporated into the meeting in a fun way. A mechanic walks around to ensure that the bikes are built correctly. The payoff is that at the end the local organization sends over 20 kids who get the bikes. When the bikes are done, the doors open and in walk the 20 kids. There are a lot of tears and hugging and high fives. Then the truck is loaded with the bikes, which brings them back to the neighborhood where the children live."

Lyons says that a bike-building program might cost \$200 a person but he added, "It becomes the highlight of the event and what they talk about when they get home."

This is not a fad, says Lyons, who adds, "There is no going backwards on this. When you break this down into the save the planet theme — including all the things we are doing as an industry to recycle and minimize our footprints, that will be ongoing."

### **Hoteliers and Destinations Onboard for Onsite CSR**

Hoteliers and destination executives



The annual Las Vegas Educational Experience FAM trip hosted by Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment included a community service project for the first time last fall. Attendees participated in projects to benefit St. Jude Ranch for Children.

agree that planners are increasingly asking for options to make an impact on the community in which the event is located. Jeff Doane, vice president of sales for Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, says, "It's been a push-pull relationship. We saw a demand in the marketplace that fit with our sensibilities. We wanted to have offers in the market. It's also come the other way, with planners asking us for something."

What it comes down to, says Doane, is, "You could go help build a house for Habitat for Humanity or you could play in a golf tournament. It's extraordinarily rewarding to do something for someone in need — and it can't help but enhance the meeting experience."

Doane says some of Fairmont's initiatives emerge from the brand's loyalty program, Fairmont Presidents Club, which, he says, "categorizes customers into passion groups. One primary passion group is those whose passion revolves around charitable organizations. That passion cuts across a lot of demographics."

Fairmont doesn't cookie-cutter on-site activities. "We don't have anything that's ready-made," says Doane. "We do have a repertoire but we go to the planner and ask what they want. And, as long as it fits our ethical guidelines, we'll make it work."

Onsite CSR brings many side benefits, Doane explains: "If it involves team-

building it really pays off. I went to a customer event where I worked side-by-side with our best customers. It's amazing the relationships you can develop when you're building somebody a house."

All these options, says Doane, "are amazingly flexible as far as inserting them into a meeting. Whatever it is, we'll make it work with the group."

And it seems that location doesn't matter. At the Fairmont Zimbali resort in South Africa, groups can arrange to paint schools, repair homes, plant seeds, teach a skill and more.

At the Fairmont Kea Lani in Maui, one group had a race featuring environmentally friendly cars. Each team created two cars — the first solar powered

**Mike Lyons**  
Executive V.P.  
AMR Meetings  
& Incentives  
Newton Square, PA



***"How can we leave a positive imprint and make an impact on the lives of the less fortunate? We're staying in nice hotels, and eating in nice restaurants, and poverty is just blocks away."***

built from kits, the second made from recycled materials. The group invited local students to join the teams. Afterward,

the group donated the cars, as well as new solar car kits and a solar classroom curriculum to area schools for teachers to use to stimulate conversation about alternative methods of transportation.

### **Visit Orlando Steps Up**

And it's not just hotels that are becoming more involved with onsite CSR. Orlando, for example, has become extremely proactive on the CSR front. "We decided," says Tammi Runzler, vice president of convention sales and services for Visit Orlando, "that we shouldn't be touting the impact of social responsibility if we weren't willing to live up to that." (See box on page 13.)

As a result, whenever representatives of the CVB take to the road, says Runzler, they incorporate a CSR element — whether it's a trade show, FAM tour or conference. In addition, Orlando is ready to work with planners on their own customized CSR activities. "We have all the relationships to make this happen," says Runzler. "We can make the connections and be as involved or uninvolved as the group wants. We want to be their resource to make it happen."

More and more groups, says Runzler, "are doing something. In fact, it's at top of mind for most planners; they want to be involved. If we can help and make it easier, they're very appreciative. We just take a little bit of work off of their to-do list."

"If they have 50 people for two hours or 500 people for a full day," says Runzler, "we can find an organization to work with them. Sometimes, if it's a larger group, we can set up multiple projects so attendees can pick and choose. Some might want to go to a local food kitchen rather than do physical labor."

Visit Orlando, says Runzler, will even handle transportation. "All of the hotels are cooperating with us because this community believes in community ser-



New Orleans youngster Cedric Gooden won a poster contest for the New Orleans Recreation Department that was sponsored by Airline Reporting Corporation's CTD Conference. Attendees spent time spiffing up playground equipment.





Photo courtesy of Woodstock Inn & Resort

Woodstock Inn & Resort's Meetings with a Mission program includes the Naked Table Project, in which corporate groups assemble tables made from local maple harvested from a sustainable forest. The tables are then donated to a charity of choice.

vice. It's also a wonderful way for groups to come and connect with the community. It forms an emotional tie. They can go home and say, 'I went to Orlando and did volunteer work at a local school.' We love when they go out into the community and connect."

Runzler even believes that the economic downturn might make people embrace social responsibility even more. "In a soft economy, there is no greater ROI than spending time like this," she says.

Similarly, Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment (which is a meeting and sales and operations arm of eight Las Vegas properties) recently hosted more than 250 meeting planners in painting and cleaning the interiors of each of the 10 homes at St. Jude's Ranch for Children (which serves abused, abandoned and neglected children and families) during a Las Vegas Educational Experience. This is an annual FAM trip, but this was the first time a CSR project was included in the schedule.

### Naked Table Project

Resorts and hotels are becoming more creative with their CSR options. For instance, the Woodstock Inn & Resort in Woodstock, VT, introduced Meetings With a Mission, a selection of corporate retreat programs. One unusual option is the Naked Table Project, in conjunction with Shackleton-Thomas,

a Vermont-based company located in a 180-year-old mill that specializes in making fine handmade furniture, potteries and accessories.

Corporate groups have the opportunity to assemble tables made from local maple harvested from a sustainably managed forest. Post-construction, participants enjoy a walk through a national historic park with a forester where the group will identify and tag a replacement tree for future growth. Teams can

chest is then donated to the children in the hospital.

All of the Meeting with a Mission programs come with a facilitator, lunch, materials, a group photo, certificate and press release and can be customized based on budget.

Courtney Lowe, director of sales and marketing for Woodstock Inn & Resort, says, "In light of the changes in the meetings world in the last few years, we wanted to come up with something that would help the planner and the person running the meeting to put more value to their programs by accomplishing something else.

Says Lowe, "We are telling planners we are doing this. People are interested in these options, especially the Naked Table, which costs a couple of hundred dollars per participant."



**Kerri Mills**  
Manager  
Marketing Events  
Airline Reporting  
Corporation  
Arlington, VA

*"Local people came out of their homes to thank us and to tell us how much it had meant to them."*

choose to donate the table or tables to a charity of their choice or the inn will assist in choosing one. The table is presented with a certificate and the GPS coordinates of the replacement tree selected.

The property also created Treasure Chest for Kids, specifically designed to benefit The Children's Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD) in New Hampshire. Each team is provided with a story of a CHaD patient, with clues that will lead them on a treasure hunt to help fill a chest with toys, games, books and other gifts. The treasure

### Volunteering

While many companies now incorporate CSR with a donation to a community, it is more of a hurdle to get companies to invest time — and possibly money — into onsite activities. According to Kelly Wood, vice president of global sales at Ritz-Carlton, "In 2009, we had over 21,000 group rooms involved with Meaningful Meetings (which involves a donation, but



Photo courtesy of Ritz-Carlton

Meeting groups are offered a variety of "volunteering" community service opportunities under the Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints umbrella of social responsibility programs.

not activities) — probably representing 10 groups of 200 rooms each. On the other hand, about 4,000 rooms participate in "volunteering" (which involves onsite CSR activities) — it's newer and getting its legs."

Sue Stephenson, vice president, Community Footprints at Ritz-Carlton, says she is "definitely seeing a growing interest in wanting to incorporate some kind of 'giveback' into meetings. Many businesses now have a strong CSR focus and this is a natural extension of that."

Stephenson says Ritz-Carlton incorporates volunteering into all of its own meetings and has been doing so for years. Also, when the brand has client events for meeting planners and travel agents, volunteering is part of the package.

Wood says, "While we have had a lot of success with Meaningful Meetings, volunteering has more moving pieces. Not everyone likes to see their golf and spa go away. As recently as a year or 18 months ago, this conversation was different. A planner might have said that CSR was the responsibility of another department. Then, of course, with the economy and the optics around meetings, companies realized there is an opportunity to do something socially conscious, which adds to teambuilding at the same time. When they realized the hotel could provide without extra costs or time, they became interested."

Ritz-Carlton, says Wood, has become very adept at helping companies incorporate CSR into the meetings. "We can tell them 'Here's a partner who can help you' or 'Here's a hotel program that is easily executed.' On our advisory board, it's always part of the conversation: 'Do you do it? If you do, how do you do it?'" The flexibility in CSR applies to the timing of its planning, according to Wood, who explains, "You can add this element at various points in the cycle. You may not have discussed it throughout the sales process, then a week or month out, you can introduce it."

Despite Ritz-Carlton's proactive role

in CSR, says Wood, "We have always been very careful about marketing it because it can come across as self-serving. We hit it hard on the ground through our sales efforts, and through our conference services teams."

The cost of an onsite CSR program de-

pends on the event, says Stephenson, who adds, "If it's merely connecting a group with a local organization, there is no cost involved. If it means designing something specific with costs to the hotel that will mean an expense for the group — but we do not do this as a profit center." **C&IT**

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Christine Duffy



Michael Gehrisch



Bob Gilbert



Mike McWilliams



Eric Rozenberg



Nancy Zavada

# A Conversation With Industry Leaders

With meetings business picking up in the hotel industry, the astute planner will shift gears and book further out to capitalize on the rates and space currently available. That's the "call to action" of **Christine Duffy**, who was the president and CEO of Fenton, MO-based Maritz Travel Company at the time of this interview last fall. Duffy currently serves as the president of Cruise Lines International Association. She characterizes the strong buyer's market of 2009 and early 2010 as one where "many corporations were bringing their meetings back, but thought that they didn't have to commit early. So we were seeing much short-term activity, companies waiting to see what the quarterly result was going to be and then making a booking decision at the last minute. You were able to get space; there was a lot of supply and great deals," Duffy explains. Now, "that is beginning to dry up. There are still some good values out there, but you've got to make those booking commitments now because (a) it's becoming tougher to find space, and (b) the longer you wait, the more you're going to pay. There is no financial incentive at this point to wait."

There are limits to this strategy, however, as some hoteliers may not want to extend today's relatively low rates years

out, given the expected shift toward a seller's market. "Hotels are typically reluctant to commit to rate too far out unless there is other business connected to the original contract," notes **Robert A. Gilbert**, CHME, CHA, president and CEO of McLean, VA-based Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI). "Committing to a rate too far out is usually good for only one of the two parties." And negotiations should transcend market conditions by emphasizing win-win situations that preserve strong relationships among planners and suppliers.

Hoteliers are increasingly focusing on that approach, observes **Eric Rozenberg**, CMP, CMM, president of Brussels, Belgium-based Swantegy and the 2010-2011 chairman of the MPI international board of directors. "Those hotels that have been in the industry for a while know that it's cyclical, and they're trying to concentrate more on strengthening the long-term relationship that we have with them," Rozenberg says. "It's now more about finding the middle road between the seller's and the buyer's market."

Hoteliers eventually will be "tested" on whether they're really willing to go the extra mile on rates, concessions and contract terms with the weakening of the buyer's market. That's happening slowly overall. For example, there were about 3½ million fewer hotel rooms sold through the end of August than there were during the same periods in 2008 and 2007, cites **Michael D. Gehrisch**, president and CEO of Washington, DC-based Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI). In addition, the current strength of the buyer's market varies depending on the city. "As usual, the primary markets have been the first to experience a strong rebound in group and transient business. Secondary and tertiary markets have not experienced the same rebound," Gilbert says.

And among the primary markets there is also variation in how quickly the pendulum is swinging back. "The hotels are still finding it difficult to raise their room rates in most destinations, but that's a little different in markets like Miami, New York City and DC, where they've been out to really accelerate their room rates

quite a bit," says Gehrisch. The supply-to-demand ratio is less favorable in first-tier cities such as Orlando and Las Vegas, with several major properties coming online or expanding in recent years. In general, "there is still a lot of supply to be absorbed before we can categorize the environment as a seller's market," says Gilbert. That supply won't continue to expand for a few years, however. "New product starting in development now will not come on line until 2013 and 2014," he says.

## The Value of Incentives

Many companies also continued to see the value of incentives, even during the height of the recession and AIG syndrome. Rozenberg, who notes that 80 percent of Swantegy's business is incentive travel, says, "Companies that do incentive travel have obviously been concerned with price and perception, but what we've seen is that those that were really using incentive travel kept on doing it." And with today's lean work forces, motivating top performance is vital. "Many people have been laid off in companies, and they're saying that those who stay in the company are the best, the most critical for the success of the company. How do you motivate them? How do you retain them? How do you make sure that they understand the vision of the company and their role in that vision?" says Rozenberg. "Incentive travel is an incredible tool for that."

Duffy has observed an increase in international incentive programs, which is always a sign of healthier budgets

for those events. "Europe is still suffering, and some of that is related to how weak the dollar is. But places like Buenos Aires, Mexico, Bali and even Asia, though you've got higher airfares, are still good values," she says. "Because many people

***"Those who stay in the company are the best, the most critical for the success of the company. How do you motivate them?...retain them? Incentive travel is an incredible tool for that."***

**Eric Rozenberg**, CMP, CMM  
MPI International Board Chairman  
President, Swantegy  
Brussels, Belgium

haven't yet been to China, and with the understanding that more and more business is being done there, corporations are trying to get their people there to better understand how critically important the China market is to our own economy," Duffy argues. "We've seen one U.S.-based company that took all their top leaders to China for a week. They wanted their headquarters people to really be immersed and understand how that culture operates and build some relationships that you just don't get on the phone or through WebEx." Gehrisch concurs: "Asia didn't get hit nearly as hard in the corporate side of

the business, so you'll see a lot of incentive business in markets like Hong Kong and Thailand."

Gehrisch adds that he is not aware of any destination marketing organization (DMO) that's cut back on its marketing efforts due to the economic downturn. "They might have cut back on some of the administrative areas, frozen wages and pension contributions. But they've stuck to the very essence of what they do, and in some cases stepped it up," he says. The DMAI itself has launched virtual initiatives to make it easier for planners to work with DMOs and find destinations. "We put together a social media blog, [meetingplanningpartners.com](http://meetingplanningpartners.com), and we also have a LinkedIn site for CVBs and meeting planners to answer questions," he notes. DMOs are often incorporating TripAdvisor into their sites, and utilizing YouTube, which is "viral as far as getting videos out there," he says.

## Social Media Tools

On the buyer's side, **Mike McWilliams**, director of strategic planning for Plymouth, MN-based Carlson Marketing Worldwide, has observed many companies utilizing YouTube to distribute meetings-related content "as long as the material is for general consumption." Apart from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, McWilliams sees some growth and usage of "second tier" social media such as Foursquare (a location-based social networking tool), TripIt (TripIt Groups facilitates tracking plane

By George Seli



schedules when attendees are booked on different flights, as well as attendees sharing travel plans among themselves), and Jive and Yammer (social media tools geared toward businesses).

For McWilliams, these tools aren't just about content delivery and exchange; they're also valuable for tracking and improving ROI for a face-to-face event. "Any type of delivery mechanism — mobile, virtual, social — can really act as a Trojan horse for data collection, and then you can use that to make the live experience more relevant and rich for participants," he says. "And we advocate tracking, measuring and leveraging data for strategy during every step of the hybrid events. But we see the majority of our clients just measure clicks or simply measure to determine whether the options were utilized. When you really start to measure things like relationship strength as a result and start to consider impact on sales, awareness, retention, then you're really measuring effectiveness. We see a lot of the first, we don't see a lot of the second. Many of our clients are putting money into measurement, but are not kind of drilling down into each of the categories as effectively."

### Face-to-Face Meetings

In contrast, measuring the ROI of face-to-face interaction has even been pursued scientifically. For example, Maritz Travel and the Maritz Institute recently collaborated with the Cornell Center for Hospitality Research on neuroscience research showing that attention, emotion and networking are all positively impacted by meeting in-person. "A year ago we were predicting that we would see many more face-to-face meetings replaced with virtual technology, and I'm happy to report that that is not at all what we see," says Duffy. "What we really are seeing is that virtual technology enables the face-to-face event to have content reach people that perhaps never would have been invited or had access to the content delivered at a face-to-face meeting." In a way, the increased popularity of the hybrid

meeting is a nod to the value of keeping the face-to-face component. "Obviously 2009 was a big one for virtual, but we saw that pendulum swing back to hybrid," says McWilliams. "If live was on the right, we swung hard left in 2009 and now we're kind of in the middle in 2010." In some companies, there may be resistance from upper management to reinstating face-to-face, notes Duffy. "The CFO is saying, 'Look at how much money we saved by canceling all these [live] events last year. Why do we need to bring them back? We

***"Any type of delivery mechanism — mobile, virtual, social — can act as a Trojan horse for data collection. ...use that to make the live experience more relevant and rich."***

**Mike McWilliams**

Director of Strategic Planning  
Carlson Marketing Worldwide  
Plymouth, MN

still did OK.' What they're not understanding is that the implications of events you canceled last year may not be seen for two more years, because you've not engaged your people and retained your top performers, particularly as we look at incentive travel programs and retaining that top talent in the organization and keeping that connection."

### Green and CSR

Hybrid meetings are also more eco-friendly, given that they avoid a certain amount of air and ground travel. It's one example of how greening an event can actually save money. Green initiatives may have taken a back seat in priority during the recession, "but what has really happened is those strategies have become and are cost-saving strategies," says **Nancy J. Zavada**, CMP, principal of Portland, OR-based MeetGreen. "So eliminating hand-

outs, using public transportation, eliminating water bottles, etc., all save money. I think it has gone more mainstream, and the green strategies that are really being adopted are the ones that are saving money. There are of course things that you can do that are more costly, such as serving all organic food, but you don't have to do 100 percent organic. You can negotiate to do the first 30 percent for the same cost. You also have to be careful of the vendors who are upcharging for green, their green package costs more."

**Roger Simons**, CMP, MPI's manager of CSR and sustainable events, notes another reason for the endurance of green meetings and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in general in recent years. "There was a natural downturn in meetings during the recession, but CSR is nonetheless increasingly important, especially when there is such a spotlight on ethical behavior due to major corporate crashes during the financial meltdown and other factors such as major notable environmental disasters," he explained. "CSR is not a trend; it's an exponential growth area that is only getting more important in today's business environment. What we are seeing is more and more organizations factoring in sustainability in their decision-making when choosing suppliers, but it's not necessarily the No. 1 priority."

Zavada concurs with the idea that public perception is a major motivator in this sphere. "Many Fortune 500 companies have to adopt a CSR policy because of their corporate image. It's the more visible corporations right now, but the more visible ones are the bigger ones with the larger buying power that are driving the hotel chains and the smaller vendors."

Similarly, in Simon's view, "What's good for major corporations is good for corporations that aspire to be major. CSR makes both business sense and moral sense, and in many cases we've seen many smaller organizations with strong CSR commitments being bought up by major brands. I don't think it's a matter of only one sector of business taking it seri-

ously; it's a worldwide and cross-industry growth area."

For instance, Simon points to the continuing rapid growth of the U.N. Global Compact. "With over 8,700 corporate participants and other stakeholders from over 130 countries, it is the largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative in the world."

According to Simon, "Thinking is constantly evolving how best to implement best practices" on CSR initiatives. "For example, at our recent World Education Congress in Vancouver, the caterer served iced water out of huge glass pitchers filled with different fresh fruits, lemons, apples, etc. Not only was this a beautiful centerpiece, but a completely sustainable way of serving flavored water. I've also seen a map of the local area around a destination detailing where every product served at a meal was sourced from. It's an excellent example of telling the story effectively."

Zavada highlights other details that represent careful thinking on green practices: "Signage is a huge thing. If it can't be reused, then print it on a more environmentally friendly material. Consider also the scheduling for shuttles. You have to put them a quarter mile out so you're not picking up people from right around the corner, which you find all the time."

However, carbon offsetting is not a "best practice," in Simon's estimation. "Carbon offsetting unfortunately is one of the most popular initiatives in green meetings because it's the easiest to implement. But it should be the last resort," he says. "When attempting to green your meeting, consideration should be given first to reduction, reuse and recycling on-site. This is the only way we'll reduce our impact on the environment."

The great variety of practices available makes the "greenness" of an event a matter of degree, but industry standards are currently being developed by the Convention Industry Council's APEX initiative and ASTM International. "I'm really looking forward to the standards coming out so that everybody will have

an agreement on what a green meeting is," says Zavada. "There are folks that are recycling and not using handouts that have decided that their meetings are green, and they're done. There's nothing wrong with what they're doing, but there's still more that can be done."

With regard to CSR standards, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has developed "wide-ranging guidelines for companies to disclose around their CSR efforts," says Simon. "What's being created is a significant international consensus-

***"There are folks that are recycling and not using handouts that have decided that their meetings are green, and they're done. ...But there's still more that can be done."***

**Nancy J. Zavada, CMP**

Principal  
Meet Green  
Portland, OR

based sustainability initiative for our industry: the GRI Event Sector Supplement, which is specifically for events, be they sporting or business focused. This is being developed with the consultation of many prominent organizations such as the International Olympics Committee and United Nations Environment Programme.

MPI is the only global meeting association at the heart of this leading initiative and represented on the official Advisory Group to GRI. The reporting framework around the environment, society, product responsibility, sourcing and legacy is due to be delivered September/October 2011."

### SMMP

CSR practices also can be implemented as part of a strategic meetings management program (SMMP). For example, a preferred supplier list can favor hotels with green designations such as LEED and

EnergyStar. In fact, large corporations are more likely to both have an SMMP in place, due to their high volume of meetings, and practice CSR, due to their greater visibility. "SMM started back in the early '90s in the pharmaceutical industry because of all the compliance and regulatory issues they were having around physician-attended meetings and physician medical education. But now there is more of an interest in SMM by larger corporations beyond the pharmaceutical," says Duffy. "Financial services, technology, telecommunications and more kinds of corporations are embracing the principles of SMM, which does include a focus on leveraging spend, operating with transparency, mitigating risks and negotiating on behalf of the company."

But we are also including in that a discussion with customers in the sales and marketing organization, because that is typically where the budgets are held for many of these programs, on what are you trying to accomplish. Let's talk about what kind of a meeting or event or incentive trip you should be having, and in some cases maybe you shouldn't have a meeting at all, you don't need a face-to-face. And what should be the design of the meeting? Should we be doing a national large meeting or should we be considering regional? Ultimately, there should be that filter" as part of the SMMP.

Planners should ideally be prepared to be part of that strategic discussion, one that ensures that only those events likely to bring a strong ROI pass to the execution stage. "I think the most important thing that all of us in the meeting and event industry have to learn is to speak the language of business," says Rozenberg. "That means understanding why the organization is staging the meeting. The senior planner in the organization needs to justify why they're doing it and how it fits into the strategy of the organization. To me, learning to speak the language of business is the most essential skill we'll have to learn, not only for next year, but for the rest of our lives." **C&IT**



# Local and Sustainable

The Global F&B Movement That's Here to Stay

Photo courtesy of Stanwood Hotels & Resorts



By Stella Johnson

*F*ood makes meetings memorable, and coordinating the various food and beverage segments of a corporate event these days is no small culinary achievement. Consequently, the food and beverage component of a meeting, from breakfast to dinner, and from receptions to refreshment breaks, can make or break the event.

But, while most people ponder whether to stick with the tasty food options from the “healthful eating” column such as honey-crusted salmon surrounded by julienne carrots or more traditional fare such as Southern-fried chicken or marbled prime rib, the fastest growing trend in the industry today is a global sustainability movement that includes a wide range of sustainability initiatives and practices that have permeated most areas of the meeting planning process in the past few years.

According to Carol Galle, CMP, co-founder of Detroit-based Special D Events, sustainability in all its forms has taken on far greater importance with many of her Fortune 500 clients, which include such corporate icons as Texas Instruments. Galle, who was formerly a meeting planner for General Motors, says, “After nearly 20 years since founding my own company, the biggest trend we are witnessing is the one towards the demand for locally grown foods. Fortunately, not only are our clients asking for it upfront, but most of the caterers, hotels and other vendors that we work with are already ahead of the game. When I prepare to open that discussion, they are already ready with a variety of suggestions from the outset.”

For example, for a recent corporate event, Special D worked with the convention center to design a menu that featured only locally grown ingredients and arranged for simple wheatgrass centerpieces for the tables.

Experts including Brad Goodsell,

## 10 Ways to Enhance Attendee Alertness



SULLIVAN

According to Andrea E. Sullivan, president of BrainStrength Systems, how fully we experience our personal life and the many events that mark our professional life is highly dependent on the foods we eat. Sullivan says that while some foods increase human alertness and ability to focus, others create a feeling of sluggishness, which may hinder how clearly we think and process information.

“All planners want attendees to be alert, energized and more engaged,” Sullivan says, “and food is an excellent tool to use in those efforts to produce effective, more memorable meetings. Design menus that help support attendees at being their best throughout an entire conference.”

Sullivan, a speaker, trainer, manager, consultant and coach, will address the subject in depth at the International Association of Conference Centres-Americas 30th Annual Conference March 23–25, 2011, at The National Conference Center, Leesburg, VA.

- 1. Avoid Brain Fog.** White flour and sugar have an effect on the mind that we in the business call brain fog. At breakfast, cut down on bagels and Danish pastries while providing alternatives like whole-grain breads, yogurt, granola, hard-boiled eggs and energy bars.
- 2. Incorporate Protein.** The balance of protein to carbohydrate is a primary determinant of whether the brain perks up or slows down. High-protein, low-carbohydrate foods perk up the brain (seafood, lean meats, soy and dairy); while, in comparison, higher-carbohydrate, lower-protein foods relax the brain (pasta, potatoes and rice). Avoid starchy lunches, too.
- 3. Minimize Slump.** Minimize the afternoon slump by providing plant-based enzymes to counteract fatigue. Consider including bananas, pineapples, mangos or avocados for afternoon breaks.
- 4. Add Choline.** It is known to support our neurotransmitters, the brain's messengers, which carry signals from one brain cell to another. It is easily provided in peanuts, eggs, soybeans and flax.
- 5. Go Blue.** Blueberries trigger neural pathways to enhance cognition and mental processing speed. They've been shown to actually reverse brain cell damage, short-term memory loss and the effects of long-term stress. Provide them in salads or as a topping for ice cream or yogurt.
- 6. Replace B Vitamins.** Avocados are rich in oleic acid, which helps to build myelin, the neuronal sheath that speeds up information processing in the brain. They've also been shown to increase oxygen to the brain, replace B vitamins depleted by stress, and they contain plant enzymes that counteract fatigue. Add them to salads or provide fresh guacamole and healthful chips that are low in sodium and fat as a popular snack.
- 7. Buy Seasonal, Local Foods.** They're good for the environment and for our brains. They are also fresher and maintain more nutrients.
- 8. Bring on the Chocolate.** Dark chocolate is not only a healthful choice but it's also been shown to improve mental performance. Dark chocolate is rich in antioxidants and boosts levels of serotonin and endorphins, the “feel good” chemicals in the brain.
- 9. Increase Serotonin.** Whole-wheat bread will improve mood more than a candy. That's because complex carbohydrates increase serotonin levels — that wonderful neurotransmitter that lifts us up and provides a sense of peace.
- 10. Keep Hydrated.** There is nothing more vital to our energy and mental clarity than a well-hydrated brain and body. Provide abundant water and encourage participants to drink it.

— SJ



president of Chicago-based Executive Travel Directors, and Hillary Bessiere, director of business development of Kansas City, MO-based Bishop McCann, share Galle's point of view.

Goodsell, for instance, says that the company is definitely seeing "an uptick in planners buying into the idea of using only local and seasonal ingredients whenever and wherever possible." He says, "This not only saves on costs but also showcases the environment in which the meeting is being held. At one recent corporate event, not only were local and seasonal ingredients utilized in all menus, but the group went one step further by adding a description card next to each dish saying where the ingredients came from and why it was chosen for the meeting. Extra touches like that educates attendees and make them feel they are getting something special, too."

Bessiere, whose clients are also into sustainability in a big way, recently coordinated a reception for a group of



***"(There's) an uptick in planners buying into the idea of using only local and seasonal ingredients. This not only saves on costs but also showcases the environment in which the meeting is being held."***

**Brad Goodsell**, President  
Executive Travel Directors, Chicago, IL

pharmaceutical reps that had attendees buzzing: "The hotel served wedges of pecorino cheese drizzled with honey that was actually taken from beehives on top of the roof, explains Bessiere. "The chef displayed the active beehives under a glass case at the reception, which really created an interaction among the attendees as the chef discussed the story behind the beehives."

#### **Bacon Is Back!**

Perhaps it's a direct correlation to the anxious times we now live in but an-

other hot trend is the return to comfort foods at corporate events.

Bibby Gignilliat, CEO of San Francisco-headquartered Parties That Cook, a culinary event company with three offices that stages corporate teambuilding events, cooking classes and cooking parties, says comfort foods such as sweet and savory pot pies and crushed-cornflake fried chicken are becoming increasingly popular at corporate meetings.

And while it might raise the eyebrows of the strictly yogurt-and-fruit

crowd, Gignilliat also claims that bacon is making a respectable comeback, and the company uses it regularly in such dishes as "pork tenderloin served with bacon jam," among other rich and savory favorites.

"That's because people want big," exclaims Nick Elliott, director of operations at Paradise Catering, a 25-year-old organic caterer, located in Carmel Valley, CA. Elliott believes that this re-emergence of comfort foods at business events is in direct correlation with the return of corporate business. "Comfort

food is back. The days of small salads and dainty hors d'oeuvres are over and have been replaced with BBQ ribs instead," observes Elliott.

"For example, a standout example in my mind involves a series of events we recently catered for a large foreign auto manufacturer at our local racetrack in Monterey. This was a portfolio of very high-end engagements, encompassing breakfast, lunch and dinner, and it spanned a period of several fall weekends, too," he adds. "The attendees were a diverse group of racing enthusiasts

***"Comfort food is back. The days of small salads and dainty hors d'oeuvres are over and have been replaced with BBQ ribs instead."***

**Nick Elliott**, Director of Operations  
Paradise Catering, Carmel Valley, CA



who loved to eat and drink. While some started the day with light fare like Greek yogurt and granola, most of them headed for heartier dishes like frittata and French toast smothered with butter and maple syrup."

According to Elliott, lunch for this international-style event included beef or chicken dishes with starchy sides and tasty desserts but dinner was the real highlight of the day: "It was both fun and ethnic. Everything was German fare with such delights as sauerbraten, sausage and warm potato salad," says Elliott. "German beer poured during the dinner while German chocolate cake and other tempting desserts reigned at the end the evening."

Photo courtesy of Hyatt Hotels and Resorts



BUTCHER



SCALISE

## ***Farm to Table Is Hot, Hot, Hot!***

A corporate dinner or reception is destined for glory with Mark Butcher and David Scalise working behind the scenes and in and out of the kitchen. Butcher is director of food and beverage and Scalise is executive chef at Sawgrass Golf Resort & Spa, A Marriott Resort, located in Ponte Vedra, FL. Here are their thoughts on what's hot in the food and beverage arena.

Sawgrass Golf Resort & Spa, A Marriott Resort was the selected site for a "farm-to-table" fund-raising dinner for a local food network.

#### **C&IT: What was the dinner about?**

**Butcher:** The event incorporated our new sustainable menu that includes selections from both local and regional farmers and artisans such as heirloom fruits and vegetables, locally caught seafood, specialty cheeses and dry-aged beef.

#### **C&IT: What are the logistics involved in bringing all those elements together?**

**Butcher:** Partnering with nearby farms, or as near as possible, such as Anson Mills (SC), a grower that actually "keeps alive" true Southern ingredients that were available at the turn of the century by harvesting and selling a number of heirloom varieties of such grains as corn, wheat and rice. Another one is Twinn Bridges, a nearby farm that delivers to us their specialty cheeses in a truck that is powered by recycled vegetable oil.

#### **C&IT: Are you "the man behind the plan?"**

**Butcher:** No, while I'm responsible for all food and beverage operations at the resort, as well as possible menu decisions and online discussion about wine, beverage and food, the sustainable-oriented menu was actually designed by our executive chef David Scalise, and our chef de cuisine Brett Smith.

#### **C&IT: What food trends have you identified at the resort?**

**Scalise:** We're doing just about everything from comfort foods to small plates, and from tastings to buffets. We're also implementing food operations that are more streamlined in terms of sustainable packaging of the event. And, small nearby farms cannot keep up with demand. There's one grower of lettuce that we've contracted with on an exclusive basis and we'll buy as much as he can grow. As a chef, I can tell you that there's a big difference in taste from a food item that's been stored in a warehouse before it reaches us, and one that comes directly to us from a nearby farmer.

#### **C&IT: How economically stressed are corporate budgets for food functions, if at all?**

**Scalise:** Everybody is on tight budget these days, and we try to be as creative as we can. We can take a standardized menu and customize it to the client's needs.

**Butcher:** Yes, instead of a five- or six-course meal, groups might only be able to afford three courses that include a salad, main entrée and dessert, and we work around that. We can use the banquet menu as a guide but, remember, people still want the "wow factor" on any budget, and we try to provide that.

#### **C&IT: Final comments?**

**Scalise:** I'd finalize by saying clients are requesting carving stations where food can be cut and cooked to order more than straight buffet tables; and each station may only feature one item from roast beef to heirloom tomatoes. Also, customers are getting into specialty salts and olive oils.

**Butcher:** People are becoming more educated and want to know not only where the food comes from but how it was raised. For instance, if we serve chicken, clients may ask if any growth hormones were used and were the chickens free range. I believe the difference is that trends come and go but sustainability is here to stay, both here at the resort, in restaurants and supermarkets.

— SJ



## Less Is More

The return of comfort foods to corporate menu planning doesn't dismiss the "less is more" philosophy that's dominated the food industry over the past several years. For instance, while Gignilliat passionately sings the praises of the realm of rich and savory foods that we all love so much, she also reminds us that, "Rather than a sit-down meal, sometimes event planners choose menus of small plates or tapas that represent cuisines from around the world, which can be passed around or served at a buffet. Popular items we list include Vietnamese Pork Meatball Bahn Mi Sandwiches, Little Fish Tacos and Spanish Albondigas — meatballs in almond, garlic and parsley sauce."

Likewise, Goodsell says many of his

meetings and events, whether it's to save on inches at the waistline or dollars at the bottom line, make great sense for Kate Paul, owner, catering and creative director at Los Angeles-based Foodink Catering. Paul affirms that a "small-bite" event is a cost-effective alternative for her many clients such as Victoria's Secret, The Limited, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Qantas.

Paul presents a custom, luxe menu of specialty appetizers for the guests who are invited to the canapé bar to watch as the chefs prepare them. Later on, they pass the appetizers around to the attendees. Paul says a popular item



Photo courtesy of Hyatt Hotels and Resorts

corporate teambuilding events, Gignilliat says, "We have staged several events for Facebook and always they choose Kitchen Challenge (a concept borrowed from the popular "Iron Chef America" show televised on the Food Network).

"With our professional chefs as culinary coaches, each Facebook team slices and dices to create a meal from a predetermined protein, vegetable and starch. Strategy, delegation of tasks and efficient communication were all crucial for the big win. The Facebook team that whipped up the best entrée won a prize based on presentation, teamwork and taste. Then, all Facebook participants sat down to eat a meal garnished with camaraderie," explains Gignilliat.

On another occasion, Parties That Cook hosted an event for 40 Japanese businessmen in a private home. As he recalls, "On the night of the event, the businessmen timidly arrived, one by one. Keep in mind that many of them had never cooked before, let alone in their non-native language. You

can imagine how anxious I felt when I asked, 'Who's excited to cook?' and no one raised a hand.

"After I gave a lively interactive demonstration, I divided the men into teams. Within minutes, they approached me, covered in flour from making shortcakes saying, 'Chef, give me another project.' By the time they sat down to dinner, the decibel level had gone from zero to 10, says Gignilliat. Then, two weeks after the event, the host contacted Gignilliat and said, 'Bibby, the cooking party was the highlight of their two-week stay in San Francisco.'

"I knew then that I had a great concept — bringing people together with the universal language of food," reveals Gignilliat. **C&IT**

## Food Teambuilding Events

Parties That Cook boasts an impressive client list including Facebook, Google, Apple and PayPal. One of the first to successfully pair cooking classes with



Photo courtesy of Hyatt Hotels and Resorts

***"The biggest trend we are witnessing is the one towards the demand for locally grown foods. Not only are our clients asking for it...but most of the caterers, hotels and vendors... are already ahead of the game."***

**Carol Galle, CMP, President**  
Special D Events, Royal Oak, MI

clients shift their first night's welcome reception to a later point in the evening so that they can serve small bites or dessert only — a much more cost-effective, yet viable option. "With a later welcome reception time on the first night, attendees know to come with fuller stomachs," he notes. "And, we're finding dessert-only buffets are becoming popular with the awards section of the agenda, too."

Downsized portions at business

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# Taking Meetings Seriously

## Why Business Is Better Than Ever at Purpose-Built Properties

Misfortune for some sectors of the economy in the past few years led to a mini-boom for conference centers. And many of them have not only survived during the recession, but flourished, building their business in the process.

"The Fall of 2008 was certainly a painful catharsis for all of us in this industry," says Bob Nelson, general manager of the Wyndham Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center in Glen Allen, VA. "First there was the AIG Effect. Then the collapse of Lehman Brothers...and pretty much the rest of the economy with it. But, interestingly, those events

actually served to spark increased interest in conference centers. Many corporations began shunning meeting venues with more-glamorous images, for fear of public perception." Case in point: The Wyndham Virginia Crossings has been seeing 1.1 percent year-to-year increases.

### Upward Trend

Tom Bolman, executive vice president of the International Association of Conference Centres (IACC), says that meetings business at conference centers is projected to increase by 3-5 percent this year and 5-7 percent for 2012.

Nonetheless, Bolman explains, the recession has created some changes that may be permanent, among them more regional meetings, where attendees can drive in.

"And we're seeing the disappearance of some of the old misperceptions," he says. "Conference centers were once considered sterile and institutional. Today, though, they tend to have a full array of amenities and fine dining onsite. And they now run the gamut from smaller retreats that cater to one group at a time to conference resorts that include golf and spa services.

"And," he adds, "we're seeing a recognition by corporate planners that each center has a person dedicated solely to your meeting, who can really relieve the burden — and the stress — on the planner."

The transformation of the old economic order gave conference centers a golden opportunity to shine the spotlight on what they've always done best — facilitate serious meetings. "Conference centers sell a product that's specifically designed to ensure maximum performance at meetings," Nelson says. "These facilities have one core objective — to stage successful meetings, generally for groups of between 25 and 400 people. And we're giving certain types of planners an experience that they might have a hard time matching elsewhere."

One of the areas in which these centers excels is corporate training programs. Indeed, this is the core business for many of them. And everything in the facility — from the physical plant to the furniture and lighting and food — is built for meetings.

"You won't be sitting in a banquet chair for eight hours in a conference center," Nelson says. "You'll be sitting in a comfortable ergonomic chair...a chair that's intended to keep you refreshed and alert all day long. And you won't have ballroom lighting; you'll have lighting that's intended to enhance a serious business meeting — and, often, you'll have large windows, because an open feel encourages more creative thinking."

In addition, the furniture and room setups at these centers are also ergonomically designed, to improve productivity and enhance results.

Virginia Crossings has more than 23,000 sf of IACC-approved meeting space, along with 183 guest rooms for attendees.

### Purpose-Built

Eric Whitson agrees with Bob Nelson's assessments. Whitson is di-

rector of sales and marketing at The National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA, which will be hosting the IACC Americas Annual Conference March 23-25. Whitson represents one of the country's largest conference centers,



**Tom Bolman**, Executive Vice President  
International Association of Conference Centres, St. Louis, MO

with 265,000 sf of IACC-approved conference space, 250 meeting rooms and 917 guest rooms. Although the facility specializes in training meetings for corporate, governmental and non-profit entities, its size affords it the versatility to host a wide variety of meetings.

"Because we're purpose-built," Whitson says, "we can focus on the things that are most important to corporate planners. IT infrastructure, for example: We've got extensive bandwidth availability here, so we can train hundreds of people at the same time. The ability to be connected by wireless is a growing trend in our field."

Conference centers are generally asked by planners if they have dedicated staff for technological aspects, and the answer is almost always "yes." In addition, the emerging trend toward hybrid meetings — in which meeting content is delivered virtually to complement the face-to-face event — is resulting in conference centers spending a lot of time and money to ensure that such meetings run smoothly.

"Certainly, there will always be a need for face-to-face meetings," Whitson says. "But, with companies watching their ex-

penditures so carefully these days, hybrid meetings are a growing trend. Also, you need to have the most up-to-date audio-visual and presentation technology. And, in order to meet the needs of planners in these areas, conference

*"Conference centers were once considered sterile and institutional. Today, though, they tend to have a full array of amenities and fine dining onsite. And they now run the gamut from smaller retreats that cater to one group at a time to conference resorts that include golf and spa."*

centers are staying a step ahead of the technological curve."

To meet high-tech expectations, conference centers now have large-screen plasmas, plug-in access to all audio-visual sources, surround sound, higher bandwidth, greater attendee-interface capability, and PDA and iPhone applications. And some are even working on



*"Because we're purpose-built, we can focus on the things that are most important to corporate planners."*

**Eric Whitson**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
National Conference Center  
Leesburg, VA

iPad tools for planners, incorporating items such as information on the conference center, contact lists, etc. that they can carry with them.

In fact, in order to carve out a larger niche in the meetings arena, IACC's more than 300-member conference centers adhere to a strict 39-point set of standards,

*"Conference centers sell a product that's specifically designed to ensure maximum performance at meetings."*

**Bob Nelson**  
General Manager  
Wyndham Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center  
Glen Allen, VA



By Steve Winston



covering everything from providing dedicated, single-purpose conference space, which must represent a minimum of 60 percent of meeting space based on net area, to the aforementioned ergonomics and technology to F&B, guest room work areas and green initiatives. IACC has a Code of Sustainability, and members must develop actionable green initiatives...and must show the results. (For more criteria, visit [iacconline.org](http://iacconline.org).)

### Green Expectations

Dolce Hotels & Resorts, headquartered in Rockleigh, NJ, is one of the leaders in purpose-built conference centers, hosting 30,000 meetings and 4 million group clients every year. Paul Dolce is the vice president of conference centers, and a son of the company's founder and chairman.

"'Green' is no longer a request, where meeting planners are concerned, it's now an expectation," Dolce says. "We're trying to be a leader in this area. We conserve water by encouraging our clients to forgo the daily washing of their towels and linens. We use water dispensers rather than plastic bottles. And we try to work with our clients in finding ways to use less paper, by emphasizing a technological approach to communications materials."

Dolce says that the company is also approaching F&B from a new perspective. It's moving away from the typical chip- and snack-filled coffee breaks. For one thing — as in all conference centers — there's no such thing as a "coffee break." Instead, there's a manned refreshment center that stays open all day long. The company is actively promoting fresh local ingredients in both its refreshment centers and its meals. It's getting away from heavy foods and sauces that leave many people feeling too full and a bit lethargic.

"Our centers are located in interesting places around the country," says Dolce, "and these places should reflect the local cuisine. For example, at the Bolger Center,

in Maryland, we might serve Maryland crabcakes; in Boston it might be chowder. We're trying to get away from the one-size-fits-all concept, because different clients deserve different choices.



"Business meetings should be serving health-

***"In a conference center, the entire staff is there for only one reason — to give the client a professional, productive, unique meeting experience. Meetings are the only thing we do."***

**Ted Davis**, Senior V.P. of Sales and Marketing  
Benchmark Hospitality International, The Woodlands, TX

ier food choices," Dolce adds. "Just because you're at a meeting doesn't mean you have to gain five pounds."

### CMP Solution

One thing that differentiates dedicated conference centers from other meeting facilities is that they offer a CMP — Complete Meeting Package. The CMP concept is part of IACC's standards. In this system, you receive one soup-to-nuts price for your meeting, rather than an à la carte menu of assorted extras. This relieves planners of one of the most onerous aspects of planning the meeting: the need to build in extra space in the budget for unforeseen circumstances. It addresses all conceivable expenses in one plan; you don't pay extra for F&B changes or meeting-room changes or technology assistance. For some time, there was a common misperception about CMP — that there was no flexibility, and that the prices may have leaned toward the higher side.

"In fact, the truth is directly opposite," says Ted Davis, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Benchmark Hospitality International, which has 35 private and public conference centers,

hotels and resorts. "There's actually a great value proposition to this concept, with a lot more choices than before. For example, refreshment stations are open as long as the meeting goes on. There's now a great deal of flexibility with meals, and with menus; we can accommodate

most dietary considerations. And there are no budgetary surprises. You know ahead of time what you'll be paying. And that's very important to planners — and to companies — these days."

Bolman adds, "Even with the Complete Meeting Package, it's still possible to stretch your budget. You can find 'hot dates' when conference centers offer lower and more-flexible pricing. You can ask the center to customize a package specifically for your needs. You can hold multiple meetings at the same conference center. And it's still possible to negotiate some extras, such as Internet access in the guest rooms, etc."

### Resort-Style Amenities

Davis also addresses another outdat-



***"'Green' is no longer a request, where meeting planners are concerned, it's now an expectation."***

**Paul Dolce**  
Vice President of Conference Centers  
Dolce Hotels & Resorts, Potomac, MD

ed misperception: that meeting centers are only for training purposes. He notes that Benchmark's centers are seeing an increase in teambuilding activities, as well as in incentive events. And most of the company's meeting centers are full-service facilities, with amenities such as golf, recreational activities, spas and bowling alleys.

"In a conference center," Davis says, "the entire staff is there for only one reason — to give the client a professional, productive, unique meeting experience.

for every aspect of the meeting, and she says that the CMP package offered her great value and plenty of flexibility.

"They handled all the things you'd expect them to handle," Cassaro says, "such as the training sessions and meetings. But they also handled our talent show and our networking event flawlessly."

Mike Adams is global meetings director of the huge multinational advanced technology company Lockheed Martin. He's used conference centers ranging from The National Conference Center to

***"At Lockheed Martin, we're focused on the lowest investment with the highest impact. Our meetings have to pass the 'press test,' and no one in the media's going to criticize you for meeting in a conference center."***



**Mike Adams**, Global Meetings Manager  
Lockheed Martin, Bethesda, MD

Meetings are the only thing we do. And, because of that, we do them exceptionally well. That's not only our core expertise, it's our only expertise."

### Conference Center Converts

Barbara Cassaro is owner of Canton, GA-based Meeting Perfection Inc., which plans corporate meetings and incentive events for clients nationwide. She's planned several meetings at The National Conference Center, which is 45 minutes from Washington, DC. She recently planned a 600-attendee sales conference there for an international technology company. And she's now a devotee of conference-center meetings.

"In today's economy," she says, "places like The National Conference Center provide a cost-effective way of meeting face-to-face, not just for the bottom line, but also for public perception. And the cost-effective aspect was especially true for a large group like ours."

Cassaro used the center's planners

The Marriott Inn & Conference Center at the University of Maryland to the Airlie Center in Warrenton, VA. He says that conference centers often win business precisely because of their affordability.

"Affordability is very important to companies today, and conference centers 'get it,'" Adams notes. "And because you have one specific person there as your point of contact, communication is much smoother and much faster. They know what you're trying to accomplish. We always have a high ROI when we use these centers. And they're consistent with our concern with public perception.

"At Lockheed Martin," he adds, "we're focused on the lowest investment with the highest impact. Our meetings have to pass the 'press test,' and no one in the media's going to criticize you for meeting in a conference center."

The DoubleTree Hotel & Executive Meeting Center, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, has the best of both worlds: a cut-

ting-edge IACC-approved meeting center and staff, and the sunshine of Florida right outside the door. One of its clients is Oasis Outsourcing, a West Palm Beach, FL, firm that takes over administrative functions for a variety of corporate clients. Oasis uses the DoubleTree Center frequently for its sales training meetings, its most recent taking place in November (30 participants).

"One thing you'll notice about conference centers is that there's usually a lot of whiteboard around the room,"

says Larry Doiron, director of sales training for Oasis. "You're not limited to a single blackboard. And they have expert meeting facilitators. The most effective meetings are those that become, in the attendees' minds, 'events.' And, because everything is taken care of — the lighting, the acoustics, the furniture, the floor plans — that's exactly what you have at these centers."

Jean Risimini agrees. Risimini is manager of meetings and conventions with Meda Pharmaceuticals, a Swedish company with U.S. headquarters in Somerset, NJ, and Marietta, GA. She held a training meeting in December at the DoubleTree Hotel & Executive Meeting Center Somerset (NJ). She says that some planners are still reluctant to use conference centers, because of the lingering misperception that it's more expensive. However, she notes, when you add up all the extras you receive for one set price — from printing name tags to manning your reception center — it's actually a good value. And she adds that it's very easy to address last-minute issues at conference centers, because they've already planned for every contingency.

"I've been using these centers for many years," Risimini says. "And in this day and age, when so few of us are doing so much, I'm surprised that everyone's not trying them."

**C&IT**





HOY



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ENGLUND

The Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau has named Vicki Lemasters as account executive in the bureau's North office. She was senior sales manager at the St. Anthony Hotel, San Antonio, TX.

Millennium Hotels & Resorts has named **Daniel J. Dolce** as vice president of sales for the U.S. region. He was vice president of global sales at Dolce Hotels and Resorts.

Visit Newport Beach, Newport Beach, CA, has named **Lori Hoy** as national sales manager, representing the San Diego, Arizona, Texas and Southeastern markets. She was senior sales manager at Radisson Hotel Newport Beach.

**Ishmael Kolthoff**, CMP, was named director of sales for the Puerto Rico Convention Center (PRCC), based in New York and responsible for Northeast and Northwest markets. He formerly served the PRCC from 2001–2007, and most recently represented the Aruba Convention Bureau to the group and meetings markets.

The Hilton Anatole, Dallas, TX, has named **Lauren Diaz** as Southeast regional sales manager. She was senior account executive at JW Marriott Camelback Inn Resort & Spa, Scottsdale, AZ.

**Dan Sierka** was named senior account executive at The Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Scottsdale, AZ. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing at Wigwam Golf Resort & Spa, Phoenix, AZ.

**Karen Englund** was named director of sales and marketing for Grande Lakes Orlando, which includes The Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott hotels. She was director of sales and marketing at L.A. Live: The Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott hotels in Los Angeles, CA. **C&I**

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Beau Rivage Resort & Casino	800-239-2771	beaurivage.com	Maureen Wooten	mwooten@beaurivage.com
Blue Man Group	800-blueman	blueman.com	Group Sales	sales@blueman.com
Doubletree Resort Orlando - International Drive	407-345-0056	doubletreeorlandoidrive.com	Group Sales	steven.green@pyramidhotelgroup.com
Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center	615-458-2800	gaylordopryland.com	Group Sales	meetings@gaylordhotels.com
Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau	617-867-8236	bostonusa.com	Beth Stehley	gbcvbsales@bostonusa.com
Hammock Beach Resort	888-696-6730	hammockbeach.com	Jason Kern	groupsales@hammockbeach.com
Hilton Anaheim	714-740-4234	hiltonanaheimtour.com	Brad W. Logsdon	brad.logsdon@hilton.com
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Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino	800-545-6040	innofthemountaingods.com	Jo Kazhe	jokazhe@innofthemountaingods.com
Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority	877-847-4858	lvca.com	Michael Goldsmith	mgoldsmith@lvca.com
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Tuscany Suites & Casino	877-887-2263	tuscanylv.com	Group Sales	sales@tuscanylv.com
Universal Orlando Resort	888-322-5531	uomeetingsandevents.com	Group Sales	meetings@universalorlando.com
Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-700-7702	vbmeetings.com	Al Hutchinson	ahutchin@vbgov.com
Visit Orlando	800-662-2825	orlandomeeting.com	Karen Harrington	convention.sales@orlandocvb.com
Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort	800-524-4939	swandolphinmeetings.com	Eric Opron	meetings@swandolphin.com
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	westin.com/lasvegas	Sandra Horvath	shorvath@westinlv.com
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