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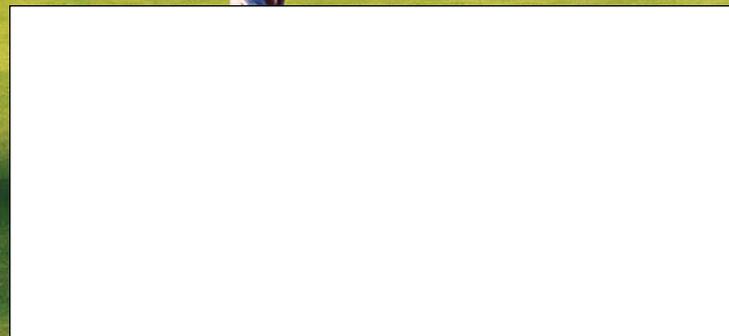
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Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

**Golf & Spa
Resorts
From Fairways
to Facials,
R&R Is Back**

PAGE 18



Destination: New Mexico

PAGE 28



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VOLUME 29 NO. 5 MAY 2011

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Revel, a \$2.5 billion beachfront entertainment resort, is expected to open in Atlantic City in 2012. The 1,090-room gaming resort will provide 160,000 sf of meeting space.

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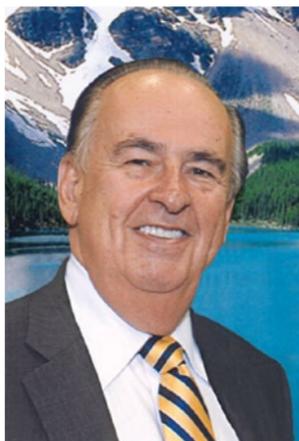
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Native American drummers performing in Santa Fe provide a colorful and authentic glimpse of the unique cultural attractions offered in the Land of Enchantment.

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Life Is Good

This month's issue is brimming with encouraging stories: "Life Is Good," "R&R Is Back," "A Winning Combo" and "Meetings in the Land of Enchantment" speak to the return of good times to the meetings industry. For example, in our cover story on "Golf & Spa Resorts" (page 18), we learn that the economic and perception issues that plagued these resorts are disappearing. According to the Knowland Group, a recent survey of U.S. golf resorts reported a 62 percent rise in golf bookings.



So goes the spa industry. The International Spa Association's hope for the future is reflected in their motto "there is a spa experience for everyone." Many spas have expanded their services to reach new markets, especially corporate sectors. Thus, our cover illustration is a fitting reminder that team members who helped bring their companies

through the recession deserve the hard-earned reward of a day on the links or in the spa. Besides, the struggle to pull through the recession has taken its toll on the health and welfare of the professional meeting planners still standing. In the health and wellness feature (page 24), planners share their personal stories and recommendations of how to stay above the fray — ranging from a daily dose of B-vitamins to taking time out to give back. As Diane Harder, CMP, succinctly reminds us, "I do believe there is something far larger than self, and I find great fulfillment in giving back. My ability to fund-raise successfully combined with my skills as a meeting planner greatly complement each other. This, plus plenty of physical activity that includes cycling for long hours or walking marathon distances, keeps me happy and healthy. To quote the famous T-shirt slogan, 'Do what you enjoy, enjoy what you do. Life is good!'"

Planners attest that meetings in New Mexico (page 28) are more memorable and productive. "We find that New Mexico in general, and the Hyatt Regency Tamaya specifically, are very conducive to achieving our goals and objectives," Judy Zuercher of CRC Health Group says. "When people are more relaxed, they're more productive." Put another way, the state's extraordinary natural beauty and Native American culture enhance the meeting experience, serving to refresh, invigorate and inspire meeting attendees.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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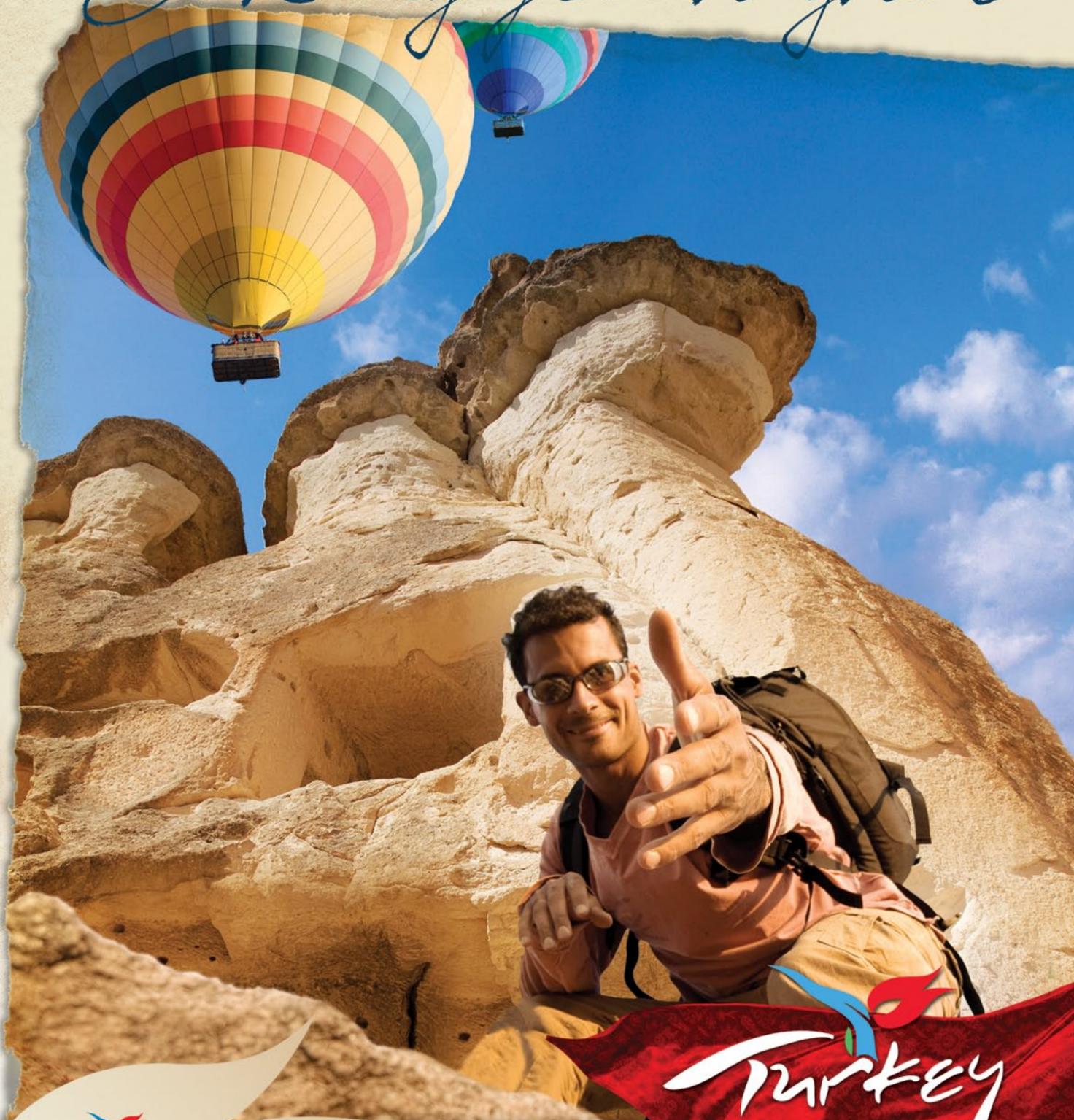
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Dittman Adds Virtual Gift Cards to Incentive Rewards Portfolio

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — Dittman Incentive Marketing, a leading provider of incentives, rewards and recognition programs, has added virtual gift cards to their broad array of incentive reward options, including brand-name merchandise, travel rewards and event tickets. "Research shows that this type of card is enormously popular with consumers. Today's culture is increasingly about instant gratification, and virtual gift cards allow us to leverage that fact in a way that benefits our clients," notes Dave Dittman, executive vice president. Individuals can redeem rewards program points for the cards, which come in different denominations and are available for major retailers including Amazon, JCPenney, L.L. Bean, Chili's Restaurants, Lowe's, Sports Authority, Celebrity Cruises and more. "We strive to be as innovative as possible in offering clients the kinds of incentive rewards that excite and engage their program participants and drive results," Dittman notes. "When a person earns points that they can transform directly into taking their family out to dinner that night — it can really inspire future accomplishment." www.dittmanincentives.com

The Spa at The Peabody Now Open

ORLANDO, FL — The Spa at The Peabody opened recently as part of The Peabody Orlando's \$450 million expansion. Spanning two levels of the hotel's new 32-story tower, the 22,000-sf Spa and Fitness Center features 12 treatment rooms, a new full-service hair and nail salon and an 8,000-sf fitness facility. The Spa at The Peabody has two outdoor balcony treatment options, two skin-care rooms, four massage rooms, four body treatment rooms with Swiss showers and two couples' suites, featuring a Kohler infinity tub. The 8,000-sf Fitness Center features a group class studio, a spinning room, Cybex equipment complete with built-in flat-screen TVs and iPod compatibility. Personal training and membership packages are also available. www.peabodyorlando.com

Caesars Entertainment Launches New Meetings Rewards Program

LAS VEGAS, NV — Caesars Entertainment Corporation announced the launch of Total Rewards Meetings & Events, the gaming industry's first-ever reward and loyalty program targeted specifically to meeting and event clients. The program allows meeting and event customers to earn Total Rewards credits for the business they bring to Caesars Entertainment properties across North America. Caesars Entertainment's Total Rewards, the gaming industry's largest nationwide customer loyalty program, has more than 40 million members.



MASSARI

"We are excited to be the first company to offer a fully integrated gaming and meeting rewards program to our guests," said Michael Massari, vice president of meeting sales and operations. "Caesars Entertainment is known for providing differentiated service and innovative options to our Total Rewards members. Now we will be able to include meetings and events clients, an important part of our business, in our Total Rewards program."

Total Rewards credits may be earned for every dollar paid by the master account with no limit on the number of credits that can be earned. Total Rewards credits will be earned at the rate of one base credit for every \$1 paid by the master account. Tier credits will be earned at the rate of one tier credit for every \$5 paid by the master account. Cardholders then redeem the credits for room stays, spa treatments, dining, merchandise from the Total Rewards catalog and future meetings and events at Caesars Entertainment properties. For additional information, visit www.totalrewards.com/meetings.

San Jose Convention Center Expansion Project Moves Forward

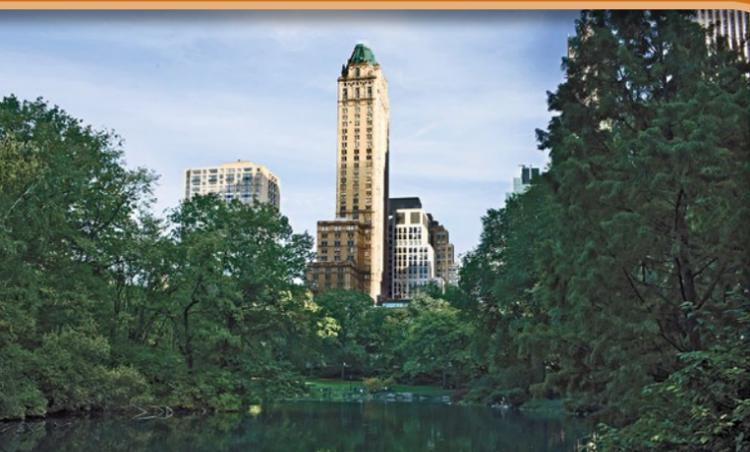
SAN JOSE, CA — The San Jose Convention Center's \$120 million project upgrade, which received the go-ahead from the city council in mid-April, is officially ready to go. "The expansion and renovation of our convention center will help San Jose remain competitive as a meetings and convention destination," said Mayor Chuck Reed. "I'd like to thank San Jose hotel owners for providing the funding necessary to move this project forward during challenging budget times." The convention center currently offers 425,000 sf of exhibit, ballroom and meeting space. The expansion will add an additional 125,000 sf of flexible ballroom and meeting room space and will seek LEED silver certification.



Rendering of the San Jose Convention Center expansion.

"The new convention center will become an icon of pride for San Jose and increase Team San Jose's competitive edge selling San Jose as a destination in the meetings and convention marketplace," said Bill Sherry, CEO of Team San Jose, which operates the convention center and several other city cultural facilities. Open during construction, the San Jose Convention Center plans a grand re-opening in 2013. For more information, visit www.sanjose.org.

MEETING VALUES



The Pierre, a Taj Hotel, New York, NY.

The 2011 Small Luxury Meetings Special Offer, valid through August 2011, includes: complimentary meeting space; \$165/person for daily F&B service; luxury accommodations (\$450/night/room May and June 2011; \$399/night/room July and August 2011) with complimentary high-speed Internet and 24-hour access to the hotel's business center and fitness center. 800-743-7734, www.tajhotels.com/thepierre

■ **Barton Creek Resort & Spa, Austin, TX.** The Business, Birdies and BBQ offer, with rates starting at \$295/person/night, includes: resort guest room, complete day meeting package with buffet breakfast, meeting room, a.m./p.m. breaks, buffet lunch and standard AV; golf on Crenshaw Cliffs golf course; and chef's choice barbecue dinner. Offer is valid for groups of 15 or more room nights over select July and August 2011 dates. For details, visit <http://www.bartoncreek.com/meeting-specials.aspx>.

■ **JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts, Marriott Hotels & Resorts and Renaissance Hotels.** Advance booking incentives are available for meetings at participating hotels in the Caribbean and Latin America. For 30-day advance booking: receive 1/35 comp room; 60-day advance booking: 1/25 comp room, plus free Internet in main meeting room; 90-day advance booking: 1/20 comp room, complimentary welcome refreshment break, and free Internet in main meeting room. Meetings must take place before December 31, 2011. Contact Aldo Ruiz, international sales director, 305-671-2634, Aldo.Ruiz@marriott.com.

■ **Omni Hotels.** Omni Hotels will waive the attrition clause from contracts for new group meetings booked and consumed by December 31, 2011. The zero attrition program is available for meetings with up to 200 peak room nights. Previously contracted meetings are not eligible. www.omnihotels.com

Events Calendar

JUNE 2, 2011

DMAI DESTINATIONS SHOWCASE CHICAGO
Donald E. Stephens Convention Center
Rosemont, IL
Contact: 202-296-7888
www.destinationsshowcase.com

JUNE 15-16, 2011

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Long Beach, CA
914-421-3270
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JUNE 21-23, 2011

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Baltimore, MD
Contact: 203-840-5975
www.aibtm.com

JULY 20-22, 2011

DMAI 97TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
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New Orleans, LA
202-296-7888
www.destinationmarketing.org

JULY 23-26, 2011

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Orlando, FL
Contact: 972-702-3053
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AUGUST 6-9, 2011

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OCTOBER 13-15, 2011

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Las Vegas, NV
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www.siteglobal.com



Brad
Goodsell

Corporate Meeting Management

Surviving and Thriving in a Recovering Economy

While the last year marked a steady increase in meeting bookings after the recession's sharp drop-off, getting more for less has become the norm. When planning and executing meetings, companies continue to scrutinize their meetings budgets and keep a close watch over spending. Moreover, factors unrelated to the economy, such as improved video conferencing technology and increasing corporate concern over carbon footprints, present additional challenges to business travel. The following trends provide a snapshot of what to expect from the industry and how to maximize your budget for successful meetings management during the recovery.

Lean Meetings

The strongest trend in response to the economy is shorter, leaner meetings. From travel time to content and lead times, the entire meeting schedule is compacted to maximize cost savings. Strategically located meetings, where many companies break large, single-location gatherings into several smaller regional meetings, are increasingly popular. As oil prices continue to rise, bringing travel costs with them, regional programs that require less air travel and fewer hotel stays represent a reasonable and affordable alternative. Planners can make the most of regional meetings by booking them in second- and third-tier cities, where lower demand generates significant cost breaks on hotels and F&B, increasing the value created for each dollar spent.

Along with less travel time, meeting lengths are reduced to essential content so

time spent at the meeting is more targeted, and employees are back in the office faster. Compacted meetings also typically mean short lead times, which create challenges for planners and vendors. Where hoteliers and planners used to forecast one year out, they now forecast just a month or two out.

Companies are discovering they can continue to meet with cost-savings adjustments and may have little incentive to restore pre-recession systems. While short lead times are challenging, they also present opportunities for last-minute deals on hotel bookings. Also, working with vendors offering multiple services can minimize pre-program admin and may bring cost-breaks if you choose several services, allowing you to manage the short lead time and still save money.

Outsourcing on the Rise

Typically, outsourcing rises in struggling economies, and the meeting planning industry is no different. As companies continue to look for ways to increase productivity amid hiring freezes and budget cuts, utilizing external meeting planners and travel directors is a cost-effective way to get the job done. If you're using outsourced planners, consider having a roster of three to five potential planners year-round. When you first hear of a potential meeting that might require extra help, but aren't sure of budget or details, alert your team. This gives them time to arrange their schedules and start looking for deals. Having a team familiar with your working style and expectations will also help make the process seamless.

Green on a Budget

Related, environmental concerns, along with cost reduction is pushing companies to hire increasingly localized planning teams and outsource administrative work necessary for keeping them straight. Many companies hire several local, regional teams in each area to plan smaller meetings. Although local staffing often saves money and reduces the environmental impact of traveling, it increases administrative load on already stressed corporate travel teams. Therefore, companies are increasingly outsourcing administrative tasks such as payroll, data tracking and contracting to outside travel directing companies.

Beyond using local planning teams, checking in with local keynote speakers and entertainment for the meeting eliminates travel costs and effects on the environment. Distributing meeting materials electronically, either by e-mail or posting to the company website for download, saves on printing costs, eliminates paper waste and often gets positive feedback from attendees who appreciate having time to study materials beforehand. In addition, using local food distributors is often much less expensive than shipping food to the site, and again carries both green benefits of supporting local growers and reducing environmental effects of transportation while giving attendees a fresher, more conscientious eating experience.

Hotel Negotiations

Beyond all other price-saving measures mentioned, hospitality pricing structures will be a major budgeting factor for meetings as the industry recovers. According

to the *Hotels.com* Hotel Price Index (HPI), the average cost of a hotel room around the world rose 2 percent in 2010, the first time that the average hotel room price rose year-over-year since 2007. We can expect to see increases reach the mid-high single digits this year as construction growth remains stagnant, and hotel occupancy increases due to lack of new builds in the market.

However, such a modest increase after a long and deep recession still means hotel rates are relatively low compared to pre-recession levels, and hotels are still desperate for big business bookings, which leaves plenty of room for planners to negotiate price breaks and extra amenities.

Larger hoteliers are continuing to lay out value-driven discounts and dynamic pricing to supplement flat-rate negotiations in attempts to woo back group business. Meeting planners and clients want streamlined, efficient and budget-friendly programs, especially now that companies are shifting their focus to once again growing their business and profitability. In order to do that, many meeting planners are demanding more value to maximize their clients' budgets, and hotels will continue to offer it to secure business.

This is also a great environment for planners to take advantage of changes in hotel points programs and promotion initiatives aimed at corporate business because hotels want to big business back. Before negotiating your rate, do some homework on your location's local market to get a better idea of how far they will bend for you. As the tried and true rule of negotiation says, "It never hurts to ask." **C&IT**

Brad Goodsell is president of Executive Travel Directors, a Chicago-based company that provides onsite meeting support staff to organizations nationwide. www.traveldirectors.com

A Winning Combo

Excellent Facilities, Superior Service and Great Value

Over the past decade, gaming resorts have sprung up across the country and around the globe. And while they've become popular with the general public, they've also become a go-to preference for many meeting planners looking for a little pizzazz that's also surprisingly affordable.

"We wanted to look at something outside a regular resort hotel or a conference center," says Nancy Eda, sales executive assistant at Madison, NJ-based Quest Diagnostics. They hosted a four-day, three-night eastern regional sales meeting for 300 attendees in March at the 962-room MGM Grand at Foxwoods and the adjoining, 1,279-room Foxwoods Resort Casino in Mashantucket, CT. "We based that particular decision on two factors. One was that we wanted a large, centrally located resort that would be convenient for our attendees. And the other was that we wanted a decent price. **But we also thought that a gaming property that was an easy drive for our attendees would be an ideal venue.**"

Belinda Newman-Prince, executive assistant at Microsoft in Redmond, WA, applied a similar logistical logic when she used the 370-room Tulalip Resort Casino, an Indian-owned property 30 minutes from Seattle, for a four-day, three-night "global summit" meeting last year for 400 attendees including many international guests. Newman-Prince and her management and attendees enjoyed the experience so much, they went back this year. "Initially, we didn't pick Tulalip because it's a gam-

ing resort," says Newman-Prince. **"We picked it for its convenient location and its overall amenities. We just thought of the gaming as a nice perk for our attendees who wanted to have some fun at night."**

The fun factor was also a basic metric used by Elva Santillan, CMP, marketing events planner at Seal Beach, CA-based Custom Building Products, which hosted a three-day, two-night regional sales meeting for 45 attendees in February at the 481-room Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, FL, just south of Fort Lauderdale. "Fun for our attendees was definitely a factor in our thinking," says Santillan. **"And a gaming resort also tends to keep attendees on-property, because they don't have to take a taxi or shuttle to go somewhere else to find entertainment. By definition, a gaming resort has more amenities."**

As a result, says Patrick Flynn, director of sales at the 1,623-room Peppermill Resort Spa & Casino in Reno, NV, gaming resorts inject into a meeting a collective energy and enthusiasm often lacking at meetings in traditional meeting hotels. And, he adds, coming out of a major recession and an unprecedented downturn in the meetings market, such elevated energy is especially important to planners looking to rekindle team spirit.

Susan Duda, president of independent meeting and event planning firm ITP Event Management in Andover, MA, shares Flynn's view that gaming resorts typically lift the energy level for a given meeting. That's one key reason

why she chose the 2,000-room Borgata Hotel, Casino & Spa in Atlantic City for a three-day, two-night meeting for 700 attendees last April.

"The gaming portion of a meeting always seems to work well for us, because it provides entertainment, says Duda, who has also hosted meetings at the 600-room Cove Atlantis, at the globally acclaimed, 3,414-room Atlantis, Paradise Island resort complex in the Bahamas. **"It also provides something for the spouses to do during the meeting. So, as a result, we're always looking for new gaming resorts that fit the bill for a particular meeting."**

From Las Vegas to Bethlehem to Macau

Duda and fellow planners won't have to look far for new gaming resorts. Tight budgets and the effects of a down economy have spurred cities and towns across the U.S. to permit legalized gambling casinos, which are often paired with entertainment venues and full-service hotels.

Las Vegas is the No. 1 destination in the world for conventions, business meetings and incentive programs, according to various attendee and planner polls. Las Vegas hotels and resorts provide an endless variety of meeting and entertainment options.

Two of the newest gaming resorts, Aria Casino Resort and M Resort offer new options for planners considering Las Vegas as a meeting destination.

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By John Buchanan

offers 300,000 sf of meeting and pre-function space.

Aria, part of MGM Resorts International, is set up so attendees don't have to walk through the casino to get to the meeting space — a significant plus for most planners.

On the South Las Vegas Strip is the four-star M Resort Spa Casino, which is ideal for small or medium-sized meetings. The resort offers 60,000 sf of meeting space and a 100,000-sf outdoor events piazza with built-in stage and views of The Strip.

Additional gaming resort options, especially attractive because they are drivable, can be found in the Northeast corridor. For example, Pennsylvania is gaining in popularity and giving places like Atlantic City a run for their money.

The Las Vegas Sands Corp. bet on Bethlehem, PA, a few years ago and will open a 304-unit hotel this month to complement its Sands Casino Resort

Bethlehem. Meeting space, entertainment lounges, Emeril's Chop House and more make this gaming resort ideal for small meetings within driving distance of Philadelphia and New York City.

In addition to its popular Venetian/Palazzo, Sands Expo complex, Las Vegas Sands Corp., under Chairman and CEO Sheldon Adelson, has developed gaming resorts throughout the world. His vision for Macau, where he opened the Sands Macau and the Venetian Macau, will combine more than 20,000 guest rooms, retail and meeting and convention space along the Cotai Strip.

Steve Wynn, the other Las Vegas casino tycoon changing the face of global gaming, opened namesake resorts Wynn Macau and Encore at Wynn Macau in the last few years — with more on the drawing board.

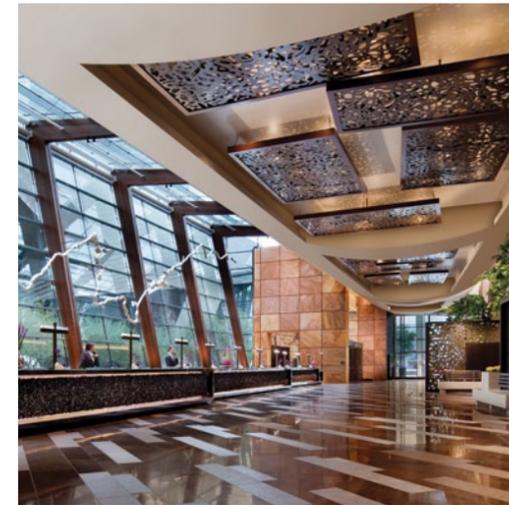
Practical Benefits

A primary reason why so many plan-

ners find gaming resorts so attractive is the range of amenities they typically offer.

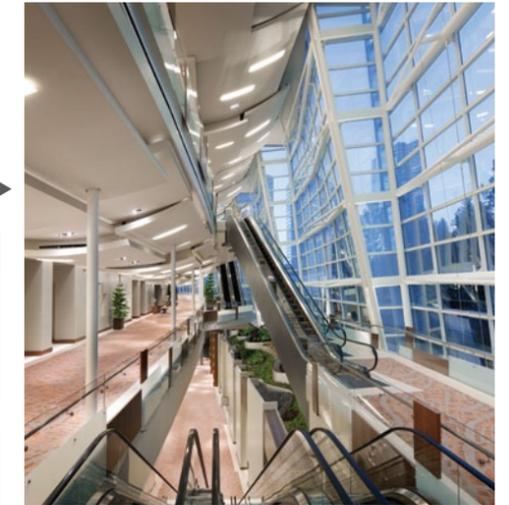
“When you look at a gaming resort versus a major-brand chain meeting hotel, you have much more variety at the gaming resort, in terms of things like the number of restaurants and lounges and the activities like nightlife onsite,” says Flynn. “And in today's market, those amenities add value for the planner and for attendees. In a regular meeting hotel, an attendee is pretty limited in what they can do. You check in, go to your meetings, and you've got just a few choices for restaurants and maybe one lounge for relaxation and entertainment. So, when planners do use a gaming resort, they're usually looking specifically for that kind of variety and the other benefits that a casino hotel offers.”

Onsite amenities at MGM Grand at Foxwoods and adjacent Foxwoods Resort Casino were a major factor in Eda's site selection. “We could do every-



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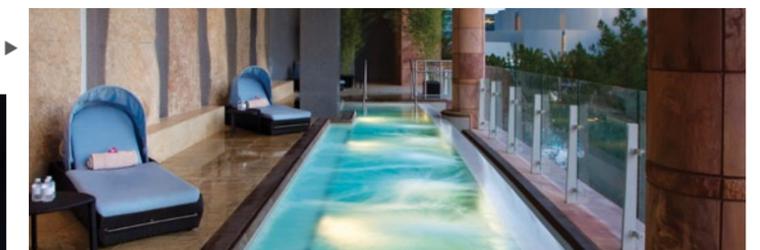
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thing we wanted to do on-property," says Eda, who also hosted a meeting last year at The Borgata in Atlantic City and had equal praise for it. "That is one important difference between a gaming resort and a regular meeting hotel. And that means you don't have to hire buses and shuttle people around. With a gaming resort, there's just so much to do onsite, from dining and entertainment to shopping and a spa."

Santillian found similar benefits at Seminole Hard Rock. "The things that

"One of the smart things many of them (gaming resorts) have done is to provide really good meeting space. And at the same time, their room rates have become very competitive."

were particularly appealing to our attendees were the dining and shopping options," she says. The 17 eclectic and diverse dining options at the resort include Tuscany Italian Bistro, Bluepoint Oyster Grill and Renegade Barbecue. A roster of 18 shopping options includes Brookstone, Perry Ellis and Quiksilver.

Such recreational diversion is especially important in a post-recession marketplace, where many planners are still working with reduced budgets, says Steven Horowitz, director of sales at one-year-old, 497-room Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale. The property is owned by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. "The kinds of amenities that gaming resorts typically offer is particularly important to a group that is more budget-conscious and is not going to do a dinner or organized event every single night," he says. "Gaming resorts like Talking Stick have the venues to take care of those attendees, and they won't get bored because they're doing the same thing every night."

Meanwhile, says Duda, gaming resorts have identified yet another way

to extract maximum results from a very competitive market. "One of the smart things many of them have done," she says, "is to provide really good meeting space. And at the same time, their room rates have become very competitive." The practical bottom line for planners, Duda says, is excellent facilities combined with genuine value.

The Value Proposition

There's also strong consensus among planners and



Susan Duda, President
ITP Event Management, Andover, MA

gaming resort sales executives that dollar for dollar, gaming properties pack more bang for the buck when it comes to value. "And that's not just true of room," says Flynn. "It's also true of food & beverage."

Eda found that to be true at Foxwoods. "The value we got was a major factor in our decision to go there," she says. "We got excellent rates for our rooms, food & beverage, meeting space and AV equipment."

Tangible value for the dollar was also a major factor for Santillian. And in that sense, she adds, gaming resort operators think much like Las Vegas hoteliers when it comes to creating a competitive advantage based on value for meeting customers. The week before her Seminole Hard Rock meeting, in fact, she hosted a western regional sales meeting at the 814-room Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, located in a spectacular natural setting outside Las Vegas.

With budgets still under pressure, more and more planners are discovering the unique value proposition that a modern gaming resort delivers, says Chris Perry, who at the time of this interview was vice president of hotel sales and mar-

keting at the 1,200-room, Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, CT. "And the key," he says, "is that at a property like Mohegan Sun, planners get that value without giving up the experience."

The Service Factor

Another common surprise among planners who use a gaming resort for the first time is great service. And that, say gaming resort executives, is another example of the competitive business model they have crafted.

Newman-Prince experienced truly superior service at Tulalip. "As a planner, that's the thing that's most important to me," she says. "For most meetings, we're working the whole time to make sure everyone else is doing what they're supposed to be doing. At Tulalip, they took care of everything. I honestly have never had an event go so smoothly — and been able to sit back and enjoy myself because I knew things would go smoothly because everything was being so well taken care of. And I knew in advance that things would go well, based on the conversations I had on my site visit."

Not only did Tulalip excel according to any traditional measure of service, but they went above and beyond what would normally be expected, Newman-Prince says. "For example, they put our logo on our room keys," she says. "And we didn't even ask for that. They just did it, and it was a nice surprise."

Despite the value and positive attendee feedback that Tulalip generated, Newman-Prince says, its exemplary service was the main reason the company went back this year.

Eda had similar praise for MGM Grand at Foxwoods and Foxwoods Resort Casino. "The staff at Foxwoods was probably the best that I've ever worked with," she says. **"Their service and attention to detail, even before I could ask, was as good as I've ever seen. They just have**



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Dining and Entertainment

In addition to a proven track record for value and service, gaming resorts have staked out another distinct market advantage by offering more dining and entertainment options than a standard resort hotel.

For example, Mohegan Sun features two dozen restaurants. Fine dining choices include Bobby Flay's Bar Americain, Todd English's Tuscany and Michael Jordan's Steak House. Casual choices include Big Bubba's BBQ, Chef Bobby Flay's Burger Palace and Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville.

IP Casino, Resort & Spa, a 1,088-room property in Biloxi, MS, features a pair of AAA Four Diamond restaurants. Located on the 32nd floor, "32" features a panoramic view of Back Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway, and serves steaks and fresh Gulf seafood. Tien specializes in an innovative mix of Asian cuisines.

Given its broad infrastructure, IP is also able to offer greater flexibility than a normal hotel, says director of sales Leslie Barfield. "We work hard to offer planners flexible options," she says. "For example, we can stage a dinner in one of our restaurants on a night it's closed to the public, so it becomes a spectacular venue for the meeting — much better than a banquet room."

Talking Stick also offers live entertainment every night. "All five of our lounges and some of our restaurants have live entertainment every night," Horowitz says.

"There's always something going on that is exciting for meeting attendees."

For big-name entertainment events open to the public, or as a private venue available for buyouts, a 650-seat showroom regularly books acts such as Huey Lewis, Rick Springfield and Don Rickles.

Mohegan Sun, which offers more than 70 dining, shopping and entertainment options, features the 10,000-seat Mohegan Sun Arena. The use of exclusive

private boxes for public performances from major acts such as Elton John or Katy Perry is a perk often exploited by enthusiastic meeting planners.

For her attendees, Newman-Prince found the entertainment at Tulalip to be an essential perk. In addition to enjoying the gaming, she says, one night her attendees went dancing at a cabaret that featured a live band. "That was one example of the opportunities we had to have attendees relax at the end of a hard day," she says.

Entertainment capabilities at the resorts also can be easily turned into memorable private evenings or other events, such as luncheons. At Foxwoods, Eda staged a '70s-themed Casino Night. "It was a dinner event, but done in a more fun environment," she says.

Other Diversions

Gaming resorts also cater very effectively to the well-established demand meeting planners and attendees have for spas and golf.

For example, Peppermill features a 30,000-sf spa with 55 treatments rooms. Although the property does not have a golf course, it has an affiliation with Red Hawk Golf Club, located 12 miles away at the Resort at Red Hawk in Sparks.

Talking Stick features a 15,000-sf spa located on the 14th floor. "It delivers spectacular views," says Horowitz. The resort also features two 18-hole championship golf courses at Talking Stick Golf Club, managed by Troon Golf.

Mohegan Sun features an 18-hole golf course and a 23,000-sf spa with 21 treatment rooms. Mohegan Sun Country Club at Pautipaug, located 15 minutes away, is now undergoing a redesign and complete renovation. It will reopen in April 2012.

Looking Ahead

Now that the meetings market is returning to normal after a two-year downturn, demand is up across the board at gaming resorts across the country. And their popularity cuts a wide swath, from

incentive programs to sales meetings, product launches and even board meetings and executive retreats.

At Peppermill, Flynn sees a return to the property's traditional incentive business, as well as high-energy sales meetings and product launches. If there's a trend, he says, it's toward more small meetings, such as board meetings and exclusive executive retreats. In preparation for that market niche in a recovered meetings market, Peppermill last year invested \$2.5 million in a state-of-the-art boardroom that seats 26 at a board table, with additional peripheral seating for another 20. Both sides of the table feature three 62-inch plasma TVs, and a 12-foot HD projection screen is available for presentations or teleconferences. "It's like a self-contained business complex," says Flynn.

Gaming resort developers are looking for new frontiers. In Washington State, the Yakama Nation will break ground on their reservation in May for a new \$90 million casino expansion, which will include a six-story hotel, conference facilities and a spa. Meanwhile, across the Columbia River, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are developing a \$67 million expansion project of their own, adding a high-rise hotel to their existing complex among the wheat fields and cattle ranches of northeast Oregon.

Those projects will take their place alongside the dozens of new casinos and expansion projects recently completed, despite the recession, according to the 2011 "Indian Gaming Industry Report."

At the same time, Hard Rock has announced tentative plans to develop a new gaming resort in Atlantic City; and Revel Entertainment has resumed development of a 20-acre, 7.8-million-sf beachfront entertainment destination resort complex that will open in 2012 on Atlantic City's boardwalk.

That means an already popular option for planners will simply offer more choice — and opportunity to come. **C&IT**

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Even when the meeting agenda is packed full of serious business, attendees love to be given a chance to squeeze in a little R&R. So when part of the group can't wait to get out on the fairway, while others would love nothing more than to decompress in the spa, the natural choice for a meeting site is a resort that offers both.

In recent years, many groups steered clear of golf resorts for economic reasons or perception issues, but that trend is now reversing. The Knowland Group, a data firm specializing in the global meetings and convention industry, recently conducted a survey of golf resorts across the U.S. Of the resorts surveyed, 62 percent said that golf bookings are on the

rise, with most of them describing the increase as moderate or large. "The highly vocal negative perception of golf events has finally started to fade," says Michael K. McKean, Knowland's CEO.

According to the International Spa Association, the spa industry is also optimistic about the future. The industry's motto is "there is a spa experience for ev-

eryone," and many spas have expanded their services to reach broader audiences. The majority of spas also now employ environmentally sustainable practices, and many are increasing their use of social media to make confirming spa reserva-

"I loved working with both the pro shop and the spa director. Everything was perfect. ...It was my spa for the day, it was my golf course."



Gia Staley, CMP
Manager, Meetings and Events
Healthpoint Biotherapeutics
Fort Worth, TX

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A Native American Sense of Place

Gia Staley, manager, meetings and events for Healthpoint Biotherapeutics in Fort Worth, TX, planned a 2007 sales meeting at Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa in New Mexico. The event was so successful that the company repeated it in February of this year. The Hyatt, which is located at the base of the Sandia Mountains between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, offers 350 pueblo-style guest rooms along with nearly 24,000 sf of indoor meeting space and 50,000 sf of outdoor function areas.

"I was looking through an industry publication, and I saw an ad for the Hyatt Tamaya," Staley explains. "Hyatt is one of my very favorite chains, and I was surprised that I hadn't learned about it before. It's about a 30-minute drive from the airport to the resort and then you wind around and it's all out there by itself." The Native American-themed resort honors the Tamayame (people of Tamaya) whose history in the region dates back more than 1,000 years.

"What's beautiful about the resort is that it's all Native American," Staley says. "It just puts you in a different place. It's so relaxing, and the service was outstanding."

The Hyatt Tamaya is also home to the nationally ranked Twin Warriors Golf Club and the 16,000-sf Tamaya Mist Spa and Salon. Three outdoor heated pools, riding stables, two tennis courts and a fitness center round out the resort's recreational amenities.

"We have to have 9,000-10,000 sf for our ballroom space and a lot of breakout space, so we love it when we can go in and take over (the meeting space) of a hotel," Staley notes. "There just aren't many hotels like that." Her programs had 200 and 230 attendees, respectively. "It's not a gigantic group, but we owned the place."

Golf and spa services were also part of the program. "We had an afternoon of R&R, so we offered the spa and golf," Staley adds. "We had a golf tournament with a shotgun start, and we had about 60 people playing. We also took every appointment in the spa between 12:30 and 6:30 p.m. We had it reserved ahead of time for facials, massages, manicures and pedicures. I loved working with both the pro shop and the spa director. Everything was perfect. It was just really easy. It was my spa for the day, it was my golf course. I highly recommend it."

Staley also worked with Hyatt's in-house DMC to arrange horseback riding or an afternoon of shopping in nearby Santa Fe for those who didn't want to golf or visit the spa. The DMC also handled all of the group's airport transfers.

Staley reflected back on her dual meeting experiences at the Hyatt Tamaya. "They were just great, so accommodating. It's a hidden gem. I don't want anyone to find out about it!"

'Four-Peat' in Florida

Tami Schmidt, vice president, cor-



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By Karen Brost



Picture-perfect swing: An afternoon of R&R at Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa included spa and golf for attendees of Healthpoint's February sales meeting.

porate communications for Magellan Health, is based in Columbia, MD. She plans a senior leadership meeting for 125-130 of her company's top executives each year. "The purpose of the meeting is to look back and celebrate the accomplishments from the prior year and get everyone focused and clear and coordinated on the current year's priorities," she says. "It is also a chance for this

She credits PGA National's outstanding service for the decision. "They are large enough and savvy enough to be able to compete with the big hotel chains, but it's a real boutique experience," she explains. "I'm generally amazed at how much they pull in their entire staff to make things happen for us.

"We're only there once a year, and people will remember your name," she continues. "And it's not just the meeting planners and CEO who get that amazing, personal Nordstrom-like customer service. It's all of our attendees."

The 379-room, AAA Four Diamond hotel features 39,000 sf of meeting space, nine restaurants and lounges, 19 tennis courts and 90 (yes, nine zero) holes of championship golf. It is also home to The Spa at PGA National, a 40,000-sf European spa.

While there was no time in the agenda for golf, several attendees added an extra day so they could play. "They gave it rave reviews...they said it was the best course they ever played on," Schmidt explains.

One experience Schmidt was determined not to miss was the spa. "It is absolutely heavenly. I don't even feel like I'm at the meeting. I transcend to a different place," she says.

She shared more examples of PGA's

extraordinary service. This year, on the group's checkout day, the hotel was booked to capacity but a massive blizzard was going on up north to prevent about half of the group from returning home. Schmidt explained that the PGA staff already had them booked into other accommodations before the Magellan team even had time to ask. "It was phenomenal," she adds. She also appreciated how the PGA staff helped them organize a community service project to benefit a local children's hospital.

The Keys to Relaxation

When you cross over into The Florida Keys just an hour south of Miami, a golf-and-spa state of mind just naturally takes over. The first stop is the north end of Key Largo, where the exclusive Ocean Reef Club welcomes meeting groups to its 2,000-acre tropical retreat. It's a true destination resort with its own private airstrip, two 18-hole championship golf courses, the full-service Salon & Spa, fishing village shopping area, marina offering fishing, diving and snorkeling charters, a cooking school with customized programs for groups, and nine restaurants and lounges. A full menu of teambuilding and other group activities is available, including a mini golf tournament and yoga on the beach. There are 300 recently updated, deluxe accommodations, and 30,000 sf of total meeting space.

New in Nevada

A new entry into the golf and spa resort category is Ravella at Lake Las Vegas, which opened in February. Located on the former site of the Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas, the newly rebranded property is managed by Dolce Hotels & Resorts. The Mediterranean-themed lakefront resort offers 349 rooms and suites. Some of the accommodations are housed on the Ponte Vecchio Bridge, which is inspired by the famous bridge of the same name in Florence, Italy and spans 375 feet across Lake Las Vegas. The resort is located ap-

proximately 20 minutes from McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas.

"We have over 33,000 sf of meeting space," says Marty Bertone, director of sales and marketing for Ravella. He explains that the resort can accommodate any type of group from 10 to 1,000 people. "As a nice compliment to that, we have an incredible 30,000-sf spa (The Spa at Ravella) that has 24 treatment rooms."

Bertone says that once a group contract is signed, the resort's director of spa will contact the planner to see if they would like to book any spa appointments in advance. At the planner's request, she will also set up a spa registration desk next to the group's main registration area to accommodate any attendees or spouses who would like to make spa appointments.

"On the golf side, we do the same thing," Bertone continues. "We're fortunate enough to have bought tee times from Southshore Golf Club, which is a

private country club located here in Lake Las Vegas. You can only play the course if you're a member or if you're staying at our hotel or Loews Lake Las Vegas. We're the only two hotels that they partner with.

"It's an absolutely spectacular course that is a true desert course," he adds. "They need to be shuttled over in one of the hotel's cars because it's located in a private subdivision. It is quite exclusive. It's about a four-minute drive from the resort.

"If they're doing a shotgun start or they have a golf piece to their program, then on the sales side we will arrange all of the golf for them and reserve the times and so on," Bertone continues. "If they are not, then we can do the same thing like we do with the spa. If the client would like to offer that as an optional activity, we can have people sitting at their registration area, finding out if people want to sign up for a tee time."

Texas Tee Times

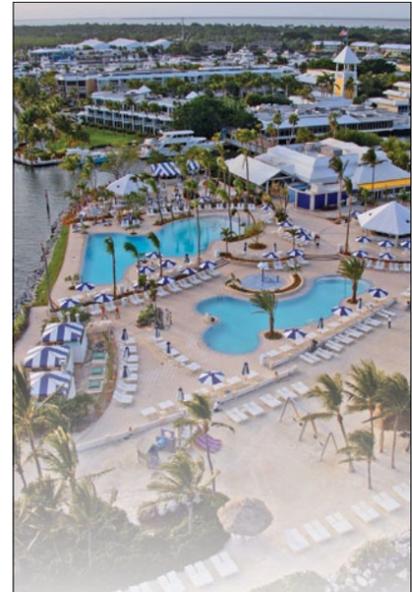
The JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa opened in January 2010. Set on 600 acres of rolling, wooded hills, the 1,002-room property is the largest JW Marriott Resort in the world. It features more than 140,000 sf of meeting space, including the 40,000-sf Grand Oaks Ballroom and several outdoor venues.

The resort also includes two PGA Tour Tournament Players Club (TPC) golf courses, one designed by Pete Dye and the other by Greg Norman, as well as the 26,000-sf Lantana Spa. Another of the resort's recreational amenities, the River Bluffs Experience, is a six-acre water park with multiple pools and water slides and a 1,100-foot lazy river. All of the water attractions are heated so guests can enjoy them year round.

Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, FL, is a destination unto itself with 36 holes of championship golf, the Spa & Salon, shopping, marina, private airport and more.



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The medical products company Hollister Inc., headquartered in Libertyville, IL, recently held its national sales meeting at the JW Marriott with 300 attendees from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Hollister has three different business units, so the attendees arrived in three waves, and the entire event lasted 10 days.

“What enticed us (to choose the JW Marriott) was that it was a new property so none of our attendees had been there previously. That was a plus,” explains Betty Glander, senior exhibit and meeting planner for Hollister. “It was, of course, beautiful and the location was good. The meeting space accommodated what we were looking for very well. The sales group that we met with on our site visit seemed very service-oriented and willing to do whatever it took to meet our needs, so it was a good fit for us.”

The Marriott team delivered on its promises. “I would just say that overall the meeting was very successful in large part to the incredible service orientation of that hotel. It far surpassed the service level of any of the hotels that we’ve used previously,” Glander notes.

Kicking Back On Kauai

Helen Wylie, corporate administrator/

Spa services “started off their trip and ended their trip. They came in relaxed, and they left relaxed.”



Helen Wylie
Corp. Administrator/Foundation Manager
Development Dimensions International
Bridgeville, PA

foundation manager for Development Dimensions International, planned a five-day, four-night incentive program at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa in



The perfect pairing at Westin Kierland: An attitude adjustment on the course followed by a back adjustment at the spa.

Hawaii in February. “The Grand Hyatt is amazing to work with,” she says. “Their staff in particular is just always accommodating, friendly and professional, yet we had fun at the same time.”

Golf and spa were an important part of her program. “We always have at least four foursomes and we pretty much take over the spa for two days. The golf course was amazingly beautiful. I think we got there just after it had just been redone.” The Poipu Golf Club is located adjacent to the Grand Hyatt and offers 18 holes of championship golf designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr.

Amenities at the resort’s 45,000-sf Anara Spa include an outdoor garden treatment area, outdoor lava rock shower gardens, soaking tubs and a 25-yard lap pool. “My people had everything from massages to facials, manicures and pedicures,” Wylie explains. “They got to use the outdoor haies (houses). Some just got to go and have lunch there and relax by the lap pool. We used all of the services. Everything was perfect. It’s nice to see (attendees’) faces when they come out of there. They were just relaxed. They were appreciative. (Spa services) started off their trip and ended their trip. They came in relaxed, and they left relaxed.”

The Grand Hyatt Kauai recently intro-



duced its “Relax, Re-Charge, Re-Group” program to offer groups custom-tailored spa and fitness programs at reduced rates. Planners can arrange to welcome their attendees with a “Traveler’s Rejuvenation” package, which includes an aromatic travel candle and bath products. Another option is the “Coco Mango Sun Collection,” which includes sunscreen, self-tanner and lip balm. Anara Spa also can arrange group activities such as a one-hour Sunrise Walk, yoga classes on the shores of Shipwreck Beach, or executive group fitness classes in kickboxing, aerobics or water aerobics.

Set on 50 oceanfront acres on the southern shore of Kauai, the 602-room Grand Hyatt offers 24,000 sf of indoor meeting space and 40,000 sf of outdoor space, including formal gardens, and lagoon and poolside venues. The resort recently celebrated its 20th anniversary by renovating all of its guest rooms.

Tournament Planning 101

Planners don’t need to be golf pros themselves to pull off a successful golf tournament. They just have to find the right expert to guide them. Teresa Sullivan is golf sales manager for the 732-room Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, AZ. The resort’s Kierland Golf Club has three nine-hole championship courses, which can be played in three different 18-hole combinations.

“For us here at Kierland, everything is about personalized service,” Sullivan says. “What I tell clients is ‘just give us the pairings and get everybody here, which is about a two-minute walk from the resort, and we’ll take care of everything else.’”

“We do personalized cart signs, a personalized welcome letter, personalized score cards. We’ll take their company logo and put it on everything. If they like to do a long drive or closest to the pin contest, we’ll put their logo on the proxy sign for that hole, too. We can also order any merchandise and have their company logo put on it. We can order anything from golf shirts, golf balls, hats and ball markers to wine bottles and custom golf flags. We can put their logo on the box lunches. We’ve even put logos on panini sandwiches before. We can really personalize anything to take the golf event to the next level.

“We take care of all of it so it makes it easy for the meeting planner,” Sullivan says. “We make them look good. We try to make their job easy because they have a lot of other things going on besides the golf tournament.”

The Westin Kierland offers several amenities not commonly found at other golf courses. “We have a covered driving range. We are the only course in Arizona that has climate-controlled golf carts,” Sullivan notes. The resort also owns four Segways that have been equipped to carry golf clubs. “Something we’ve done with a couple of groups is that we’ll put the VIPs or the meeting planner on the Segways to go around and say hello to everybody. It makes it a little bit different.”

Planners booking a golf tournament at The Westin Kierland also can take advantage of the resort’s “Scottish Experience,” which pays tribute to the Scottish immigrants who helped build Arizona’s railroads, mines and towns. “We can rent kilts for them and do a scotch tasting and cigars after their round,” Sullivan says. The golf club can also schedule the group’s round to finish just in time

to hear the bagpiper that plays on the course at sunset every day.

Sullivan explained that the “shotgun start” format is the one most commonly used for corporate tournaments. “It’s going to be the most popular because that’s when everybody can start at the same time, and we can spread them out on different holes. For larger groups, that’s the way to go so they can all finish at the same time. There are also different formats like a best ball, a scramble and a shamble. It just depends on the group and how experienced they are.”

Sullivan advises planners to book their golf tournaments early. “People are booking farther in advance now than two years ago. Companies are coming back to having an activity day, so I would say the trend right now is to book a tournament six to eight months in advance. If you’re going to a resort that has a peak season, I would say to book at least eight months ahead of time so you can get the date and time that you need.”

So should your golfers bring their clubs? “It’s trending now that the majority of them don’t bring their clubs,” Sullivan states. “It’s a hassle and it’s expensive. We have a partnership with Callaway, and we get new clubs every year. We have over 100 sets of rentals. They like to play with the newest and greatest and test them out.”

Any non-golfers in the group may want to take advantage of the 15,000-sf Agave, The Arizona Spa. For meetings and events, the resort offers 175,000 sf of function space.

Getting Back in the Game

Like many companies, Development Dimensions International put their incentive program on hold when the economy slowed down. “We took a break in 2010 because it was a way to save jobs and we thought that was important,” Wylie explains. “It was nice to bring everybody back for 2011 for a great trip (to Kauai). I think it was even more appreciated. We absolutely hated to leave.” **C&IT**



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LIFE is GOOD



Photo courtesy of Ayana Resort and Spa Bali

Jacqui Cooper, a five-time aerial skiing world-title holder, now promotes wellness as a yoga instructor and success coach. Cooper conducts a yoga session at Ayana Resort and Spa Bali, overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Meeting Planners Share Their Tips for Enjoying the Good Life

Kim Migut, CMP, is a 37-year-old wife and mother who loves her career as a meeting and event planner in the Indianapolis law office of Baker & Daniels. However, she admits that sometimes the stress levels associated with the job can get way out of hand.

Migut suggests that meeting and event planning is akin to a stress-making machine as planners must anticipate every worst-case scenario and be prepared 24/7 with Plan B and Plan C at the ready. On top of that, Migut says, "There are the hours of dedication on the job that can lead to wear and tear on the body (as well as the mind and spirit). It can be tough to balance things (in the office and at home). The planner is the first one at the meeting and the last one to leave. Even if the event is local, it's difficult to make it home in time to prepare dinner and spend quality time with your family. Sometimes it seems like the older you get, the harder it is."

Migut's most stressful year ever started seven months into her pregnancy when she had emergency intestinal surgery. Timing is everything, and fortunately Migut avoided extra stress by having most of the details for her company's

largest event of the year wrapped up way ahead of time. A scant eight weeks later, Migut's little girl arrived.

But there was more to come. As soon as she returned to work, doctors found two hernias, and then her father passed away. "That was a long year for me," Migut recalls.

How did she get through it all? Migut credits the great support from her employer and her team — one that was more than willing to jump in and help.

"For instance, while I was ill, I worked at home, and my company helped keep the amount of work on my plate down to a minimum. That certainly made life less stressful and a lot easier when I did go back to work," explains Migut. **"Planners should never let anything build up into something that is impossible to sort out either mentally or physically, and planners can do that by surrounding themselves with an expert team like mine."**

Listen to Your Body

To keep up with the demands of their profession, meeting planners must pay attention to their overall health and wellness. Even if they veer off the path, says Melissa Robinson, special events associ-

ate at St. Edward's University in Austin, TX, they can get back on the road to recovery. "The first thing planners let go of is their wellness plan; that is, if they even have one," says Robinson. "Planners tend to adopt the mindset, 'When I wrap up this project, then I am going to either start a fitness program or get my fitness plan on track.' We are obviously great at planning, organizing and executing meetings and events, but we sometimes let those skills fall short where it matters most — our personal health."

Robinson, a fitness instructor and personal trainer, is launching Fit Event, a new company that shows how to incorporate fitness and wellness into meetings, conferences and other events.

The idea was partially born as a result of her own health problems. "Last year, I found myself under a tremendous amount of stress" she says. "I was easily working 15-hour days and, when I was not working, I was stressing out about work. I ended up developing a severe case of esophagitis as well as stomach ulcers that took almost five months to heal. So, even as a wellness enthusiast I have to remind myself to listen to my body when it says, 'Hey, I need a break.'"

Robinson recommends that meeting professionals add an exercise component in the same way as they plan all other event segments. **"In today's technology-driven world, an exercise workout is never more than a few taps away. Planners can access free, on-demand workout videos through a cable or satellite provider or right from a smartphone," she says. "Also, think before you eat. Eat breakfast, eat regularly and eat wise."**

Learning From Planners in Their Prime

Guy Genis, Robert O. Sanders and Diane Harder are three prime-of-their-life meeting and event planners who learned how to balance their hectic, stressful work schedules with a rewarding home life. Here are their stories:

Work Hard, Play Hard

Producing events for more than 20

years, Genis, now 44, started out chartering yachts for guests of the Ritz-Carlton. Later, he started Eventmakers, a multimillion-dollar destination management and event planning company located in Toluca Lake, CA. It was a "labor of love," recalls Genis, "plus a lot of hard work and stress."

But it all paid off as the success of his company has allowed him to live a dream life with his wife and two children.

Business-wise, however, there's al-

10 Tips for Reducing Stress and Staying Healthy

Ford Ironman triathlete Steve Herron, a digital marketer for hotels and resorts and a registered Yoga Alliance 200 training instructor, notes, "Although hotels are much more accommodating with regard to fitness, the hours spent in meetings and the demands of entertaining clients leave little time to utilize those facilities," he says. "It is even more important for meeting professionals...to maintain some semblance of healthful living and nutritional eating habits."



STEVE HERRON

Herron says, "It really doesn't take a lot of work to be healthier. It just takes a little bit of education and some creativity. Meeting professionals are very adept at both of those." Herron offers these tips:

Eating

- Take food with you on flights, which will help avoid the calorie, sodium and sugar-laden choices in the airport food courts.
- Follow the "paleo" method of eating, which eliminates all processed foods and grains. It is designed to keep your insulin levels constant throughout the day and eliminates those peaks and valleys of energy.
- Plan meals several days in advance of departure to or from the destination because the day before is way too busy for a meeting planner to devote time for this vital task. Always combine a high-quality protein source (grass-fed bison or beef; free-range, non-steroidal chicken; and wild caught fish are best) with long-chain carbohydrates from vegetables. No bread, but rice or pasta of any kind is permissible. Add good

fat! An extensive list of foods can be found at nutritiondata.self.com.

- Increase consumption of water, add supplements and set a written deadline for being in bed (no TV). These are very effective at staying healthy.

Exercising

- Incorporate an exercise on the event agenda. It need not be long or even that strenuous to benefit all who participate.
- Coordinate with the hotel sales department to have a yoga class prior to a morning breakfast or an evening dinner event. The postures invigorate the nervous system and increase blood flow, and the breathing techniques help reduce stress. A mere 30 minutes of yoga can create a relaxed yet energized feeling that will last for hours.
- Bring an exercise DVD and play it on your laptop. Rodney Yee produces a variety of DVDs that are easy to follow. www.yeeyoga.com
- Walk when all else fails. It is a good alternative and very valuable for stimulating blood flow, giving the legs a nice break from the long periods of sitting (which is bad for the hamstrings and circulation) and getting fresh oxygen deep into the lungs.
- Cancel the cocktail hour and make walking a networking event instead. Your attendees will be happy you did, too, and it saves on the budget.

Entertaining

- Watch out for any form of entertaining that includes alcohol and late nights. The alcohol dehydrates and stresses your system, and the late nights will show up on your face the next morning.

— SJ

By Stella Johnson

ways the stress factor to, well, factor in. "If I stand back and think about the macro cause of stress, I would attribute it to pressure from the client," Genis observes. "After all, the larger the piece of business and the more important the brand, then the more pressure there is to fulfill particular needs. And, when they are public companies, then you are dealing with many entities including human resources, investor relations, public relations, accounts payable and more."

Recently back from Las Vegas, where he staged a huge event for "the largest fast-food company in the world," it wasn't long before a cold with flu-like symptoms caught up with Genis and kept him bedridden for a couple of days. "It's the nature of the business and, if you want to work hard and play hard, then maintaining health and wellness is a constant struggle for me."

So, how does this CEO process his stress? **"One answer is vitamins, especially B12. It keeps the immune system up and delivers plenty of energy,"** he claims. He also enjoys as much time at home with his family as possible and his chosen sport of tennis which he has seriously pursued since he was nine years old

Genis' philosophy of life is to "become a journeyman at your discipline of choice, and you will never work a day in your life, or at least it will seem like it," he proclaims. "Keep all your ducks in a row. You'll end up a lot healthier and happier for it, too."

Achieving Work Life Balance

At 48 years of age, Robert O. Sanders, CMP, has been in the hospitality field for more than 30 years — the first 15 spent with Marriott in various roles. Currently, he is general manager of meetings and events for New York City-based Ovation Travel Group.

Sanders strongly believes that there is a direct correlation between stress and

health in one's life. "It's a common occurrence and, if not managed properly, it can be dangerous to your health. I think your body is something that you must pay close attention to, no matter how close the deadline."

Sanders says he is in relatively good shape for a man in his late 40s, "except for high blood pressure, which I manage with medication, exercise and healthful eating habits." Like a lot of other planners, Sanders agrees that stress is the enemy in the meeting and hospitality industry with its myriad of details, last-minute requests and, often enough, a lack of information and communication. "This, for many planners, creates a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety, although any stress that I have is generally self-inflicted. But, that's because I'm a perfectionist and want everything to run smoothly."

Stress at home is also self-inflicted because Sanders says he devotes a lot of time planning his days and weeks "around my family's needs, schedules and celebrations in order to build in quality time to spend with them." "That means getting up around 5 a.m. and often staying up until midnight," he adds. "My home life is very important and very stable. That's because I work very hard to make it that way."

"If you've done your job well, the execution aspect of any meeting or event should be fairly smooth. **Surround yourself with a great team, ask a lot of questions, organize and control the things you can,**" recommends Sanders. **"That not only makes your life less stressful, but a lot healthier and more enjoyable, as well."**

At the Top of Her Game

Diane Harder, CMP, exudes the kind of confidence and experience a 56-year-old meeting planner has when she is at the top of her game. She has logged more than 25 years of hands-on experience in every aspect of the meetings business.

Currently, she is the meeting manager at Bethesda, MD-based JBS International. This veteran is settled in her profession and viewed as a mentor by her colleagues.

"Still, things can get stressful when everyone wants their meeting booked yesterday, and some may not even know exactly what they want," Harder claims. "People who don't plan meetings do not always understand this, nor do they have a clear picture of what is involved in the organization and execution of a successful event. Time frames and due dates come and go with no acknowledgment of the information from others that planners need to know before they are able to move forward on a particular project. Although it can be very stressful, the difference for me is that I enjoy the organization and challenge of what I do."

Harder manages that stress with a somewhat carefree home life she enjoys with her significant other and three shelter cats. As experts contend, continuing one's passions and interests in life is imperative for maintaining the wholeness of a person, and Harder does that well. "I've always loved the great outdoors and such activities as hiking, biking, kayaking and gardening," she says. She also loves cooking "only using recipes as guidelines," and reading as much as possible. "My home is like a small library," she says. "All of that eliminates stress in my life and, so far, I believe this blessed lifestyle keeps me fairly healthy and fit."

"As for wellness, in terms of one's body, mind and spirit, I do believe there is something far larger than self, and I find great fulfillment in giving back. My ability to fund-raise successfully combined with my skills as a meeting planner greatly complement each other. This, plus plenty of physical activity that includes cycling for long hours or walking marathon distances, keeps me happy and healthy. To quote the famous T-shirt slogan, 'Do what you enjoy, enjoy what you do. Life is good!'" C&IT



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Native dancers at Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Santa Fe.

Photo courtesy of Santa Fe CVB

New Mexico

Meetings in the Land of Enchantment

New Mexico is different.

You can see it as you fly over the multicolored, 10,000-foot peaks of the Sandia Mountains, and then begin your descent toward Albuquerque, while, beyond the city, thousands of square miles of high desert flow into a horizon broken only by purple mesas and mountains.

You can feel it, as well. The air. The colors of the mountains and the cottonwood bosque (forest) along the Rio Grande. The starry nights. The majestic vistas wherever you look. The omnipresent fragrances of hanging chilies and piñon trees. The ancient Indian pueblos (19 of them), Hispanic villages and other examples of the state's unique tri-ethnic culture.

For years, New Mexico flew under meeting planners' radar. But no more. There's now a concerted effort here to attract corporate meetings. And there's a growing number of planners who will happily swear that meetings here are more productive.

Meeting With the Mountain Gods

On the 460,000-acre Mescalero Apache Reservation, in south-central New Mexico, sits the Inn of the Mountain Gods. Most air access is through El Paso, a couple of hours to the south. But meeting planners are finding it well worth the trip.

The inn, which is surrounded by the imposing peaks and the tall pines of the Sierra Blanca Mountains, has 273 rooms and suites, most facing the mountains or Lake Mescalero, and 40,000 sf of event space. There's a 38,000-sf casino, a championship golf course, restaurants, lounges and clubs. Attendees can go horseback riding, boating, fishing, hiking or biking, possibly catching a glimpse of bald eagles, deer and elk.

The setting is paradise to Dick McDaniel, president of Amherst Grain & Fertilizer in Amherst, TX. He's brought his attendees (about 20) to Inn of the Mountain Gods eight

times in recent years for several days of meetings and networking, along with a little R&R.

"There are mountains, water, trees, streams and good weather...which is a great combination for people who come from west Texas, where there's flat plains and a lot of wind," McDaniel says. "But we also find that our sessions there are very productive — precisely because of the relaxing views and the natural beauty all around. When you combine that with the spirituality of being on an Indian reservation, it's a hard mixture to beat."

After meetings, McDaniel's attendees often head for nearby Ruidoso, with a well-known quarter-horse track and authentic Western shops, galleries and eateries.

McDaniel adds that his attendees "really look forward to going back every year. And when people look forward to meetings, they're more productive. We get a tremendous ROI in meetings in New Mexico."

The Aura of Santa Fe

Sitting at 7,000 feet at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains 60 miles north of Albuquerque, Santa Fe is filled with adobe buildings and red tile roofs. It's the state capital, and it's been a meeting place for 400 years.

There's more than 200,000 sf of meeting space here, 72,000 of it in the Santa Fe Convention Center, built in 2008. In addition, the city has 5,500 hotel rooms, a quarter of them within walking distance of the convention center.

Several of Santa Fe's best hotels are clustered around the town's famous Plaza. The historic Hotel La Fonda on the Plaza has 170 rooms and suites, and its 21,000 sf of meeting space is embellished with artwork, kiva fireplaces, chandeliers, rough-hewn beams and sand-painting ceilings. The Inn & Spa at Loretto is an adobe palace with 134 rooms and 16,500 sf for meetings. The Hotel Santa Fe (163; 8,600) is located in the historic Guadalupe Railyard District, now filled with distinctive shops and restaurants.

Santa Fe is a sophisticated town with excellent restaurants. The Compound specializes in upscale French cooking.

The Coyote Café and Rio Chama feature high-end New Mexican cuisine, and the latter has private dining rooms, a wine cellar, and a humidor where small meetings can be held.

"Sooner or later," says Keith Toler, executive director of the Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau, "meeting attendees will find themselves on the Plaza, around which are often gathered craftspeople from local Indian tribes, selling their dolls, blan-



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By Steve Winston

kets, pottery and jewelry. And all around the Plaza — all around town, in fact — are superb art galleries.”

Janet Rasmussen, vice president of finance at Santa Fe-based OpenEye Scientific Software, also believes meetings are more productive in New Mexico. In early March, she brought a group of 80 to the Eldorado Hotel & Spa (219 rooms; 23,185 sf), just off the Plaza, for the company’s Annual Meeting of Product Users and Customers. It was OpenEye’s third consecutive meeting here.

“We bring chemists, programmers and pharmaceutical researchers here to see what we’re working on,” Rasmussen says, “and to network and get to know each other. Our people tell us they love the mountains, the cultural amenities and the food. And they also tell us the atmosphere is conducive to relaxing meetings at which they can talk freely, and in which people seem more open to learning.”

Rasmussen says budgets in the pharmaceutical industry are pretty limited these days, and that most executives can only attend one or two meetings a year. It says a lot for Santa Fe that this is the one they pick. This is a meeting with noted presenters, and at which attendees ask a lot of questions. Often there are last-minute changes in the program — or more attendees than expected. However, Santa Fe (and the Eldorado) handle the changes seamlessly.

“Santa Fe is just emerging in the meetings market, and some planners aren’t very familiar with it,” Rasmussen says. “Because of this, I’d encourage them to work with a good partner in the hotel or in the convention and visitors bureau...someone who

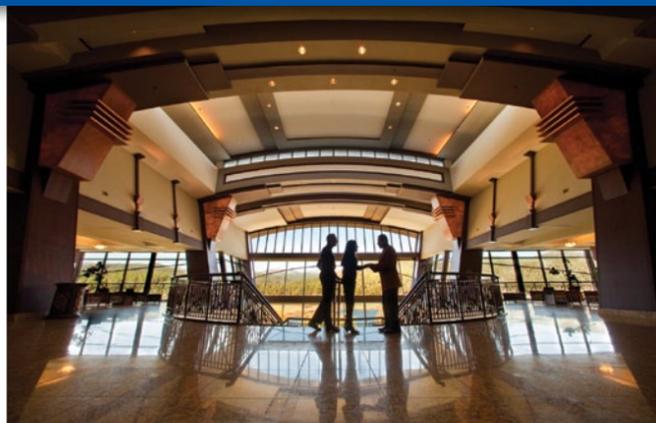


Photo courtesy of Inn of the Mountain Gods

Inn of the Mountain Gods offers attendees 40,000 sf of meeting space and unlimited opportunities for outdoor recreation in its mountain setting on the Mescalero Apache Reservation.

The resort is known for its Twin Warriors Golf Course, with challenging ravines and roughs, black volcanic rocks...and the occasional prairie dog or coyote sighting. (See related story on page 18.) There’s an award-winning spa, called Tamaya Mist Spa and Salon. The Tamaya Stables are the largest in the region, and planners often use them for teambuilding events and “rodeos.”

“Meeting planners tell us they come here for the Native American ambience and the natural beauty,” says Steve Defelice, director of sales and marketing at the resort. “I’m always hearing how it enhances the meeting experience, and by so doing, enhances the meeting productivity.”

Judy Zuercher is executive assistant to the CEO of Cupertino, CA-based CRC Health Group, which has nearly 150 facilities nationwide specializing in residential and outpatient services for drug or alcohol addiction and behavioral health. She’s staged the company’s Annual Management Conference at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya for two of the past three years.

“We brought 200 senior managers from all over the country to the Hyatt last September,” she says. “In our two meetings there, we’ve found that — as opposed to a big city — holding the meeting at a self-contained resort, where attendees never had to leave, brought them closer together, and increased the opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas.”

Because many of the attendees work in very stressful fields, she said that they appreciate a low-key place with a distinct spiritual essence. They were able to experience a nighttime ride in a tethered hot-air balloon, and watched Native American demonstrations of bread-baking and music.

“We find that New Mexico in general — and the Hyatt Regency Tamaya specifically — are very conducive to achieving our goals and objectives,” Zuercher says. “When people are more relaxed, they’re more productive. And when they don’t feel the need to run out at night, they tend to spend more time discussing the program.”

She says that the fact that the resort is on an Indian pueblo



“Holding the meeting at a self-contained resort...brought them closer together, and increased the opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas.”

Judy Zuercher, Executive Assistant
CRC Health Group, Cupertino, CA

can serve as the point person for their meeting.” She adds a footnote: “We’ve already signed a contract to come back next year.”

On the Santa Ana Pueblo

Midway between Albuquerque and Santa Fe is the prestigious Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, with 350 pueblo-style guest rooms and nearly 74,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space. The Hyatt, which is on the Santa Ana Indian Pueblo with magnificent vistas of the Sandia Mountains, is infused with Native American culture and spirit. There’s Native American art throughout, as well as opportunities to see Indian ceremonial dances and craftspeople at work.

serves to generate attendee enthusiasm about the program, as well, because it’s an antidote to the traditional meeting site.

“One night we roasted s’mores around a campfire, while listening to an Indian storyteller,” Zuercher recalled. “And if that doesn’t invigorate your attendees, nothing will.”

Albuquerque: the Duke City

Albuquerque boasts 16,000 hotel rooms, and more than 1 million sf of meeting space, 600,000 of which is at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

The Hyatt Regency Albuquerque has 395 guest rooms and 30,000 sf of meeting space downtown, convenient to all the great museums as well as the colorful Old Town district. Also downtown is the historic AAA Four Diamond Hotel Andaluz, a boutique property with 107 guest rooms and suites, and meeting space for 200. In the heart of Old Town is The Hotel Albuquerque, which boasts more than 200 newly renovated rooms and 61,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space.

Unique meeting spaces abound. The Anderson-Abruzzo International Balloon Museum Foundation is the largest hot-air ballooning museum in the world, and it offers 62,000 sf of event space. And venues such as The National Hispanic Cultural Center and The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center have modern meeting spaces to go with their interesting exhibits.

Church Street Café in Old Town proffers authentic Southwestern specialties and locally brewed beers with fanciful names (such as “Alien,” in honor of the fabled alien visit to New Mexico after World War II). El Pinto Restaurant & Cantina also offers authentic New Mexico cuisine. And many attendees enjoy Scalo Northern Italian Grill in the eccentric Nob Hill district. Each of these restaurants has space for group events.

“These days, meeting planners are looking for memorable experiences for their attendees,” says Rob Enriquez, vice president of convention sales, services and sports at the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau. “They want attendees to return home inspired and refreshed. New Mexico offers that. And we offer it at tremendous value.”

Many meeting planners enjoy getting out of their hometowns for their meetings. Jim Gallegos, who runs Mattel Corporation’s annual MCC International Gathering of Friends (a.k.a. Matchbox car aficionados) in Albuquerque, has tried. But his attendees won’t hear of holding the event anywhere else.

“We get about 800 attendees from all over the world every July at the Albuquerque Marriott for three days of workshops, exhibits, new-product displays, and toy shows and sales,” Gallegos says. “I’ve tried to move the event around to other cities. But our attendees won’t have it. They love the weather here. They love the tri-ethnic culture. They love the food. And



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“They really look forward to going back every year. And when people look forward to meetings, they’re more productive. We get a tremendous ROI in meetings in New Mexico.”

Dick McDaniel, President
Amherst Grain & Fertilizer, Amherst, TX

they love the fact that the Sandia Mountains are only a few minutes outside of town.”

Mattel ensures this event benefits the Albuquerque community as well. “We have a Saturday night auction,” says Gallegos, “and we donate much of the proceeds to Rachel’s Courtyard, a children’s hospital here in Albuquerque. And we donate most of the proceeds from the meeting itself to the hospital.”

Buffalo Thunder

Fifteen miles north of Santa Fe on the Pueblo of Pojoaque is the Hilton Santa Fe Golf Resort & Spa at Buffalo Thunder. The exterior is classic New Mexico, with adobe and vigas (wooden ceiling beams punching through the outside walls). As the resort is just 2½ years old, it also boasts state-of-the-art event and prefunction space.

The world-class resort, which sits amidst 587 acres of pristine Native American land with eye-catching high-desert rock formations, offers a casino, headline entertainment, a spa, 27 holes of golf, a pool with fire-shooting pillars, two nightclubs, excellent restaurants and a ranch. There are 450 guest rooms and 66,000 sf of meeting space, along with an old Spanish chapel where events can be held. Buffalo Thunder also has an interesting mix of teambuilding opportunities, with companies using GPS capabilities to stage scavenger hunts relating to tribal history and culture.

“I’m a New Mexican, so I can see the changes taking place here in the meetings market,” says Rhonda Maio of Albuquerque-based Quell Corporation, who holds occasional meetings at Buffalo Thunder. “Planners are discovering there’s an atmosphere here that you can’t find anywhere else. And this is a business-friendly state. The governor and the state legislature have made clear they’re determined to grow the meetings market here.”

Las Cruces

Las Cruces is just north of El Paso, TX. It’s home to New

Mexico State University, and no stranger to meetings and out-of-town visitors.

Because of its proximity to Mexico, there’s more of a Hispanic influence here than an Indian one. Las Cruces culinary specialties include dishes such as chicken enchiladas with green chili (and perhaps an egg on top).

The 55,000-sf Las Cruces Convention Center just celebrated its grand opening in March with the latest technology and a LEED certification. And there are 3,000 hotel rooms within a few miles of the center. Full-service hotels here include the Ramada Palms Hotel & Conference Center (114; 6,000 sf) and the Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces (203; 10,000 sf). There’s also meeting space at New Mexico State University and at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum.

The surrounding countryside is prime for biking, hiking, hot-air ballooning and golf. And the nearby White Sands area is a breathtaking 275 square miles of white gypsum sand dunes.

“We hear the same thing again and again from planners who come here,” says Chris Faivre, media manager of the Las Cruces Convention & Visitors Bureau. “It’s different from the usual meeting venue. It’s relaxing. It’s beautiful. And that combination helps meeting planners accomplish their goals and objectives, because attendees are relaxed and focused.”

Other Great Meetings Destinations

Taos, 150 miles north of Albuquerque, is one of the most beautiful towns in America, filled with galleries, crafts shops and excellent restaurants, an historic and colorful plaza, and a traditionally vibrant art scene. The town is overlooked by 10,000-foot Taos Mountain, sitting on the Taos Pueblo, home of the Tiwa tribe.

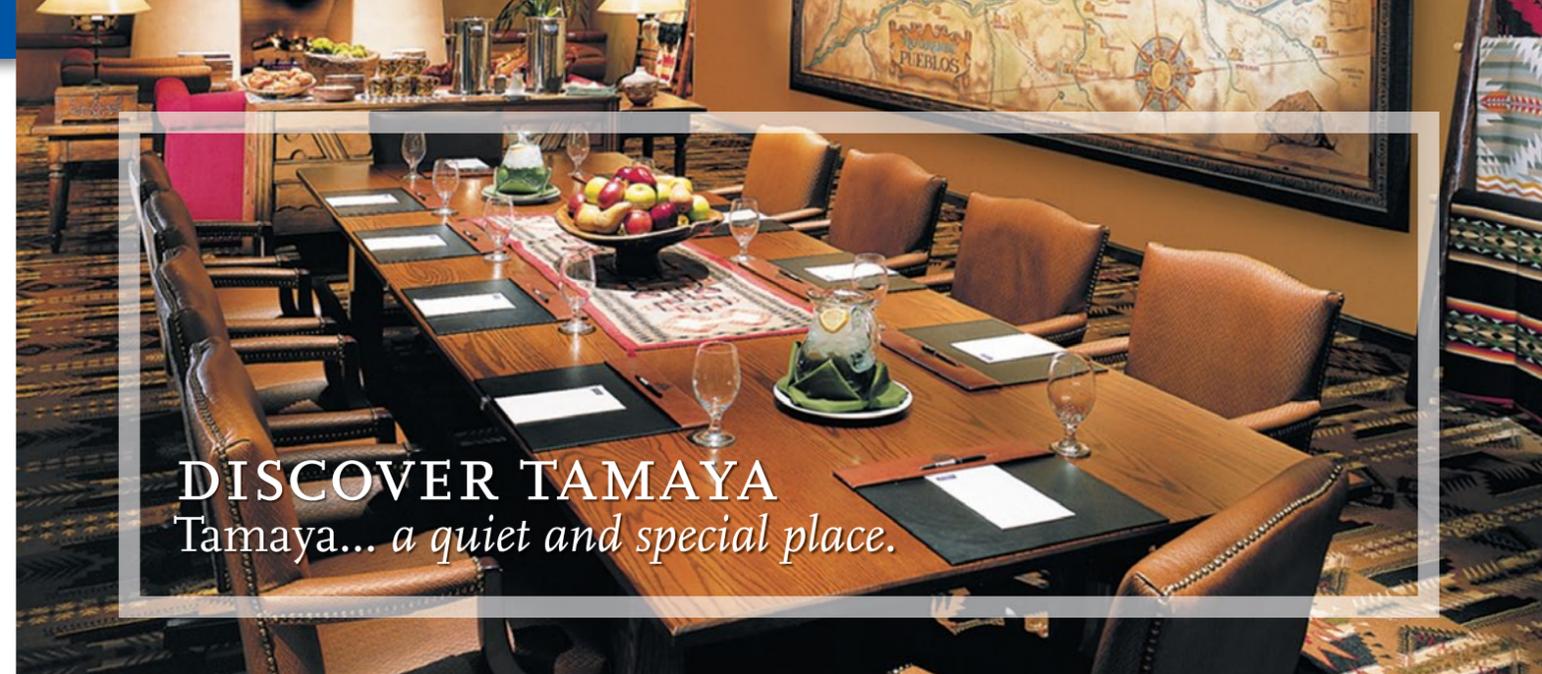
The Taos Convention Center, located in the heart of the historic district, offers 21,000 sf of indoor meeting and event space including three ballrooms, and outdoor patio space of 5,000 sf.

About 60 miles west of Albuquerque is the Acoma Pueblo, site of “Sky City,” the oldest permanently inhabited settlement in America. Here, atop a 300-foot mesa, a small group of Acoma people live as their ancestors did. Down the road from the mesa, however, is the Sky City Casino Hotel, with meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 300, along with name entertainment and the Huwak’a Restaurant.

The Land of Enchantment surprises and delights. It offers a meetings infrastructure that’s growing fast, and a distinctive culture and environs that inspire both productive meetings and lasting memories. **C&IT**



Photo courtesy of Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa
Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa features Native American cultural experiences including pueblo bread-baking demonstrations, tribal dance performances and storytelling.



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Offer is valid for new events booked and actualized by 1/16/2012 at Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa. Offer is valid for meetings with a minimum of 150 cumulative room nights required. Offer not valid in conjunction with previously booked or held meetings. Round trip air fare and transportation is for one guest only. Offer is subject to availability of function space and guest rooms at time of booking. Blackout dates may apply. Planner must request Discover Meeting Experience Package at time of booking.

100,000 Hyatt Gold Passport Points: Meeting planner will receive 100,000 Hyatt Gold Passport points when meeting is actualized. The earning of points is applicable with Hyatt Gold Passport terms and conditions. Planner must be enrolled in Hyatt Gold Passport® to receive points. To join Hyatt Gold Passport, enroll at hotel at time of booking or visit goldpassport.com. Points will be credited to planner’s account 6 to 8 weeks after the event has been held and paid for in accordance with the Sales Contract.

10% Meeting Rebate: Offer includes a 10% instant rebate off of Qualifying Charges on the total final pre-tax Master Bill. The 10% instant rebate is applicable only on eligible guestroom, food and beverage (on non-labor costs) and meeting facility charges associated with the event. Other incidental charges incurred at any hotel restaurants, shops and spa that are not stated in the sales contract and applied to the total final Master Bill are not covered by this offer. Qualifying Charges do not include any surcharges, gratuities, hotel fees, taxes or third-party charges by contractors (i.e. florists, equipment rental, in house A/V company, simultaneous translators, or event/venue decorators etc). 10% Rebate is payable on commissionable business. Rebate is payable to the company or organization holding the meeting and paying the Master Bill and will be issued as a credit on the final Master Bill, excluding non-qualifying charges as noted above, paid for in accordance with the terms of the Sales Contract.

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MOSS

James Moss was named director of sales and marketing for the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek, which is under construction in Lake Buena Vista, FL, and scheduled to open October 2011. He formerly served as director of sales and marketing at the Conrad Miami.

The St. Regis New York has named **Paula Dirks** as director of sales and marketing. She was previously regional director of sales in Hawaii for Starwood Hotels & Resorts.



MCLACHLAN

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, Orlando, FL, has named **Jared McLachlan** as director of sales. He most recently served as director of operations for Riverwalk Jacksonville Development, Jacksonville, FL.



TRACY

Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa, Rancho Mirage, CA, has named **Ty Brassie** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing for Riviera Palm Springs, Palm Springs, CA.



MCMINN

Javaud Mushtaq was named director of sales for Loews Coronado Bay, San Diego, CA. He most recently served as the director of national accounts for Loews Coronado Bay.

Agnelo Fernandes was named vice president of marketing and sales for the Terranea Resort, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA. He most recently was strategic advisor and independent consultant on projects related to luxury brands in hospitality, spa and wellness, real estate, travel and tourism, and food services.



LITTLE

Harbor Beach Marriott Resort & Spa, Fort Lauderdale, FL, has named **Jamie Jordan** as director of sales. She formerly served as director of association sales at The Orlando World Center Marriott, Orlando, FL.

One&Only Palmilla, Los Cabos, Mexico, has named **Cristina Romero-Peri** as executive director of sales and marketing, based in the Los Angeles sales office. She most recently served as regional di-

rector of sales and marketing in Mexico for Capella Hotels and Resorts.

Visit Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL, has named **Dennis Tracy** as senior vice president, destination sales and marketing. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing for the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau in Little Rock, AR.

Team San Jose, San Jose, CA, has named **Mark McMinn** as director of sales. He was senior sales manager at both the Wyndham Buttes Resort, Tempe, AZ, and DoubleTree Paradise Valley Resort, Scottsdale, AZ. **Cheryl Little** was promoted from national sales manager to associate director of sales. **Kim Augustyn** was named national sales manager, Central region, based in Chicago. She previously served as sales manager with Metropolitan Pier & Exposition Authority in Chicago.

The Charles Hotel, Cambridge, MA, has named **Heidi Bergos** as director of sales and marketing. She formerly served as vice president, sales and marketing, full service hotels, for Stonebridge Companies in Englewood, CO.

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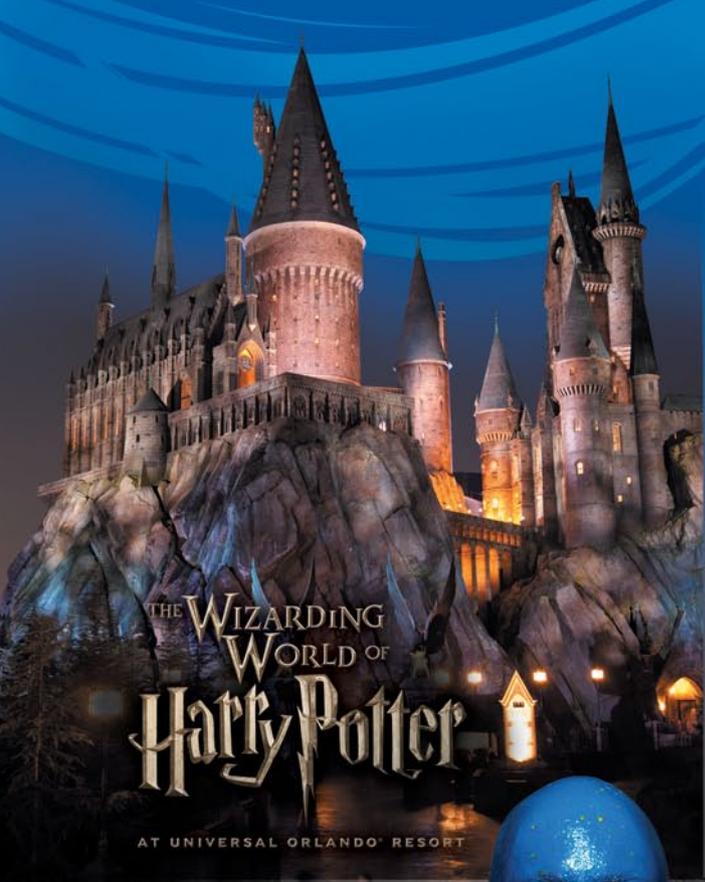
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