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Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS



Perfect Pairings

Great Golf Resorts +
Matchless Management =
Above-Par Meetings

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At Orlando's Reunion Resort, Gary Rosenberg (left), vice president of resort operations, and Bob Morse, COO of Noble Investment Group, invite meeting planners to visit their premier golf resorts for a full appreciation of the overall experience.

Destinations: Florida ● Las Vegas
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Photo courtesy of Carnival Cruise Lines

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The Virginia Beach Convention Center has more than 150,000 sf of column-free exhibit space and about 29,000 sf of meeting space. The facility is the nation's first convention center to earn LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

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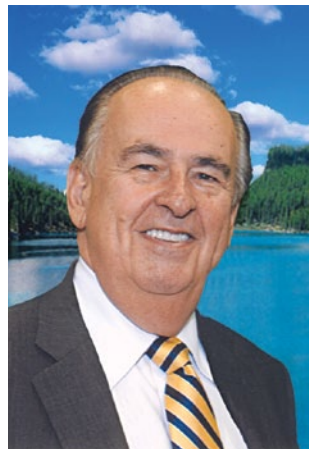
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The Right Combination

Our cover story "Perfect Pairings: Great Golf Resorts + Matchless Management = Above-Par Meetings" tells the story of how the right combinations can lead to success. The management of Noble Investment Group, namely Gary Rosenberg, vice president of resort operations, and Bob Morse, COO, combine their wealth of hospitality and golf resort experience and expertise with an unwavering commitment to help meeting planners put on more successful meetings.



Pictured on our cover in front of one of their premier golf resorts, Reunion Resort & Club near Orlando, FL, the pair's job No. 1 is to build a solid relationship with meeting professionals such as Candace Washer, the district market manager for Graybar Electric Company, who has hosted an annual event at Reunion Resort & Club since 2008. "The relationship I have with the property is very important for me," says Washer. "I know that if I ask for something, I know they will follow through and do it. Our customers and our suppliers all love the resort. We've had nothing but a positive response, because they offer excellent product with good support and customer service. They take good care of you."

The cruise industry, too, surely has the right combination in place. In "Get Onboard: Why More Planners Are Taking Meetings to Sea" we learn that cruise ship management has been really listening to what planners want and need to stage successful meetings. Dwain Wall, senior vice president and general manager at Fort Lauderdale, FL-based travel agency Cruise One & Cruises Inc., explains, "Until fairly recently, cruise ships really were not built for meetings, and they didn't have the right kind of dedicated space. But that has really changed over the past decade, and especially over the last three or four years. Now we see a number of very nice and very large vessels like the Celebrity Solstice class of ships to Royal Caribbean's Oasis class. Carnival and Princess and the other major cruise lines have also recognized the importance of the meetings business as a growing segment that they have largely ignored in the past. Now we're seeing more and better meeting space and services on cruise ships."

Despite our slow economic growth, those organizations with the "right combination" will continue to lead the pack.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher



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Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau Marks 50 Years

The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau (AOCVCB) marked its 50th Anniversary on August 23. Charles Ahlers, president of the AOCVCB, and the bureau staff gathered at the community reception recognizing the milestone year with a "Cheers To 50 Years" celebration.



Albuquerque CVB Unveils Customized Incentives

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — Customized incentives are offered to meeting and event planners who partner with the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB), area hotels and the Albuquerque Convention Center in the planning and execution of their next meeting or convention. Rob Enriquez, ACVB's vice presi-

dent of convention sales, services and sports, says, "We realize that, due to current economic conditions, planners are challenged with a variety of factors when choosing a destination for a convention, and Albuquerque's new customized incentive can definitely lessen those challenges." The incentive offers range from complimentary convention center space and financial offers to authentic cultural activities and local activities. Examples include locally inspired VIP welcome gifts, hotel meal vouchers, complimentary welcome receptions and local experiences such as expert presentations on how to purchase turquoise, a one-hour cultural presentation by a Native American flutist or gift certificates for hot-air balloon rides. Package offers vary based on the group size and begin at 50 peak room nights. The meeting must actualize before December 31, 2014. Complete details of the incentive options are available at www.itsatrip.org/meeting-planners.



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AIBTM 2012 Filling Up Fast

More than 70 exhibitors have re-booked for the 2012 AIBTM, and other new exhibitors are following suit.

On the back of business done at the show, Mark Theis of Starwood Hotels & Resorts was one of the first to re-sign. "This first U.S. event was certainly appropriate. It was an exceptional, productive opportunity for us to meet firsthand with potential business-to-business buyers."

Mike Fegley, vice president, America sales for InterContinental Hotel Group says, "We have an



FEGLY

army of sales-people here, hotels from all over the world, and at opening we had 450 appointments on the books, and we have added to that. It's been a phenomenal event for us. None of this two-minute speed-dating stuff, our new property in Times Square has had every time slot fully booked — it was rocking!"

AIBTM 2012 first-time exhibitors Palm Springs CVB, Long Beach CVB and Seneca Niagara Casino will be join brands such as Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, Club Med, Crystal Cruises, Government of Dubai, InterContinental Hotel Group, Marriott Hotels, Shangri-La Hotels, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Norwegian Cruise Lines, Preferred Hotels and Royal Caribbean. Also, U.S. suppliers to the sector include Chicago Convention and Tourism Board, Greater Boston CVB, St. Louis CVC, Visit Denver, NYC & Company and New Orleans Metropolitan CVB. AIBTM 2012 will take place in Baltimore, MD, June 19-21, 2012. www.aibtm.com

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DoubleTree by Hilton Debuts in India. Hilton Worldwide announced the opening of its DoubleTree by Hilton brand in New Delhi's Mayur Vihar area, which is the first of five properties planned by Hilton under the DoubleTree brand in India. The property will be owned and operated by Eros Resorts & Hotels, an Eros Group company, and managed by Hilton Worldwide. The newly built hotel is located within a 20-minute drive of the business district in Noida. The property offers 196 guest rooms, including four suites. Every guest room features wired and wireless Internet access, LCD television, media hub, electronic safe, refrigerated private bar, tea- and coffee-maker and iPod docking station with alarm clock. Additional onsite amenities include 24-hour in-room dining, laundry, concierge and travel desk services. www.doubletree.hilton.com

Terramar Los Cabos Mexico Selects WMG for U.S. Business Development. Effective September 1, World Marketing Group, a Minneapolis-based B2B sales and marketing company providing contract sales and marketing services in North America to international hospitality suppliers, will provide business development and representation services in the U.S. for Terramar, Los Cabos' leading DMC. Terramar delivers high-quality, leading-edge programs for its clients throughout Los Cabos. Their expertise in the meetings, incentives and conference segments is unsurpassed in Mexico says Jane E. Schuldt, president of World Marketing Group. www.worldmarketinggroup.com

Düsseldorf Tourism Offers Unique Program: Create Your Own Fireworks. A fireworks seminar for incentive and corporate programs is a new event module offered by Düsseldorf's Tourism Office. One of the most unique pieces in any program toolbox, it is one of the most popular in the convention city of Düsseldorf. A catalog of customizable event modules is part of the service provided by the business travel and convention services department of the city's tourism office, Düsseldorf Marketing & Tourismus GmbH, to meeting planners from around the world. Other modules include: cooking, gala evenings, detective games, barbecues, casino nights, sports and boat races on ice or water. For more information on event modules and on Düsseldorf as a location for incentive programs and corporate meetings and events, visit <http://business.duesseldorf-tourismus.de/en>.

Norwegian Unveils Designs for New Builds

MIAMI, FL — Norwegian Cruise Line recently unveiled new balcony and mini-suite stateroom designs for Project Breakaway, the project name for the company's two new next generation Freestyle Cruising ships scheduled for delivery in April 2013 and April 2014. Each of the 144,017 gross ton vessels will have approximately 4,000 passenger berths.

Project Breakaway ships represent an opportunity for guests to "break away" and find a true respite at sea. These new ships will each have 1,024 balcony staterooms and 238 mini-suites. Each balcony stateroom has a king-size bed (that can be separated) with a pillowtop mattress and many more amenities. The energy-efficient staterooms utilize key card access to control lighting in the room. www.ncl.com/breakaway



The new design for NCL Project Breakaway.

MEETING VALUES

The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO. Planners who book a meeting by December 31, 2011 for November through April of any future year receive 25 percent allowable attrition and a rebate of up to 10 percent off room revenue. Additional incentives are offered for a meeting held in January–April 2012, including: 15 percent off 2012 standard group catering menus; 15 percent off AV; 1/40 comp room; 1/40 comp suite upgrade. For details, visit www.broadmoor.com or call 800-633-7711.

■ **Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, Destin, FL.** Meetings booked by October 31, 2011 and consumed by December 31, 2011 with 200 or more total group paid room nights receive: 10 percent off published banquet pricing; 10 percent off AV published pricing; 15 percent off Serenity by the sea services; 25 percent attrition; comp Internet in guest rooms and one connection in general sessions; double Hilton Honors points on guest room revenue; five beachfront upgrades with complimentary amenities; 10 percent off teambuilding; comp "Welcome Sunset Reception"; and comp a.m. and p.m. breaks. 877-705-6641, www.sandestinbeachhilton.com

■ **MGM Grand, Las Vegas, NV.** Planners booking a minimum of 500 room nights for three nights peak on or before December 31, 2011 for 2012 dates receive the following exclusive offer: 25 percent attrition, 30 percent off published rates for MGM-owned AV; 1/40 comp guest room; 1/40 comp upgrade to Skylofts suite; 1/40 VIP amenity; special group pricing for KA by Cirque du Soleil; 15 percent off spa treatments; 15 percent off salon services; 10 percent discount at Conference Center Business Center; and complimentary meeting room rental. 702-891-1199, www.mgmgrand.com

■ **Renaissance Resort and Convention Center at World Golf Village, St. Augustine, FL.** The Recession-Proof Meeting Package, valid for new meetings booked and held by December 31, 2012, includes a 3 percent rebate on master account; complimentary meeting room rental; 1/35 comp guest room; up to 10 suite upgrades; 25 percent allowable attrition; 10 complimentary tickets to the adjacent World Golf Hall of Fame; and more. Offer requires 20 or more room nights with minimum two-night stay. 888-740-7020, www.worldgolfrenaissance.com

GBTA Foundation and Egencia Unveil Findings

ALEXANDRIA, VA —The GBTA Foundation, the research arm of the Global Business Travel Association, and Egencia, the corporate travel arm of Expedia Inc., released the 2011 "Corporate Travel Policy Benchmarking and Insight" study, evaluating travel management trends and policies across North American and European organizations and assessing travel policy effectiveness overall.

Key findings include: Only 21 percent of travel managers are currently tracking ancillary fees; 41 percent of those that do not track these fees, plan to in the next 12 months; 61 percent of respondents said travel policy is more a guideline than a mandate, and 72 percent said there are few to no consequences for policy violations; 33 percent of respondents authorize business class on flights to Europe, 32 percent to South America, 42 percent on flights to India, Africa or the Middle East, and 47 percent on flights to Asia-Pacific.

GBTA Foundation research has shown that although business travel continues to rebound from

its recession lows, it is growing at a much slower rate than hoped for, says Michael W. McCormick, GBTA executive director and COO. "The importance of a carefully managed travel program has never been more important," he says. "The 2010 study clearly established the effectiveness of travel policy to help

organizations minimize corporate travel costs, and we expect this year's report will be even more effective now that we have points of comparison." The complete 2011 "Corporate Travel Policy: Benchmarking and Insight" study is available at www.egencia.com and www.gbta.org/foundation.



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Gov. Christie Visits Revel

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ – On a recent visit to Atlantic City, NJ, Governor Chris Christie reiterated his commitment to a revitalized Atlantic City and toured the Revel casino resort project, which is set to open in Spring 2012. "Atlantic City is a microcosm of how the environment, tourism and the economy are interwoven," says Christie. "We are making progress every day so that Atlantic City will not only have the 'best boardwalk in the nation' — it will be the best vacation and gaming destination in America." www.revelcasino.com



Mike
Mason

Don't Let 'Lead Spam' Kill Your Bottom Line

What Planners and Hotels Need to Know

There's an interesting trend occurring within hotel sales and meeting planner offices across the country. It's one that, quite honestly, defies logic. It goes something like this: On the hotel side, they're receiving more meeting leads than ever before, but closing those leads up to five times less often. On the planner side, getting a hotel to respond has become a challenge. So they send the request to more hotels. Seems more hotels does not necessarily mean more responses. In both cases, more does not mean more. It actually means less. Less booked business and fewer thoughtful hotel bids. So what's up?

Two words: Lead Spam

What is lead spam? Simply put, it's a lead (meeting request or RFP) that gets sent to a large number of hotels, many of which don't really have a chance at booking the meeting. How many hotels are we talking about? According to some estimates, leads are now being sent to 20–30 hotels at a time.

Response Time

You may be asking, what about the issue of response mentioned above? If the hotels aren't responding, what's a planner to do?

You're right. Response times are a challenge. But it's the activity itself — adding more and more hotels to a lead — that actually drives the lack of timely responses.

It comes down to two issues: the sales managers' time and (now this is a big one) the belief of the sales managers that they actually have a shot at booking the meeting.

We'll add some numbers to the mix to make the point in a different way.

Meeting RFP: Mike's Beach Party Barbecue and Sales Meeting: 75 rooms x 3 nights

- *Hotels on the lead: 20*
- *20 sales managers receive it.*
- *They check availability*
- *They try and call their customer to clarify a few things.*
- *Review rates and get approvals.*
- *After 90 minutes of time (over a couple of days) they're done.*
- *Total hotel sales time invested on one lead: 30 hours*

Chance of closing? Five percent.

What this says is that in order to book one meeting, these 20 hotels will need to expend a total of 600 hours, or another 570 hours (19 more leads x 30 hours = 100 percent close).

Why is this important?

Because now it's a time management issue. Will the sales managers work harder on the lead with 20–30 hotels on it or the one that has five to eight? If they have two choices, which one gets the attention and ultimately the offer that best matches what the customer is looking for? Right. The one that has fewer hotels and has a far greater chance of booking. This is the key point.

The good news is that if you change just a few things in your meeting RFP process, you will be well on your way to gaining not only the attention from the hotel that you deserve, but also a very compelling proposal.

Thing #1: Tell the hotel who they're competing against. If that's not possible, give them the number of hotels they're competing against. Knowing the competitive landscape will benefit you as hotels will

likely fight harder for your business knowing who they're up against.

Thing #2: Keep the hotel list down to eight or fewer. Again, reducing the competition for your hotel partner means your meeting request will garner more of your sales manager's time.

Thing #3: Let the hotel know when the bid is due as well as when you will make a decision. This is very powerful information for a sales manager to know and will add motivation to get the information back to you. The closer the two dates are, the harder the hotels will work to get it to you. For example, indicate that you need a response by Friday and will make a decision by the following Friday.

managers are forever being asked, "What's the update on Mike's Beach Party Barbecue and Sales meeting?" Unfortunately, they will never learn the outcome of many of the leads they receive. This last step is really more out of respect for the time and effort each hotel puts into your bid than anything else. Help them close the loop on your business so they can move on to the next opportunity.

Technology

One final thought. Technology now plays a very big role in most everything we do as hoteliers and planners. The ultimate benefit of this is efficiency, whether it's time, work load, dollars or all three. The

Will the sales managers work harder on the lead with 20–30 hotels on it or the one that has five to eight?

Thing #4: Try to avoid the one-click "blanket" approach to adding hotels to your RFP. Some online lead channels allow you to select entire geographic areas of hotels in one click. This is a major culprit of lead spam. If at all possible, do a little more work to narrow down your list to just those hotels you really want. After all, why look at 15 restaurants when you know you're only interested in the five that serve Italian?

Thing #5: When you finally do make the decision, let the losing hotels know they didn't get it. Even better would be to let them know who you picked and why. Sales

challenge for all of us is to remember that there is a link between effort and reward. In other words, the more effort you put into using these slick new tools the more likely it is you'll get the outcome you need — and far quicker.

For planners, that means receiving timely meeting bids from your hotel partners that are complete, meaningful and valued. And for hotels, this means receiving more "bookable" leads that allow for competition on a level playing field and the ability to offer a high-value meeting package, customized to each customer's unique needs. **C&IT**

Mike Mason is a 25-year veteran of the hospitality industry and the founder of Zentila, the recently launched online booking engine for short-term meetings that also acts as a sales solution for hotels. For more information, log on to www.zentila.com, or call 407-656-5683. Or visit www.mikejmason.com for more industry insights.

There are few real frontiers left in the meetings industry. But among them is the cruise ship-based meeting and incentive program or corporate event. While many meeting planners have never seriously considered a meeting at sea, most attendees secretly dream of one, experts say. That's because cruising to exotic ports of call represents a timeless symbol of adventure.

It so happens that in 2011, in the wake of a severe recession that wreaked havoc with meeting budgets, cruise meetings make more sense than ever before, says Joyce Landry, CEO of Miami-based

by going to another sales meeting at another hotel? Where's the novelty? So, if you do a cruise, there's excitement from the beginning. Then you get the benefit of the value, too."

Dwain Wall, senior vice president and general manager at Fort Lauderdale, FL-based travel agency Cruise One & Cruises Inc., adds, "From the planner's point of view, the most important benefit of doing a cruise meeting is the ease of doing it," he says. "You have everything you need right there. Your food and beverage is taken care of. You have great meeting space. You have activities for your attendees. And you have all of the amenities

deeper experience than just a regular meeting. And we've seen that be true of sales meetings, product launches, incentive programs and other kinds of cruise meetings."

Making the Case

For planners new to the notion of cruise meetings, one common misperception is that a cruise ship is a cruise ship. "The first thing planners need to understand," Landry says, "is that there are as many kinds of cruise ship experiences as there are hotel experiences." As one broad example, she says, Carnival ships are geared for a young-

GET ONBOARD!

Why More Planners Are Taking Meetings to Sea

Landry & Kling Cruise Event Services, which helps corporate clients plan meetings at sea.

"When you do a cruise today, you can give attendees that feeling of pre-recession abundance again," she says. "You can make them feel pampered again because there's no scrimping going on. On a ship, you can give attendees a great experience at low cost."

Kristina Feil, CMM, NCS, co-owner of Stuart, FL-based Meetings at Sea, another expert consultant, agrees that the cost-effectiveness of cruise meetings is one thing driving their resurgence in popularity. But, she adds, just as important is another thing planners typically look for. "And that is the 'wow factor,'" Feil says. "Most people have never been on a cruise. But most people, it turns out, according to research, also have a cruise on their bucket list. So that makes a cruise a very special experience for most people. It's a novelty. It's exciting. By comparison, who's going to get excited

that meeting attendees expect, regardless of where they go, whether that's a spa or a gym."

Laura LaBelle, vice president of modeling school and talent agency Barbizon USA in Tampa, FL, experienced her first meeting at sea two years ago. She worked with Landry & Kling to plan this year's cruise. Both programs were five-day Caribbean itineraries on a Carnival ship out of South Florida.

"I do five large land-based programs a year, in addition to the cruise event," says LaBelle, who has been a meeting and event planner for 17 years. "The great thing about cruises is that it's an all-inclusive package. Everything is taken care of. That's nice for me as the planner. And it's also nice for our attendees, because they can just relax."

Says Landry, "One of the things we hear consistently from first-time users of cruise meetings is that their attendees were more engaged," she says. "They say attendees told them it provided a

er, more active audience, while Royal Caribbean creates more of a laidback, family-style experience.

Meanwhile, smaller cruise lines such as Seabourn, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Lindblad and Viking River Cruises offer highly individualized, eclectic itineraries and experiences. And there are always new entrants aiming at a new niche audience, such as the French-based Compagnie du Ponant, which has a fleet of smaller, beautiful ships in Europe and has opened a U.S. office, Landry says.

Another thing planners should understand, says Wall, is that the cruise industry of the last five years has increasingly geared itself toward corporate meeting and event business. "Until fairly recently, cruise ships really were not built for meetings, and they didn't have the right kind of dedicated space," he says. "But that has really changed over the past decade, and especially over the last three or four years. Now we see a number of very nice and very large

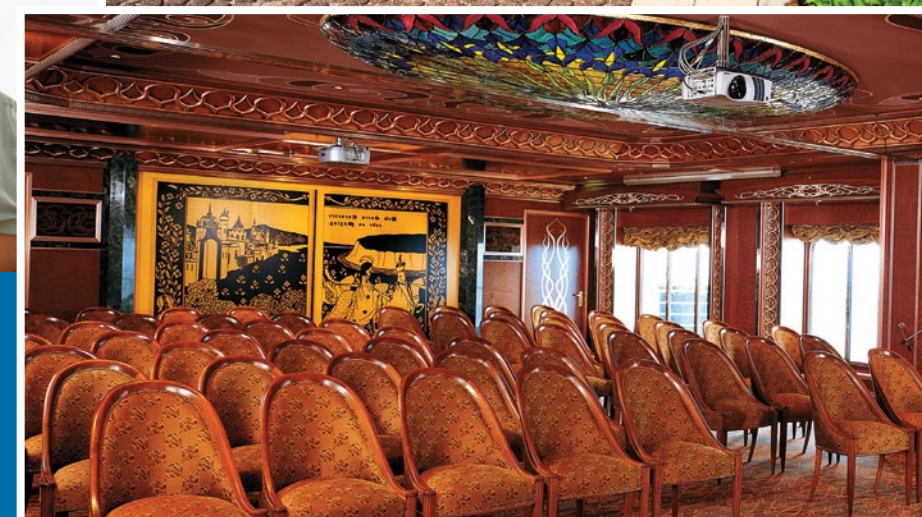
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By John Buchanan

vessels like the Celebrity Solstice class of ships to Royal Caribbean's Oasis class. Carnival and Princess and the other major cruise lines have also recognized the importance of the meetings business as a growing segment that they have largely ignored in the past. Now we're seeing more and better meeting space and services on cruise ships."

The Bottom Line

What really seals the deal is the all-inclusive value. "From a business perspective, the most important thing about a cruise is cost-effectiveness," Landry says. "A cruise offers a lot of amenities and activities that are included in the per-person cost. You pay a single price, per person, in U.S. dollars, in advance. Then once everybody is on board, everything is included. And that typically includes meeting space, as well as AV and other meeting services."

Planners and meeting hosts are often

astonished when they compare the cost of a cruise meeting to a similar program that is land-based. "I actually had to do that comparison for a client last year," says Karen Cassmeyer, CMP, LES, vice president of Fort Lauderdale, FL-based independent meeting and event planning company National Conventions and Training. She hosts at least one incentive program a year on a cruise ship. "So I did a direct comparison of a program that included features such as the entire group eating breakfast, lunch and dinner together and having entertainment and other activities, and so on. And I found the land-based program to be triple the cost of the cruise."

For LaBelle, the net savings of a cruise program over a land-based meeting are typically between 25 and 50 percent, she says. "But I look at the value in a bigger way. That's because from my point of view, I just have everything I need right there on the ship. You don't have

to worry about audio-visual or anything else you normally have to outsource. The ships also have very good meeting space, as good as any hotel now, including large spaces that are the equivalent of a traditional hotel ballroom. And they also have the equivalent of breakout space that's used for a different purpose at night."

Onboard Interaction

In addition to cost savings, Cassmeyer sees another important benefit in cruise meetings. "The main reason we do them," she says, "is because they are so incredibly popular with salespeople. They enjoy being with each other on a ship, where they are self-contained. That means that somebody who might stay off on their own at a hotel is almost forced to be part of the group on a cruise ship. It just makes for a more social experience. And that's important to an incentive program. It's incredibly important, really, because in an incentive program, you usually



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have several different levels of qualifiers. They're all top salespeople, but some are higher achievers than others. So that means a trip becomes an incredible motivator, because people can interact, whether that's relaxing by the pool or at dinner, in a very exclusive environment."

Full-Ship Charters

Planners seeking the ultimate in a cruise meeting experience should consider a full-ship charter, which allows a planner to custom-design every aspect of a program.

"A charter just takes the cruise meeting experience to the next level," Landry says. "It takes something that is already very experiential and unique and makes it exclusive. The entire ship becomes your customized environment for that particular meeting."

To assist planners with information and resources related to cruise meetings, Landry & Kling launched Seasite.com in 2009. This year, they've added the capability for direct submission of meeting planner RFPs to a wide range of global cruise lines. The service is free.

Cautions for Planners

Although cruise meetings deliver tan-

gible benefits, the underlying architecture of a typical transaction can be daunting. Feil points out that the contracts are very different from and more complex than a standard hotel contract. "They're foreign to most meeting planners," she says. Another difference is a typical lack of a dedicated salesperson — even if the cruise line has a meeting and incentives department. That doesn't necessarily mean a first-time meeting planner won't get relegated to the "group" department — and run aground on strange shores.

Given the unique challenges and obstacles, Feil and Landry strongly recommend that planners partake of the generally free services of an expert consultant such as Meetings at Sea or Landry & Kling. "You have to know the various pitfalls and how to avoid them," Feil says. "And the very first lesson, always, is do not judge anything by a ship's brochure, just as you wouldn't from a hotel brochure."

What's Next?

As both the meeting and cruise industries continue to evolve, they will increasingly converge, experts say.

"What we're seeing now is that the cruise lines are constantly looking for new destinations so they can continue

to provide very good product for the corporate market," Landry says. "And one of the things they're doing now, for example, is shorter cruises in Europe. And we're seeing those kinds of changes because the major cruise lines want to attract more corporate business. And to really be able to do that, they need shorter cruises."

As current examples, she notes, Royal Caribbean's Jewel of the Sea is launching new four- and five-day itineraries. Royal Caribbean is also putting its Voyager of the Sea into New Orleans, which will create a new opportunity for creative planners to combine a cruise meeting with one of the most beloved destinations in the U.S.

Nevertheless, says Feil, what the industry really needs is more options for short cruises. "Now, these shorter itineraries are really only offered by the major cruise lines," she says. "I do a lot of high-end meetings, such as three- and four-day executive or board retreats, and I'd love to put them on a cruise ship. But my only real options are the major cruise lines. What we really need is more premium, or luxury, cruise lines doing shorter itineraries year-round. Then you'd see a lot more meetings at sea." **C&IT**

Cruise News

The latest from **Norwegian Cruise Line** is the Epic. Blue Man Group performs in the 685-seat Epic Theater, and the Cirque du Soleil's Cirque Dreams and Dinner in the Spiegel Tent venue can be reserved for groups. The 4,100-passenger Epic also accommodates smaller incentive groups in its luxury Villas suite complex, comprising 60 suites and villas on two private decks at the top of the ship. NCL's Project Breakaway is the name for two new next generation Freestyle Cruising ships. Both are 4,000-passenger vessels and are on order for delivery in spring 2013 and spring 2014.

Royal Caribbean International's (RCI) newest ship, the 5,400-passenger Allure of the Seas — sister ship to the equally megasized Oasis of the Seas — launched last December. It spans 16 decks and features seven themed neighborhoods. DreamWorks Animation provides onboard entertainment spectacles such as a water acrobatic show in the open-air AquaTheater. The Allure also features the first

at-sea Broadway production of "Chicago: The Musical" RCI recently announced that it will build a new class of ships under the "Project Sunshine" code name. The first, a 4,100-passenger ship, is slated for delivery in 2014.

Carnival Cruise Lines, which now has 23 ships and operates out of more U.S. ports than any other line, debuted its new Carnival Magic in May. The 3,600-passenger ship also is the 100th ship in the Carnival Corporation's family of cruise brands. The Magic's sister ship, Carnival Breeze, will make its debut in June 2012. In November, the Magic will reposition from Barcelona to Galveston, TX, for seven-day Caribbean cruises.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises' luxurious six-star ships are sized right for incentive groups, with capacities ranging from 490 to 700 passengers. The staterooms are all ocean-view suites, most of which offer balconies, and there is an onboard Canyon Ranch Spa. The Regent Seven Seas fleet of all-suite vessels — Voyager, Mariner and Navigator — are undergoing a multiphase, multimillion-dollar enhancement program dubbed the "Seven Seas Signature" initiative. **C&IT**

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Perfect Pairings



Great Golf Resorts + Matchless Management = Above-Par Meetings

Every year for the past six years, retail pharmacy giant CVS Caremark has staged a prestigious golf tournament and social event that raises money for charity and provides a good time for 400 VIP attendees. This year, the company moved the event to Reunion Resort & Club, a AAA Four Diamond, Forbes Four Star Wyndham Grand Hotel Resort located outside Orlando.

"The Florida resort we had used for the preceding six years had worked out very well for us," says Steve Normandin, the event's organizer and CVS Caremark's district sales manager in Tampa. "But we decided we needed something that was Orlando-based, because we were involving more and more of the state in the event."

As a result, Normandin researched Orlando's golf courses and decided that Reunion Resort, which opened in 2007, represented the cream of the crop.

In fact, Reunion Resort & Club — whose hospitality assets are managed by Atlanta-based Noble Investment Group — is the only property in the world to feature Signature Design courses by three of golf's greatest legends: Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Arnold Palmer.

"Given that," says Normandin, "Reunion Resort was exactly what we were looking for."

Because the three-day, two-night event includes festivities for two days prior to the CVS Caremark Pro-Am Celebrity Golf Tournament, the company requires a classic resort setting, Normandin says. "We need the ability for sponsors to come in and host hospitality events, and we also do extensive entertaining," he says. "Those activities are integral to the overall success of the event from a business perspective."

Because Reunion Resort & Club features 65 lavish estate homes, ranging in size from three to eight bedrooms, both CVS Caremark and its supplier-hosts rented several for this year's event. On the evening prior to the tournament, the company hosted four social events simultaneously in four different estate homes, with shuttle service between the uniquely exclusive venues.



In the lobby of Orlando's Reunion Resort, Gary Rosenberg (left), vice president of resort operations, and Bob Morse, COO of Noble Investment Group, have a wealth of experience and expertise, especially in unique destination resorts that feature world-class golf. Committed to helping meeting planners put on more successful meetings, the pair extend an invitation to planners to visit their resorts for a full appreciation of the overall experience.

Photo courtesy of Noble Investment Group

Like Normandin, Candace Washer, the Tampa-based district market manager for Graybar Electric Company, headquartered in Clayton, MO, hosts an annual event that combines golf in a resort setting with VIP attendees — 20 top customers of the wholesaler of electrical, com-data and security products. Since 2008, Washer has used Reunion Resort & Club for the three-day, two-night event.

Why is golf so integral to it? The social nature of the game is essential to Graybar Electric's business objectives and philosophy, Washer says.

"It gives our good customers time away from the office, because our industry is hectic," Washer says. "You have to be 'on' all the time. So we take them out of that environment and put them in a different one that's more relaxed. They have an opportunity to spend time with our personnel, whether that's their sales rep or a branch manager, along with suppliers. Our business goal is to build relationships with key suppliers and customers."

Reunion Resort & Club provides the perfect atmosphere for doing that. "It allows them a more relaxed atmosphere for doing business," says Washer, who plans about 20 meetings a year, all of them in Florida. "And it also allows people to get to



The drive up to Reunion Resort & Club near Orlando never fails to impress attendees. Reunion Resort is the only property in the world to feature Signature Design golf courses by three of golf's greatest legends: Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Arnold Palmer.

know one another a little bit better. It's a very social business event," she says.

On arrival day, attendees — electrical, com-data and security contractors that are all Florida-based customers of the company or major suppliers — relax before convening for dinner. On both of the following days, they get together for training sessions as well as a round of golf.

Just as it is to CVS Caremark, Reunion Resort's location important to Graybar Electric. "In Florida, there are a lot of great properties and venues," Washer says. "But Reunion Resort works

What Meeting Planners Need...Winning Golf Resorts Deliver

For as long as there have been offsite meetings, golf has played an important role in many of them. That's why the U.S. boasts a glittering assortment of legendary golf resorts that have stood the test of time and established reputations as links landmarks.

For example, **The Broadmoor** in Colorado Springs, CO is not only a renowned golf resort. It's also is the longest-running consecutive winner of both the AAA Five Diamond and the Forbes Travel Guide Five Star awards.

Judy Vetkoetter, executive director of Dallas law firm Gardere Wynne Sewell, hosted a two-day, two-night golf meeting there in 2009 for about 150 attendees, and the firm will return later this year to play one of its three courses. The original golf course was designed by Donald Ross and opened with the hotel in 1918.

"We gather lawyers from four different offices for this meeting, and

golf is important to it because it gives them an opportunity to visit socially as well as attend strategic planning sessions," Vetkoetter says. "And if you play golf, you know that The Broadmoor has three of the best courses in the world, including courses designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and

Robert Trent Jones Jr." The 744-unit resort also features 18 restaurants, cafés and lounges; a tennis club and five-star day spa, as well as more than 185,000 sf of meeting and event space, including Broadmoor Hall, a 60,000-sf pillar-less and carpeted ballroom.

Another resort renowned for its golf courses and meeting facilities is the **Kiawah Island Golf Resort**, located on a 10,000-acre barrier island off the coast of South Carolina, 21 miles from historic and charming Charleston. The

The Broadmoor features the historic East and West courses designed by Donald Ross and Robert Trent Jones Sr. and the Mountain Course by Nicklaus Design.

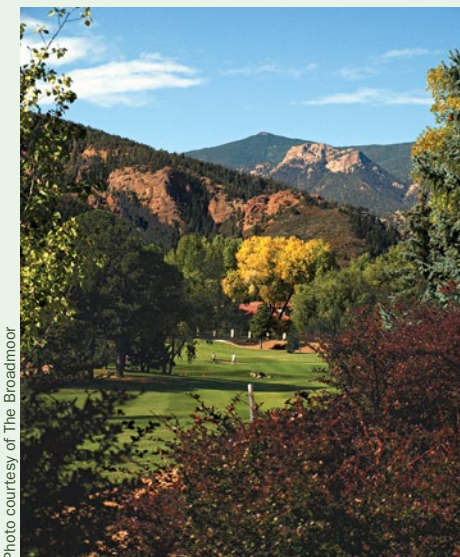


Photo courtesy of The Broadmoor

By John Buchanan

so well because it's in Orlando. And that's important to us because my district covers the entire state of Florida and Orlando is a very central destination that is easy for most people to get to. And then once they get to Reunion Resort, attendees are completely taken care of."

Like Normandin, Washer raves about the estate homes as hospitality and VIP housing venues. "They're right on the golf course and they're awesome," she says.

Setting the Standard

In its short history, Reunion Resort & Club — which includes no traditional hotel rooms, but 1,100 total bedrooms in 285 condominiums and 65 private homes spread across 2,300 lush acres — has established itself as one of the premier golf resorts in the U.S.

"There are a plethora of things that make it unique," says Gary Rosenberg, Noble Investment Group's vice president of resort operations. "It's the only resort on the planet that has three courses designed by Arnold Palmer, Tom Watson

and Jack Nicklaus. That makes us incredibly unique.

"In addition, we're home to the Annika Academy. There's only one in the world — and it's at Reunion Resort & Club."

Under the passionate guidance of legendary golfer Annika Sorenstam, the internationally renowned academy provides expert tutelage to golfers of all skill levels. It is also a Certified Callaway Performance Center featuring custom club fitting and video swing analysis. The facility also includes a fitness room, conference room and full-service locker rooms.

Not only do its three courses represent the three biggest names in the history of golf course design, they also feature extraordinary landscaping, with 15 varieties of native grasses, azaleas and camellias, as well as palm, live oak, cypress, crepe myrtle and magnolia trees. Wildlife routinely spotted includes coyote, fox, raccoon, Florida deer, gopher tortoise and armadillo. Birdlife includes wild turkeys, heron, egret, osprey, red tail hawk and owl. Against such a majestic backdrop, the

6,916-yard Palmer Course, 7,154-yard Watson Course and 7,244-yard Nicklaus Course all offer tough challenges and exhilarating rewards for golfers of all skill levels. Tee positions can be shortened on all three courses.

Reunion Resort & Club also offers a full range of top-notch amenities to match its acclaimed links. The sprawling complex features dining, shopping, a boutique spa, tennis center, biking and walking trails, and a five-acre water park with a 1,000-foot lazy river and 150-foot slide. In addition, the resort features 25,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space.

Exemplary Service and Support

Reunion Resort & Club is not just celebrated for its golf courses. Its other amenities and its level of service to meeting planners have also been essential to its success.

"The relationship I have with the property is very important for me," says Washer. "I know that if I ask for some-

thing, I know they will follow through and do it. Our customers and our suppliers all love the resort. We've had nothing but a positive response, because they offer excellent product with good support and customer service. They take good care of you."

Based on his first experience with the property this year, Normandin agrees with that assessment. "They were very good about paying attention to all that and making sure that everything went well," he says. "Whatever we requested got accommodated. They also gave us suggestions on how to make certain things better. They were very proactive. It was a very positive experience. They are very good partners."

Particularly for CVS Caremark's golf tournament, service that gives Normandin confidence is of the utmost importance, he says. "We're staging an event for 400 people who are spending a lot of money to be there," he says. "And if something doesn't go right, we have to wait a whole year to make things better."

Even if there are no glitches, Normandin looks to his hotel partners and other key vendors to support his vision with proactive gestures. On that count, Reunion Resort & Club also gets high marks, he says. "We try to vary our social events from year to year and keep them interesting," he says. "So, it's very important to us that the resort be proactive and able to help us with the planning of a good event, so that the sponsors and attendees who come enjoy it and look forward to the following year. Reunion did a great job of that, too."

Normandin also praises the resort's venues and amenities. "They have very good venues, such as their flagship restaurant on the top floor of the condo tower," he says. "We used that for a VIP event. We also staged an event by the pool and did a luau. Their restaurant is outstanding. The food-and-beverage service was excellent. I can't say enough good things about it. We had a celebrity-based, VIP audience. And they loved the food and the environment."

Other Jewels in the Crown

Noble Investment Group, which owns and manages a total of 54 hotels across the U.S., including 38 it owns and manages and 16 it manages for other owners. The company, founded in 1993, is also the single largest holder of franchises within the Hyatt organization, across multiple brands.

Noble Investment Group also manages the hospitality assets at Hammock Beach Resort. Located in Palm Coast, FL, the AAA Four Diamond, Forbes Four Star Hammock Beach Resort features 330 condominium and villa units that include 20 traditional guest rooms in The Lodge. Yacht Harbor Village features three-bedroom condos with private balconies and views of the Intracoastal Waterway. Cinnamon Beach, a five-minute walk from the main condo tower, features secluded luxury condos.

Hammock Beach, which has 18,000 sf of meeting space and 30,000 sf of outdoor function space, also features

Photo courtesy of Kiawah Island Golf Resort



The famous Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf Resort will host the 2012 PGA Championship. Designed by Pete Dye, the Ocean Course has more seaside holes than any other course in the Northern Hemisphere.

resort complex includes the 225-room, Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, as well as the 600-villa The Villas at Kiawah Island Golf Resort.

Despite the allure of its accommodations and amenities, it is golf that largely defines the resort. It features five courses, designed by Jack Nicklaus, Pete Dye, Tom Fazio,

Gary Player and Clyde Johnston. Its links are so impressive that they've been home to Ryder Cup and PGA competition. Next year, Kiawah Island Golf Resort, which debuted a new \$24 million, 24,000-sf clubhouse in 2007, will host the 2012 PGA Championships.

The resort's signature restaurant is The Ocean Room Steakhouse, and Jasmine Porch serves authentic Lowcountry fare. The AAA Five Diamond Spa at The Sanctuary features 12 treatment rooms.

Although acclaimed golf resorts such as The Broadmoor and Kiawah Island Golf Resort can be found across the country, Florida ranks as one of the states with the most golf resorts:

Rosen Shingle Creek, one of Orlando's premier meeting hotels with superb golf, attracted Betty LeDoux-Morris, CMP, a 15-year meeting planner veteran and principal of LeDoux Meeting Management Inc. in Tarpon Springs, FL. A multiple user of Rosen Shingle Creek since the first year the resort opened in 2006, LeDoux-Morris says there's no better way to get reacquainted with business contacts than in the private setting a golf course affords. She staged an event for approximately 3,000 attendees last year, and calls Rosen Shingle Creek a "planner's dream." "The let's-make-it-happen

approach and attitude of the entire staff makes planning a meeting there worry-free. The golf team at Shingle Creek has consistently taken a proactive approach to our tournaments ensuring that every guest has an incredible "take home" experience. This approach flows through the entire resort," says LeDoux-Morris. "From the moment a guest is out of their car or dropping their golf bags at the course, they feel as though they have come 'home.' From the front desk staff to wait staff to housekeeping staff, their friendly, welcoming, please-feel-at-home attitudes keep our guests happy and returning," she adds. And from a planner's perspective, "happy guests equals a happy planner," concludes LeDoux-Morris.

The 230-acre resort, located 10 minutes from Orlando International Airport and within one mile of the Orange County Convention Center, features two of Orlando's hottest new restaurants, Banrai Sushi and Tobias' Flats & Watering Hotel, bringing its total in-house dining options to 14 including

award-winning restaurants A Land Remembered, a classic steak house, and Italian bistro Cala Bella. In addition, the property features the full-service Spa at Shingle Creek and 445,000 sf of meeting and event space.

Named a four-star "Best Places to Play" by *Golf Digest* magazine, the Shingle Creek Golf Club is a David Harman-designed, 18-hole, 7,149-yard championship golf course featuring undulating fairways and interconnecting waterways. Named as one of the "Top 40 Best New Golf Courses in the U.S." by *Golfweek* magazine, the club is home to the Brad Brewer Golf Academy, rated as one of the "Top 25 Golf Schools" in the nation by *Golf Magazine*. One of *Golf Magazine's* "Top 100 Instructors," Brewer and his PGA staff can orchestrate the ultimate golf program for meetings and events of all sizes.

The Shingle Creek Golf Club, home to the Brad Brewer Golf Academy, was named as one of the "Top 40 Best New Golf Courses" in the U.S. by *Golfweek* magazine.

Photo courtesy of Rosen Shingle Creek



two 18-hole championship golf courses: The Conservatory Course, a Tom Watson Signature Design known as the longest and hardest golf course in Florida, and The Ocean Course, a Jack Nicklaus Signature Design, which features six oceanfront holes — more than any other course in Florida.

The complex also features a fine dining Italian restaurant, sushi bar, 10,000 sf full-service spa, and a 6.5-acre water park that features a sandy beach pool and water slide.

Located south of Atlanta, Noble Investment Group developed and built the 150-room The Lodge and Spa at Callaway Gardens, which is operated as part of Marriott's exclusive Autograph Collection. Guests at The Lodge and Spa at Callaway Gardens, which opened four years ago, have access to a pair of celebrated and exclusive golf courses.

Renovated in 2002, 18-hole Lake View is Callaway's original golf course, designed by J.B. McGovern and Dick Wilson. However, Cason Callaway ac-



Photo courtesy of Hammock Beach Resort

Located in Palm Coast, FL, Hammock Beach Resort features 330 condominium and villa units and two 18-hole championship golf courses: the Tom Watson Signature Design Conservatory Course and Jack Nicklaus Signature Design Ocean Course.

tually provided the inspiration for course's layout. Callaway believed that playing golf should be a pleasant experience in beautiful surroundings, and the course embodies that philosophy.

The 7,057 yard, par-72 Mountain View course, designed by Dick Wilson, features tight, tree-lined fairways that are characteristic of a true championship course. It was home to the PGA

Tour's Buick Challenge for more than a decade. One of Mountain View's most intriguing holes is the par-5 15th, where the threat of water looms over both tee and approach shots. This hole was ranked as the fourth most difficult par 5 on the PGA Tour by *USA Today*. The resort complex also features the 26-acre Twin Oaks Golf Practice Facility, which ranks as one of the best in the South.

Leading the Meeting Industry

Now that the meeting industry is recovering from the sharp downturn of 2008–2009, Nobel Investment Group intends to leverage its golf resorts as unique offerings. "The three properties are a differentiator that only we have in the way we have it," says chief operating officer Bob Morse. "And a lot of groups want to be at one of our resorts primarily because of our golf amenities."

Before the recession, meetings and incentive programs represented about 60 percent of the total business at Reunion Resort & Club and Hammock Beach Resort, and 40 percent of the business at The Lodge & Spa at Callaway Gardens. The company's goal now is to get back to those kinds of percentages.

At the same time, Morse and Rosenberg see significant changes in the corporate meetings market. "Companies are spending less per attendee," Rosenberg says. "They're cutting back on receptions on arrival days. They're

cutting back on dinners and recreation. They're cutting back on entertainment."

In such a challenged business arena, Morse and Rosenberg predict that Noble Investment Group's hotel ownership and management credentials will become elemental to its branding. "We bring experience — a broad depth of experience," Morse says. "And we have a particular experience and expertise in resort properties that feature great golf. Furthermore, one of our missions is to obtain more and more resort management agreements in our resort group and help drive value for owners."

Nevertheless, he says, it's unlikely that the meeting industry will ever get back to the glory days just before the recession. "I don't think we're ever going to see again what 'normal' was before," Morse says. "My belief about one permanent change is that companies will only bring people to the meeting that really need to be there and that you only bring them for the amount of time required to accomplish the goal of the meeting. And

I also think meeting budgets will continue to be cut and that discretionary spending will be reduced even further."

But, he quickly adds, for many groups golf resorts and great courses will be integral to a full recovery of the market and a return to business as usual.

And success for hoteliers will depend more than ever before on market differentiation and a reputation for consistently excellent customer service.

"Noble offers three unique destination resorts that feature world-class golf," Rosenberg says. "And the only way for planners to learn about them is to come and see for themselves what these resorts have to offer. You can't fully appreciate our golf resorts from a brochure. You have to experience them. And we know from the planners coming here now to visit our properties that we'll have a very solid market position going forward, because our commitment is to help meeting planners put on more successful meetings. And we know how to deliver just that." **C&IT**



Photo courtesy of Arnold Palmer Bay Hill Club and Lodge

The Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard is known as the King of Events after Palmer's reputation as the King of Golf, the man who made golf cool. Held in March in Orlando at **Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club and Lodge**, the PGA Tour golf tournament is the ideal destination for Safety National's annual incentive trip, says Skip Shewmaker, a business development representative for the St. Louis-based specialized workers' compensation solutions company. More than 20 years ago, Shewmaker brought his first group of 40 attendees to Bay Hill Club and Lodge. Today, 300 participants experience meetings, dinners, entertainment and, of course, golf. The staff at Bay Hill make Shewmaker's job easy, too: "It's real easy here because we've done it so many times before, and everybody knows the drill, so it's a pretty easy event to run," he explains.

Furthermore, Bay Hill has significant drawing power, and, according to Shewmaker, Safety National has made a commitment to its brokers "who understand if they give us X amount of business they can continue to come to Bay Hill and enjoy the fruits of those placements. It sure enters into their thinking, and if we cut that off, it would certainly impair our ability to influence them."

They say it's not unusual to run into the King of Golf himself at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge in Orlando, which is an ideal venue for an intimate board meeting or memorable incentive.

Located 20 minutes from downtown Orlando, Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge features 70 recently renovated guest rooms and offers a comfortable, relaxed environment with 9,000 sf of meeting space, including three executive boardrooms, six meeting rooms and banquet facilities that seat up to 250. Bay Hill features 27 holes of championship golf, the Arnold Palmer Golf Academy, state-



Photo courtesy of Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

of-the-art Salon, Spa & Fitness Center, six tennis courts, heated junior Olympic-size swimming pool and exceptional dining. The Lodge offers all the comforts of home and a place to relax and unwind after business sessions.

Located near Jacksonville, **Ponte Vedra Resort** is a historic landmark that dates back to the earliest days of Florida history as a tourism destination. It includes the 250-room Ponte Vedra Inn & Club and the 64-room The Lodge & Club. Golf has been integral to the time-tested popularity of the resort since the Inn & Club introduced the first course to the region when it opened in 1928. The Lodge & Club complex was built in 1989. Today, Ponte Vedra is recognized as one of the premier golf resorts on the East Coast. It features two courses, the Ocean Course and Lagoon Course. The Ocean Course and Lagoon Course each showcase a distinct "seaside links" flavor. Meandering lagoons, undulating fairways, elevated Bermuda greens protected by steep-faced bunkers and a prevailing sea breeze provide for every kind of shot-making challenge imaginable. **— JB**

Group instruction at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is the real deal. The premier golf resort features putting greens, a practice bunker, teaching staff of six, private lessons and a daily clinic.



Photo courtesy of Pennsylvania Convention Center

The newly expanded Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia offers 679,000 sf of exhibit space and 152,000 sf of meeting space, up from 90,000 sf. Now the 14th-largest center in the U.S., the PCC can host two conventions or trade shows simultaneously.

Bigger Is Better

Expanded Convention Centers and Cutting-Edge CVB Services Attract New Business

Meeting planners can expect to see more marketing and outreach efforts from convention centers and convention and visitor bureaus (also known as DMOs or destination marketing organizations), mainly because facilities are expanding or planning to do so. DMO convention marketing budgets have grown 7 percent during the current fiscal year, more than double the usual rate, according to a study by the Destination & Travel Foundation in partnership with Red 7 Media. Budgets are projected to increase 6 percent through 2012. DMOs are investing more in industry trade shows, conferences and conventions; websites and digital activities; discounts, incentives and concessions; and attendance marketing support.

Budgets are also growing because convention centers need new marketing efforts to attract meetings to fill expanded space. For example, in March the Pennsylvania Convention Center

reopened after completing a \$786 million expansion that increased the facility's size by 62 percent to 2.3 million sf. The new center offers 679,000 sf of exhibit space and 152,000 sf of meeting space, up from 90,000 sf. Now the 14th-largest center in the U.S., the PCC can host two conventions or trade shows simultaneously.

Philadelphia officials tout the PCC's expanded capacity. "Whether it's a corporation, association or trade show that needs exhibit halls or more meeting space, we now have the flexibility to provide it," says Jack Ferguson, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PCVB). "For corporations, we know that they plan on a shorter term and we have the space for them. Before, we would have to say the dates are already taken."

The PCC renovation is paying big dividends. During the first six months of 2011, meeting attendance increased 60

percent compared to 2010. Total room nights jumped 42 percent. About \$2.8 billion of Philadelphia's \$3.5 billion in convention center business on the books as of early August stems from the facility's expansion.

Convention centers must expand to keep pace with competitors, retain groups that are growing in size and attract new bookings from larger groups.

Expansion Updates

In **Nashville**, the new Music City Center will improve the city's ability to attract larger meetings. Scheduled to open in early 2013, the \$585 million facility will be three times larger than the current convention center and offer 375,000 sf of exhibition space. There also will be a 60,000-sf ballroom and 140,000 sf of meeting space. Plans also include a headquarters hotel, the 1,000-room Marriott Marquis, which will offer a 40,000-sf ballroom and meeting space.

The 800-room Omni Nashville Hotel will be located across the street from Music City Center and offer 80,000 sf of meeting and event space when it's completed in 2013. And the Nashville Medical Trade Center (NMTC) is also set to open in 2013. Designed for medical trade shows, the NMTC will offer 200,000 sf of exhibition space.

On the West Coast, San Diego officials are working out financing for a proposed \$752 million expansion of the **San Diego Convention Center** (SDCC). The city is holding public meetings to solicit public input on the plan, which would add 400,000 sf of exhibit, meeting and event space. Located on San Diego Bay, the SDCC currently offers 72 meeting/banquet rooms totaling 204,114 sf and more than 525,000 sf of exhibit space. The facility's two ballrooms offer more than 80,000 sf.

The 7,500-seat **Anaheim Arena at the Anaheim Convention Center**

(ACC) has undergone an upgrade. Renovations include outdoor function space for up to 5,000 people; remodeled food service areas; new carpeting, painting and palm trees as well as other improvements. The ACC has 813,000 sf of exhibit space and 51 meeting rooms. Recently, the ACC became one of only 14 U.S. convention centers to earn the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Green efforts undertaken by the ACC include a "Green OC" section on the bureau's website. The section details green programs and alternatives under six categories — transportation, hotels, food and beverage, entertainment, resources and the ACC.

In **Boston**, a state panel known as the Convention Partnership recommended an expansion plan that would double the size of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC). A new 1,200-room convention hotel is also part of the

proposal. The city of Boston and the state legislature must still approve the project because it requires public financing and tax increases. Currently, the BCEC offers 516,000 sf of exhibit space and 82 meeting rooms totaling 160,000 sf.

In the Midwest, the renovated and expanded **Indiana Convention Center** offers 566,000 sf of exhibit space and more than 113,000 sf of meeting space. The center is now among the 20 largest in the U.S. Combined with nearby Lucas Oil Stadium, the two facilities provide 3.4 million sf of exhibit and meeting space. Walkways connect both facilities to more than 5,000 hotel rooms. Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts, will host the 2012 Super Bowl.

In Other News

The **San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau** (SDCVB) formed a supplementary six-member sales team that

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By Derek Reveron

covers San Diego North County, which includes La Jolla, Rancho Bernardo and Carmel Valley. The team was formed after the San Diego North Convention & Visitors Bureau, which was a separate entity from the SDCVB, disbanded last year. "The north bureau contracted with us to create a sales marketing effort for the north hotels. Our existing team already takes care of the north hotels, but we now have a supplementary team that focuses on the 43 hotels that are in what's considered the north part of the county," says Margie Sitton, SDCVB senior vice president of sales.

The SDCVB runs two other efforts that are keys to attracting and servicing meetings. The bureau operates sales offices in several cities, including Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Atlanta, Indianapolis and Washington, DC. There is also a site inspection team that guides meeting planners. "They meet planners at the airport, set up the itinerary, keep them

on time and provide information about San Diego. The most important thing is to tell them what they don't already know about the destination," says Sitton. The SDCVB solicits feedback on services provided by site inspection teams to maintain top-notch service.

A site visit to San Diego proved very effective for meeting planner Ann Echols, an account executive who plans meetings and incentives with Travel Planners Inc., San Antonio. Echols is planning a business meeting and exposition in February 2013 for Matco Tools, a manufacturer and distributor of auto equipment. Attendees will include more than 2,000 Matco distributors, executives and managers. Prior to choosing San Diego, Echols and some top Matco executives made a site visit. "They picked us up at the airport and showed us lots of different venues and restaurants. They were willing to do whatever it takes to get the group there and showed us how

affordable the city is. They wowed them," says Echols.

Caytie Pohlen-LaClare, president of the LaClare Group, Inc., a Minnetonka, MN-based meeting and event planning company likes the SDCVB's website. "As a person who always visits CVB websites, I have a special appreciation for San Diego's because it's so meeting-planner friendly. Sometimes we use it for RFPs, depending on the size of the group and its needs. It also has an interactive map to fine-tune your search for hotels," says Pohlen-LaClare. She found the SDCVB's services to be helpful for a medical device company meeting held in January. The four-day event involved 50 sales executives and customers. "The CVB provided information on new properties that had come online since the last time I had done a program there, and helped me with promotion materials to send out," she adds.

Boston was recently named as the



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Photo © Ferris Architects

A rendering of the proposed design for the bayside expansion of the San Diego Convention Center includes a sustainable five-acre waterfront public space.

top destination for international association meetings in the U.S. It is the third consecutive year that Boston was awarded the designation by the International Congress and Convention Association. The recognition follows a comprehensive international marketing campaign launched last year by the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau and its partners, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, the Cambridge Office for Tourism and the Massachusetts Port Authority. The campaign, aimed primarily at Europe, includes attendance at international trade shows, sales missions and education trips.

In **Philadelphia**, the PCVB kicked off its "Smart Incentives for Smart Planners" promotion. Groups that book meetings during any of eight time periods by September 15, 2012 can receive discounted rates at about 20 participating hotels. Additionally, the PCVB, the City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation have joined forces to promote the destination as the "smart choice" for hotel development and investment. City officials have said that 1,500 more hotel rooms are needed to meet growing demand resulting from the expanded center.

On the West Coast, the 50-year-old **Anaheim Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau** recently released its 120-page Anaheim Orange County Travel Guide, a detailed resource for visitors to Orange County. The guide features overviews of attractions, hotels, entertainment, transportation, recreation and other essential information. The guide is

available as a PDF download and iPad application.

The **Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center** (LBCEC) has new wiring and wireless capability to accommodate the latest computer, Internet and AV technology. Located in downtown Long Beach near about 5,000 hotel rooms, the LBCEC provides more than 400,000 sf of exhibit and meeting space.

Visit Orlando, formerly the Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau, announced a Meeting Makeover contest that awards \$50,000 in meeting goods and services to the winner. Meeting professionals must submit an essay of at least 350 words by September 30, 2011. The winner will receive a new and improved meeting experience from Visit Orlando's meeting services team. Meetings eligible for the contest are those scheduled to take place by April 30, 2013 and have at least 350 rooms on peak nights.

Orlando also achieved a major milestone, becoming the first U.S. destination to attract more than 50 million visitors in one year. The city drew 51.4 million visitors in 2010, up 10 percent from 46.6 million in 2009, according to Visit Orlando. The number of domestic visitors increased 10.3 percent, and international visitation jumped 12.6 percent. Visit Orlando also introduced a new website, www.visitorlando.com. The site provides new meeting planning tools and a booking function through a partnership with Travelocity.

Due to its breadth of services, Visit Orlando has a reputation among meeting planners as one of the top CVBs in the nation. "I hear planners from all over give Orlando accolades even for its FAM trips, which it takes very seriously. A lot of cities make arrangements for planners and, once you get there, you are on your own to set appointments. But Visit Orlando holds hands with planners to

help them put together site inspections and keep them on schedule," says Terry Matthews-Lombardo, CMP, head of TML Services, a meeting planning firm in Orlando. She also lauds the CVB's staff. "A lot of Visit Orlando staff comes from a variety of backgrounds all over the city, including hotels and attractions. So they have a wealth of knowledge to pull from," she adds.

Elsewhere in the south, the **Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau** teamed with EventSphere, an online housing reservation and travel services company, to provide a new service. The online feature allows meeting and convention attendees to book a hotel room and register for an event through a 24-hour call center. Meeting planners can also receive real-time audits of reservations made outside of room blocks. Atlanta offers about 10,000 downtown hotel rooms that are a short walk from the Atlanta Convention Center at AmericasMart — three facilities offering 30 meeting rooms and 850,000 sf of exhibit space. The Georgia World Congress Center, Georgia Dome and Centennial Olympic Park provide a combined 1.4 million sf of exhibit space and about 105 meeting rooms.

Meeting planners often cite the **Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority** (LVCVA) as among the very best in the nation. "The LVCVA is great for me because I can pull together an RFP, talk about it with them and target the appropriate properties. It helps me with marketing materials and metrics to help attract more attendees. They also give unbiased viewpoints about venues that might accentuate programs, and point out what has and hasn't been successful for other groups in the past, and what we might want to consider," says Lisa Meller, CMP, president of Meeting Perspectives Inc., an Irvine, CA-based meeting planning firm.

Meller used the LVCVA's services to plan a meeting for 500 executives, managers and customers of a financial service

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es company. The four-day meeting was held at a popular Las Vegas hotel. Prior to the meeting, the LVCVA was a good resource for Meller. "It provided print materials, video and digital images and microsites about the destination that we could link to our registration page. Although I had been to Vegas several times, the LVCVA was helpful in identifying new off-site venues, restaurants and other things that could support our program. They helped us find golf venues and helped with a reception at Madame Tussauds wax museum," says Meller.

Las Vegas continues to attract meetings and trade shows of all sizes from the U.S. and abroad. The *Tradeshows News Network* named Las Vegas the No. 1 trade show destination in North America for the 17th consecutive year. During 2010, Las Vegas hosted 60 of the 250 largest trade shows, ranked by the amount of square footage used. The No. 2 and No. 3 destinations, Orlando and Chicago, hosted 25 and 22 shows, respectively.

Las Vegas hosts trade shows and meetings from around the world. During 2010, the number of international visitors from Canada, Germany, Australia, France, China and South Korea increased more than 20 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Among international meeting, convention and trade show attendees, 52 percent were interested in attending because the event was in Las Vegas, according to the LVCVA's 2010 Visitor Profile Study.

Adding to the city's international profile, the LVCVA and the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) signed an agreement that designates the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) as an official World Trade Center site. As part of the agreement, the LVCVA becomes a member of the World Trade Center Association. The designation will help Las Vegas continue to attract international trade shows to the LVCC, one of the world's largest and most modern meeting facilities. Located near more



The new Anaheim Convention Center Grand Plaza, a 100,000-sf outdoor and special event space, will open in 2012.

than 100,000 guest rooms, the LVCC provides 144 meeting rooms totaling more than 241,000 sf and about 2 million sf of exhibit space.

In the Southeastern U.S., the **Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau** recently created a blog to promote the city. The blog features new postings each week on the latest entertainment, events and other happenings in the area. "Shorelines: A Virginia Beach Blog" can be accessed through the bureau's website www.visitvirginiabeach.com.

Additionally, Virginia Beach's Laskin Road Gateway project is scheduled for completion by September 2012. The key part of the project is the \$100 million Beach Centre, a multiuse development that will feature 64,000 sf of new entertainment, dining and shopping venues. The project also will include 178 upscale apartments and 45,000 sf of office space.

The Beach Centre will be located just a few miles from the Virginia Beach Convention Center (VBCC), which has more than 150,000 sf of column-free exhibit space and about 29,000 sf of meeting space. The facility is the nation's first convention center to earn LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The VBCC's sustainable practices include recycling and energy and water efficiency.

When traveling to the **U.S. Virgin Islands**, U.S. citizens enjoy all the conveniences of domestic travel including

online check-in — making travel to the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John easier than ever. Travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands does not require a passport from U.S. citizens arriving from Puerto Rico or the U.S. mainland. Entry requirements for non-U.S. citizens are the same as for entering the U.S. from any foreign destination. Upon departure, a passport is required for all but U.S. citizens.

News from the U.S. Virgin Islands includes: On St. Croix, the Divi Carina Bay Beach Resort is the first all-inclusive resort on the island, and the 156-room Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa is now managed under the Marriott brand and features 12,670 sf of meeting space.

On St. John, the Concordia Eco-Resort recently earned the 4-Star Tropical Green Building Certification awarded by the Island Green Building Association for its newly constructed Eco-Studios featuring sustainable building materials.

On St. Thomas, Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort started a \$45 million renovation project, which includes refreshing 302 guest rooms, an updated and expanded spa and health club, a redesign of the outdoor common areas including the pool and water features, and a makeover of the "Windows on the Harbor" restaurant. Only the Frenchman's Reef Resort portion of the resort will be closed for renovation through September 30, 2011. On July 8, the rebranded and independent Sugar Bay Resort & Spa, formerly Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort & Spa, began operations.

Final Thoughts

No matter where in the U.S. planners want to stage meetings, events and incentives, working with the convention center, the CVB, DMO or tourism agency is an important first step and the best way to kick off the process on the right foot.

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Charles Ahlers
President-Anaheim Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

David Meek
Convention Center Manager
Anaheim Convention Center

Sylvano Ibay
General Manager-Anaheim White House

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Kevin Johnstone
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Lisa Paton
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Erin Rhodes
Marketing Manager-Discovery Science Center

Christina Dawson
VP, Partnership & CTA Program Administrator
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Florida

The Attraction Is Purely Tropical

From Daytona International Speedway to the international playground of South Beach, the tropical seaside ambience of Florida continues to be a magnet for leisure visitors and corporate groups alike. The Sunshine State attracted 21.2 million visitors this spring, a nearly 7 percent increase over the same time last year, reports Visit Florida. The total includes 2.2 million tourists from overseas — a 17 percent increase in that category.

But Florida isn't resting on its reputation as a top worldwide destination. The state's most popular and up-and-coming destinations are improving meetings infrastructure and services. With all that the state offers — world-class beaches, theme parks, golf courses and nature preserves — it's no wonder that so many meeting attendees bring family members. "I think it's because of the economy," says Karen Whitaker, owner of KLV Events Group in Winter Spring, FL. "They are saving money if they bring family at the same time. While the attendee is at a meeting or conference, relatives do other activities, especially in places like Orlando and Tampa, where you have theme parks, and in Miami."

Miami

As a vibrant cultural melting pot, Miami is the nation's third most popular destination for international visitors, after New York City and Chicago. This year, it was Miami's turn to host one U.S.-based consumer goods corporation's annual sales meeting. The three-day event, which rotates between Miami and South America, involved sales leadership, skills and motivation sessions for about 100 regional sales managers from the U.S. and South America.

During meetings, attendees conducted business in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Attendees also enjoyed Miami for the convenience of speaking their native tongue no matter where they went, says Todd Bludworth, COO and meeting planner, American Meetings Inc., Fort Lauderdale. "The company chose Miami primarily for ease of access from South America and because it's very comfortable for South Americans. With language barriers sometimes being an issue elsewhere, they feel at ease coming to Miami. Practically everybody speaks Spanish, and we have a lot of Brazilians (who speak Portuguese) here. That's also the case at hotels, so you never have a language barrier," says Bludworth.

Attendees were encouraged to bring their spouses. "We want to be sure to provide entertainment and activities for spouses while attendees hunker down 9 to 5 for meetings. One of the biggest requests we get is for shopping because Miami has

some of the best shopping in the world. We've provided shuttle service to Lincoln Road Mall and Aventura Mall. And tours to Vizcaya Museum & Gardens and Key Biscayne," says Bludworth.

With more than 43,000 hotel rooms, Miami has a growing variety of hotels and resorts. The 313-room JW Marriott Marquis opened in November at Metropolitan Miami, a \$1 billion development that includes condos, offices and retail outlets. The JW Marriott Marquis offers more than 80,000 sf of flexible meeting space, a 50,000-sf sports and entertainment complex and a 4,500-sf fitness center.

The 405-room Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel & Executive Meeting Center opened last December. Located

along the Miami River four miles from downtown, the hotel provides 20,000 sf of meeting space.

Miami's abundant meeting and convention venues are among the best in Florida. The Miami Beach Convention Center, which currently offers 500,000 sf of exhibition space, is planning an expansion that will add 300,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space. Next door is the 2,704-seat Jackie Gleason Theater. Additionally, James L. Knight International Center comprises the James L. Knight Center, the Miami Convention & Conference Center and the Hyatt Regency Miami, which offers 612 guest rooms and 100,000 sf of meeting space.



Planners have plenty of unique venues to choose from, each with their own distinctive vibe. Constructed in 1910, Vizcaya Museum & Gardens is a museum and 10-acre garden built in the style of an Italian 16th century villa. Vizcaya features Renaissance and baroque art and antiques, and is available for corporate events during evenings. Another facility, the Bakehouse Art Complex, provides galleries and studios for emerging artists. The facility serves as an avant-garde backdrop for meetings, offering two event spaces of 2,600 and 600 sf. An erudite setting is available at the Miami Science Museum with 12 event spaces.

After a day of meetings, attendees can enjoy nightlife and fine dining in Coconut Grove, an upscale bohemian-style area that is home to chic bars, restaurants, boutique shops and art galleries; and Cocowalk and the Streets of Mayfair, two open-air malls. South Beach consists of 23 blocks filled with Art Deco hotels, restaurants, and more than 150 bars and clubs. Many of the venues are located along Ocean Drive, which borders a long stretch of beach.

The Palm Beaches

About 70 miles north of Miami is Palm Beach, famed winter playground for the rich and famous. Palm Beach is located in Palm Beach County, which also includes West Palm Beach, Boca Raton and Delray Beach.

More than 200 hotels in the Palm Beach area offer more than 1 million sf of meeting space. Additionally, the 350,000-sf Palm Beach County Convention Center (PBCCC) provides a 100,000-sf exhibit hall and 23,000 sf of flexible breakout space. Located downtown near CityPlace, a retail and entertainment development, the PBCCC also provides an extravagant 22,000-sf ballroom. The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners has approved the selection of the Related Companies to develop a 400-room Hilton hotel that will adjoin the PBCCC.

The island of Palm Beach offers a variety of upscale hotels and resorts such as The Breakers, The Four Seasons and the Chesterfield Palm Beach. In Boca Raton, the upscale, 1,043-room Boca Raton Resort & Club has 146,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space. More hotels are on the way in Palm Beach County. Workers broke ground on a new 134-room Hyatt Place hotel that is scheduled to open in Delray Beach in 2012. It will be the second Hyatt Place in Palm Beach County.

Known as Florida's golf capital, Palm Beach County features many championship courses, including five at PGA National Resort & Spa, home of the Honda Classic. The resort also features The Spa, 379 guest rooms and 39,000 sf of meeting space.

The Flagler Museum on Palm Beach, which is a National Historic Landmark dedicated to the history of Florida, offers five event spaces. Across from the PBCCC in West Palm Beach, the Kravitz Center for the Performing Arts accommodates more than 3,500 people in four venues.

Emerald Coast

Located in the Florida Panhandle, Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island are the Emerald Coast's primary destinations. The area is known for its 24 miles of pure white sand beaches, sport fishing, more than 200 restaurants — and more than 1,080 holes of golf. Earlier this year, TripAdvisor named the Emerald Coast one of the "Top 25 Destinations in the United States," along with Orlando and Miami.

Located on Okaloosa Island, Destin's Emerald Coast Convention Center (ECCC) is the region's largest convention venue. The ECCC provides 12 meeting rooms, a 21,000-sf ballroom and a 2,350-seat theater. More than 16,000 hotel rooms are available at a variety of hotels and resorts. They include the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, with 600 guest rooms and more than 32,000 sf of meeting space.

Unique venues include the Gulfarium. The marine show aquarium accommodates 425 guests per show or 1,200 for all three daily shows. Dining options range from European-style restaurants to seafood shacks. Shopping is available at Silver Sands Factory Stores, a 465,000-sf retail space with more than 100 factory outlets selling brand names.

Tampa/St. Pete

The Tampa Bay area — Tampa, Clearwater and St. Petersburg — is a Florida Gulf Coast jewel. Tampa Bay offers more than 20,000 hotel rooms and a variety of meeting venues. Located near the downtown waterfront, the Tampa Convention Center (TCC) is the area's largest convention facility at 600,000 sf. Meeting hotels on St. Pete Beach include the 584-room Tradewinds Island Grand, with 70,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space; and the Sirata Beach Resort & Conference Center, which offers 380 rooms and 30,000 sf of meeting space.

Topping the list of cultural attractions is Ybor City, a once-thriving cigar manufacturing district inhabited mostly by Cuban immigrants. The area is now a National Historic Landmark featuring homes with old-world architecture and about 60 restaurants and retail shops.

Among Tampa's unique venues is A La Carte Event Pavilion, a versatile meeting facility offering four spaces, including a 13,468-sf room. Built in 1917 as a gathering place for Ybor City's Cuban community, the Cuban Club of Tampa offers seven event spaces, including a theater, ballroom, patio and conference room. Tampa's Museum of Science and Industry can host groups of 50 to 2,000 in several event spaces.

Like many Florida destinations, Tampa Bay depends partly on sizable meetings and groups held by companies based within the state. Some of the groups are repeat customers. For example, Sarasota-based Medical Education Technologies Inc. (METI) has held its last five annual HPSN meetings at the 683-room Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina, which offers 50,000 sf of meeting space. This year, more than 1,000 METI distributors

By Derek Reveron

"The company chose Miami primarily for ease of access from South America. ...With language barriers sometimes being an issue elsewhere, they feel at ease coming to Miami."

Todd Bludworth, COO
American Meetings Inc.
Fort Lauderdale, FL

and customers from several countries attended the free 2½-day conference, which involved workshops, simulation sessions and training in health-care education technology.

Why did METI choose Tampa for the last five years? "We go there mostly for the space and convenient location," says Diane Noyes, METI events manager. "It's not far from our headquarters, and we bring two or three trailers full of equipment to the hotel to set up for the meeting. Plus our attendees don't feel trapped at the hotel. One night we don't have evening functions. They can hop in a cab or take the free trolley and go anywhere in the area for dinner, shopping or a walk." Some attendees bring family members, Noyes noted. METI also plans to hold its 2012 HPSN conference in Tampa.

Jacksonville

The city of Jacksonville on Florida's northeast coast provides more than 16,000 hotel rooms and the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center with 160,000 sf of meeting space. Near the convention center sits the Omni Jacksonville Hotel, on the St. Johns River, with 354 rooms and 14,000 sf of meeting space. The hotel is just steps away from the Jacksonville Landing Riverfront Marketplace with its shops, dining and entertainment.

The 301-room Renaissance World Golf Village Resort and Convention Center in Jacksonville/St. Augustine has just debuted a new boardroom and a newly expanded outdoor event space called La Terrazza, which accommodates 500 attendees. The AAA Four Diamond resort now offers 101,000 sf of meeting and event space.

To the south of Jacksonville is Ponte Vedra Beach, home of the five-diamond, 250-suite Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, which offers 25,000 sf of meeting space and two spectacular seaside links-style courses for golfers. North of Jacksonville on Amelia Island is the Omni Amelia Island Plantation with 249 ocean-front accommodations and 49,000 sf of meeting space. Future enhancement plans include the addition of 125 guest rooms and 16,000 sf of meeting space.

The restored Florida Theatre in Jacksonville, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, offers five meeting spaces.

es. Located along the intracoastal waterway, Queen's Harbour Yacht & Country Club has four meeting rooms. The Museum of Contemporary Art's indoor meeting space accommodates up to 800 attendees.

Orlando

Meeting planners have long raved about Visit Orlando, formerly the Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Visit Orlando recently improved service and brand awareness by adding dedicated meetings staff, a redesigned website and new logo. Orlando continues to attract national and international groups to the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC), the second largest in the U.S. offering 2.1 million sf of exhibit space and 74 flexible meeting rooms.

The OCCC now connects to three major meeting hotels: the new 1,400-room Hilton Orlando with 175,000 sf of meeting space; the newly renovated Peabody Orlando with 1,641 guest rooms and 300,000 sf of meeting space; and the 1,334-room Rosen Centre Hotel with 106,000 sf of meeting space, which just recently completed its pedestrian bridge to the convention center. Next to the convention center is the 800-room Rosen Plaza Hotel with 60,000 sf of meeting space. Rosen Shingle Creek is within a mile of the OCCC and has 1,500 guest rooms, 445,000 sf of meeting space and the Shingle Creek Golf Club.

Walt Disney World Resort features its own championship golf on four courses. Its world-famous theme parks and entertainment options include Downtown Disney, which this fall will begin construction on Splitsville, an upscale bowling, billiards, dining and entertainment center. Walt Disney World offers six convention resorts with a total of 5,000 guest rooms and more than 700,000 sf of meeting space.

Universal Orlando Resort has three Loews properties onsite, including the 650-room Hard Rock Hotel with 6,000 sf of meeting space. Event space at the Hard Rock Live and Hard Rock Cafe venues together offer a complex buyout accommodating up to 4,000 attendees. Universal features six themed street sets, Islands of Adventure, Universal CityWalk with a variety of themed venues, Universal Music Plaza, Blue Man Group and the newest hit attraction, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, which offers multiple themed group options.

Scheduled to open in October, the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek will feature 400 guest rooms and 25,000 sf of meeting space. The Omni Orlando at ChampionsGate will unveil an exhibition center by January 2013. The DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld recently completed a \$35 million renovation that updated guest rooms and meeting space, and added a new restaurant. The hotel offers 65,000 sf of meeting space and 1,102 guest rooms.

Naples

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“The Marco Beach Ocean Resort was very persuasive. They made me feel as if they really wanted my group there and addressed all of my needs. They assured me that I would have a successful program.”

Leslie Brown, Regional Marketing Manager
Atmos Energy Marketing Inc.
Franklin, TN

Paradise Coast — Naples is a natural destination for upscale groups. The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Convention and Visitors Bureau recently kicked off a new online service to help planners increase meeting attendance. The Group Attendance Push (GAP) offers free online tools for planners, including customizable templates and banner ads to use in email blasts and online ads.

Naples is a sophisticated destination with more than 6,000 hotel and resort guest rooms. The city doesn't have a traditional convention center, but several resort and hotel venues are available. These properties include the Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, featuring the Tiburon Golf Club with challenging courses designed by Greg Norman; the Ritz-Carlton Beach Resort; and the independently owned Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club fronting the Gulf of Mexico with 317 newly renovated guest rooms, 34,000 sf of meeting space, spectacular outdoor beachfront event areas to enjoy the famed sunsets, a new pool event area and a newly enhanced golf course.

The nearby Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort, Golf Club & Spa has just introduced a novel group activity called “Mobbed at Marco Island,” a spinoff of the “flash mob” social networking phenomenon. A flash mob is a large group of people who gather suddenly in a public location to perform a predefined action, typically a brief dance, and then disperse rapidly after the event has concluded. The package includes a dance choreographer and videographer to capture the event for the company's website and social media platforms.

Also on Marco Island, the 98-suite Marco Beach Ocean Resort on nearby Marco Island was the site of a meeting held last year by Franklin, TN-based Atmos Energy Marketing Inc. Attendees at the 2½-day meeting included Atmos customers from across the U.S. as well as company executives and employees. This was the group's first meeting in Florida in about 11 years. Prior to selecting the Paradise Coast, the company considered resorts in two other locations within the state. Each property offered packages within the group's budget.

However, Marco Island was the final choice for several reasons, says Leslie Brown, regional marketing manager and meet-

ing planner for Atmos. “The Marco Beach Ocean Resort was very persuasive. They made me feel as if they really wanted my group there and addressed all of my needs. They assured me that I would have a successful program and find great activities for my guests to enjoy,” says Brown. The group held a Hawaiian luau-themed dinner at the hotel and enjoyed a tour of the Everglades, golfing and beach activities.

Additionally, room rates were very competitive and Brown received assurances that attendees' rooms would all have great views. Another factor was the Naples Municipal Airport. “It's an easy drive from the hotel. That's very important to me. I always visualize my customers driving from the airport to the hotel and ask myself if it's a convenient drive and whether what they see appeals to them. The environment from start to finish is important,” says Brown.

The opulence of the Naples area is one of its attractions. High-end shopping and dining areas include Fifth Avenue South, Village on Venetian Bay, Third Street South and Bayfront. Unique venues include Weatherburn Gallery, Naples Botanical Garden and the NGALA Private Preserve, with Everglades- and safari-themed events and teambuilding activities.

Daytona Beach

Daytona Beach offers more than 23 miles of beaches and the world-famous Daytona International Speedway. With more than 12,000 hotel rooms and the refurbished and expanded Ocean Center (OC), Daytona Beach is enhancing its ability to handle meetings of all sizes with more than 200,000 sf of exhibition and meeting space and a 9,600-seat arena.

Daytona Beach also has its share of meeting hotels. These include the 744-room Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort with 60,000 sf of meeting space. The Wyndham Ocean Walk offers a 5,000-sf ballroom and 247 guest rooms. Both hotels are located in Ocean Walk Village, a \$1 billion entertainment and meetings complex that also includes the OC and retail shops. Located a short ride from Ocean Walk Village in Daytona Shores, the tony Shores Resort & Spa has 212 rooms and 20,000 sf of meeting space. Some meeting rooms offer ocean views.

Two of Daytona Beach's most unique and popular meeting venues include the two event rooms overlooking Daytona International Speedway. The Bill France room accommodates 170 guests and the Daytona 500 Club hosts 500 attendees.

Incentive Travel Rebound

A recent Site survey revealed that more than 80 percent of companies polled said they plan to incorporate motivational travel in the next one to three years, and many of the same companies reported a current, real-time return to travel incentives. That's good news for the meetings industry and destinations like Florida, which boasts all the irresistible attributes that keep them coming back.

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Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

Las Vegas

‘The Best Value for the Dollar’

Las Vegas is back. That’s the clear message the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA) wants to get out far and wide for 2011 and beyond. Not only that, they say — but it’s better than ever. The city will have a chance to really shine for the attendees of IMEX America October 11–13. The inaugural trade show for the worldwide meetings, events and incentive travel industry will be held at the Sands Expo, which is connected to the headquarters hotels The Venetian/Palazzo.

“For Las Vegas, the recession is definitively over,” says Chris Meyer, CMP, CEM, vice president of sales at LVCVA. But more important, he notes, is the fact that the once dreaded “AIG effect” turned out to be more short-term popular mythology than lingering market reality.

The city is now once again seeing a full spectrum of meetings, from citywide user/customer conferences or trade shows to small meetings that include executive and board retreats. Such success, Meyer says, is the result of aggressive face-to-face selling by the LVCVA during the worst days of the meeting industry meltdown of 2009.

And what Meyer and his team sold during the grand crusade was what Las Vegas has always sold — unbeatable value supported by extraordinary meeting infrastructure and unique amenities. “We offer the best value for the dollar of any destination in the country,” Meyer says. For example, he says, the acclaimed Las Vegas dining and entertainment scene means

“you don’t have to worry about entertaining your attendees after your final presentation of the day. We’ve got tons of stuff to do. And we don’t close up at night.”

Given its value proposition, Meyer says, Las Vegas has actually benefited from the new thriftiness of many corporate meeting hosts and planners, simply because more planners are looking for bottom-line value today. “And no other destination delivers that like Las Vegas does,” Meyer says.

Another ironic result of the recession has been a return to the simple principles and high standards that made Las Vegas a hot meeting destination in the first place, says Stephanie Arone, DMCP, new owner-proprietor of 34-year-old destination management company Activity Planners. “It’s forced all of us in the destination to become really creative again,” she says. “When times are good, it’s easy to become complacent and do the same meeting over and over again. Now we’re really back to showing what Las Vegas can do.”

Running On Reputation

No matter the effects of any economic downturn, the time-tested Las Vegas brand seems to survive and prosper.

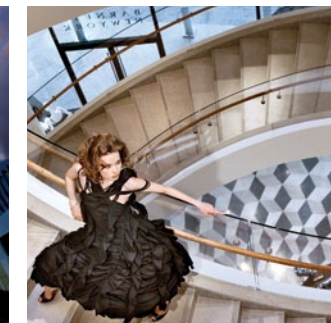
“For me, both personally and as a planner, Las Vegas is a great destination because there’s just so much to do,” says Patty Amos, meeting and event planner at wireless industry vendor Tessco Technologies in Hunt Valley, MD. “But it’s a rela-

The fountains at Bellagio put an exclamation point on the glamour and excitement of the Las Vegas Strip.

By John Buchanan



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tively small place, so everything is also easy to get to, including the Las Vegas Convention Center. There's also great dining, entertainment and golf."

Amos has used Las Vegas regularly as a destination since she joined Tessco eight years ago. One key reason: She agrees with Meyer's value proposition assessment.

So does Maria Santos, senior director, global events, at Washington, DC-based educational technology provider Blackboard Inc. "The value for the dollar you get in Las Vegas, including the airlift, helps drive our attendance." In fact, she adds, the lure of Las Vegas helped Blackboard set a new attendance record when it held its 2,500-attendee annual user conference at the 4,027-key, all-suite The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and used its sister facility, the Sands Expo and Convention Center, for its exhibits. That success brought the company back this year — and Blackboard set a new attendance record. As a result, they'll be back at The Venetian in 2013.

For just such reasons, Torrance, CA-based automotive industry business publisher Bobit Business Media has used Las Vegas regularly for the last 20 years, says current director of events Michelle Mendez. "Las Vegas is a good destination for



"The value for the dollar you get in Las Vegas, including the airlift, helps drive our attendance."

Maria Santos, Senior Director, Global Events
Blackboard Inc., Washington, DC

Vegas is Mark Fair, principal at Modad Threat Management Solutions in San Tan Valley, AZ. A half-dozen times a year, he conducts five- to nine-day security seminars for 10 to 25 attendees, most recently at the off-Strip, 826-room Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa, with 20,000 sf of meeting space including a 7,000-sf ballroom and 2,000-sf theater. "The hotel is really geared for my business and they wanted it," he says. "It was a good match." As a result, he now uses the property regularly for his events. "It's a smaller property, from a national brand that I recognize and respect," he says. "And their mindset was just perfectly suited to what I do with my events. Their customer service is very good."

And like other planners who use Las Vegas frequently, Fair and his attendees appreciate it for exactly what it is. "It offers a lot to do in a small area," Fair says. "So, any kind of attendee can find something to do in their free time."

On the South Las Vegas Strip, the four-star M Resort Spa Casino, which celebrated its second anniversary in March, is ideal for small or medium-sized meetings. Along with its 60,000 sf of indoor meeting space, the resort showcases 100,000 sf for special events on the Villaggio Del Sole, the outdoor events piazza, which features a built-in stage with an event capacity of 4,000. All six of the resort's restaurants are available for group events and all afford views of The Las Vegas Strip. The indoor meeting space includes a 17,400-sf ballroom, four meeting rooms and a boardroom.

Minutes from The Strip is the 2,163-room South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa. The hotel has expanded its casino to 55,000 sf and now offers one of the largest gaming floors in the nation. The hotel has 170,000 sf of flexible indoor meeting space, which includes an 80,000-sf exhibit hall; a 22,000-sf ballroom with permanent stage; and 22 breakout rooms. A new 400-seat showroom features headliner entertainment

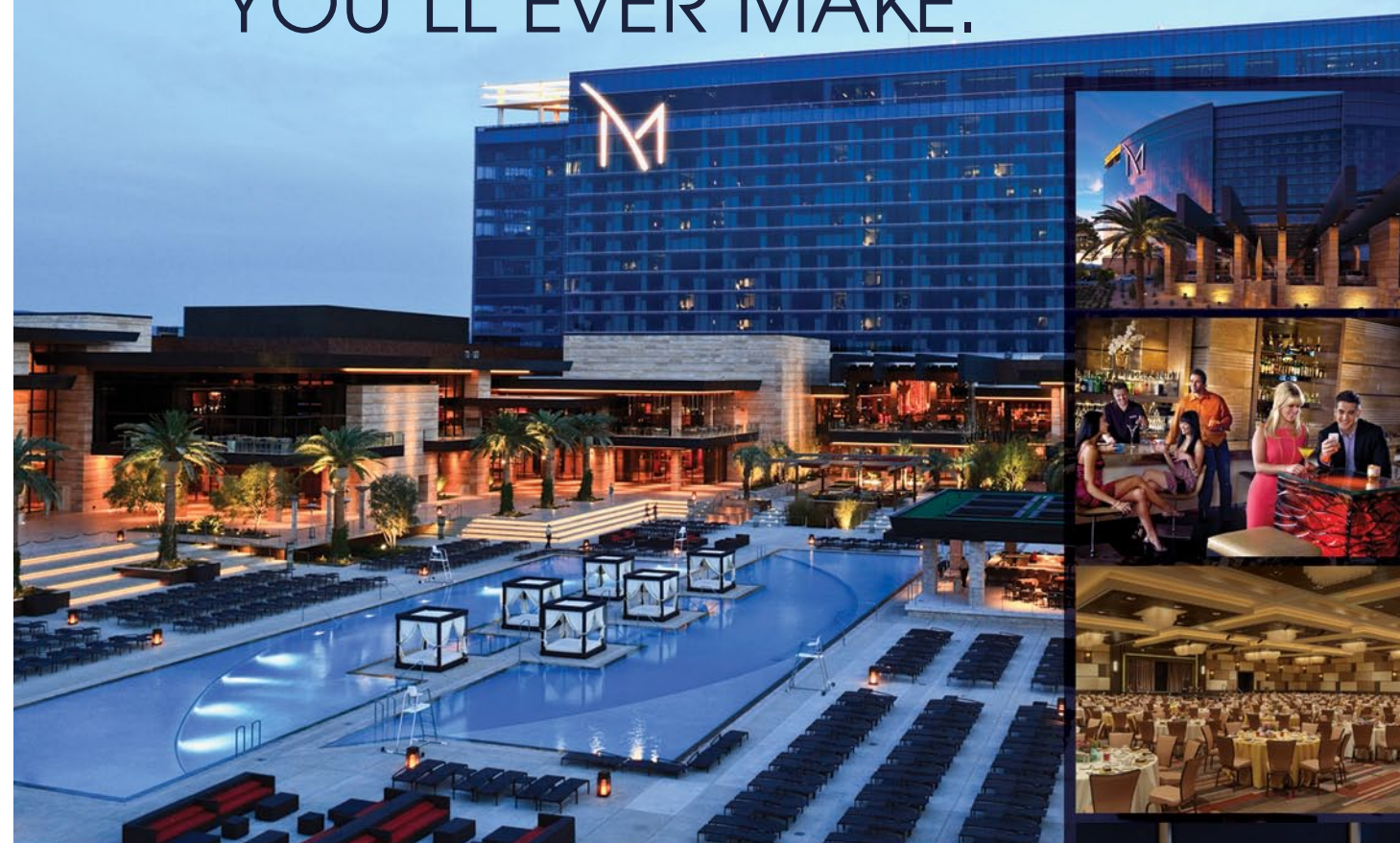


Activity Planners arranged a fun Elvis impersonation show for a sporting apparel company where all the attendees got into the act.

us because a lot of our business and attendees come from the West Coast," she says. "And it's an easy destination for them to get to. But it's also an affordable destination, too." She favors landmark hotels such as the 3,348-room Caesars Palace and its sister property, the 2,916-room Paris Las Vegas, as well as the landmark 2,941-room Las Vegas Hilton, which adjoins the Las Vegas Convention Center.

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and dancing to live bands on weekends. Unique to other Las Vegas casino-hotel properties, South Point has a 16-screen movie complex and a 64-lane bowling center.

Corporate groups enjoy a taste of the Big Apple at the 2,024-room New York-New York Hotel & Casino with its recreation of Manhattan's skyline — complete with a 150-foot replica of the Statue of Liberty, 45-story Empire State Building, 300-foot long Brooklyn Bridge and other iconic New York City landmarks. Unique venues in New York-New York include the Brooklyn Bridge, which offers 10,000 sf of open space for receptions accommodating up to 800 attendees and dinners for 600. Another event option is on the authentic streets of Greenwich Village with its sidewalk cafés, storefronts and eateries. The hotel itself has 21,000 sf for meetings.

Ten miles west of the Las Vegas Strip is Red Rock Casino, Resort and Spa, with 800 guest rooms and 94,000 sf of meeting space. Owned and managed by Station Casinos, Red Rock features an "adventure spa," which gets attendees out of the casino and into the great outdoors for hiking, kayaking, rock climbing and mountain biking. This summer Red Rock debuted an outdoor concert amphitheater that hosts up to 8,800 guests. Another Station Casinos property off The Strip is the

495-room Green Valley Ranch in Henderson, NV. The hotel has 79,000 sf of meeting space plus Ovation, a 500-seat entertainment venue, and "The Backyard," an outdoor events and concert area for as many as 4,500 attendees.

For a very affordable meeting option in Las Vegas, planners turn to the 716-unit Tuscany Suites & Casino on E. Flamingo Road. Tuscany features 40,000 sf of meeting and convention space, including the 27,000-sf Florentine Ballroom. Some of Tuscany's meeting rooms have a beautiful Italian balcony with a view of the pool and exotic gardens. State-of-the-art, audio-visual equipment is available for business presentations, and free wireless Internet access is available in several areas of the property.

Convention Facilities

Most destinations are content to claim one world-class convention venue. Las Vegas boasts three: the Las Vegas Convention Center, Mandalay Bay Convention Center, and Sands Expo and Convention Center.

The Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) ranks among the largest and most modern facilities in the U.S., with 3.2 million total sf of exhibit and meeting space. LVCC features

more than 1.9 million sf of exhibit space in 16 exhibit halls that can be reconfigured with moveable walls. A total of 241, 536 sf of meeting space includes 144 meeting rooms ranging in capacity from 20 to 2,500.

The Mandalay Bay Convention Center, located within the 3,220-room Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, is acclaimed as one of the world's premier meeting-and-convention complexes. It features 1.7 million sf of exhibit space in eight individual exhibit halls ranging from 48,822 to 576,593 sf, with 250,942 sf of meeting space that can be configured from six ballrooms ranging in size from 10,234 to 100,014 sf.

With more than 1.8 combined million sf of exhibit and meeting space, the Sands Expo and Convention Center adjoins The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and The Palazzo Las Vegas.

New and Renovated

The big news at the moment about the resurgence of Las Vegas as a destination is happening downtown. The 40-year-old, 1,037-room Plaza Hotel & Casino, with 23,000 sf of meeting space, will reopen



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Headquarters hotels for IMEX America in October are The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and The Palazzo Las Vegas.

to much fanfare in September after a \$35 million renovation. Meanwhile, the iconic and eclectic, 297-room El Cortez Hotel & Casino has completed its own \$30 million renovation.

The development that has helped redefine Las Vegas is CityCenter, which features the 4,004-room Aria Resort & Casino, with 300,000 sf of meeting space, and 1,495-key, all-suite Vdara Hotel & Spa. The properties share a spectacular modern space that highlights art and fine dining. Aria's meeting spaces feature all the state-of-the-art technology needed for even the most complex technical needs including built-in videoconferencing, fiber-optic network, high-definition projection screens, built-in plasma televisions, concert-quality sound, high-tech reader boards, fast wired and wireless Internet, full production rigging systems, and more.

In February, Dolce Hotels unveiled the 349-room Ravella at Lake Las Vegas, located 17 miles from The Strip on the site of the former Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas. The hotel offers 39,000 sf of meeting space. Meanwhile, Aston Hotels & Resorts has taken over the 347-room, all-suite Montelago Village at Lake Las Vegas, with 10,000 sf of meeting space. The third major meeting resort in the tony community is the 493-room Loews Lake Las Vegas, with 47,000 sf of meeting space.

New owner K Hotels has completed a multimillion-dollar renovation of 2,885-room Treasure Island, with 18,000 sf of meeting space.

In early summer, the 1,885-room Orleans Hotel & Casino, less than three miles from The Las Vegas Strip, debuted Big Al's Comedy Club, a 200-seat venue. The club expands Orleans' live entertainment offerings, which include a 9,000-seat arena and 850-seat showroom. Orleans has 40,000 sf of meeting space.

After halting completion during the recession, Caesars Palace

last year completed its much-anticipated new Octavius Tower, featuring 665 rooms and 17 suites. In more recent Caesars news, Nobu, the super-upscale sushi restaurant brand created by Nobu Matsuhisa and Robert De Niro, is developing the world's first Nobu boutique hotel in a tower at Caesars, just as Four Seasons pioneered the hotel-within-a-hotel concept with four floors of Mandalay Bay. The new Nobu Hotel, Restaurant and Lounge will make its debut next summer.

Caesars Entertainment is beginning construction on "Linq," a \$500 million restaurant-entertainment district designed to reinvent and revitalize the mid-Strip area. Linking the Imperial Palace and Flamingo resorts, the new district will sport a 550-foot observation wheel with 28 cabins, each with a capacity of 40 guests, and provide 326,000 sf of new retail, dining and entertainment venues.

The 2,444-room Stratosphere Las Vegas has completed a \$20 million renovation. The 2,526-room Harrah's Las Vegas has completed a renovation of its 25,000 sf of meeting space. The 2,814-room Bally's Las Vegas has remodeled its Grand Ballroom and Event Center. Wynn Las Vegas — cited by many as the gold standard of Las Vegas hotel product, along with its newer sister tower, Encore — is completing a \$99 million renovation of all 2,716 guest rooms.

A comprehensive, \$180 million phase-one renovation at the Tropicana Las Vegas was substantially completed in December.



"Las Vegas is a good destination for us because a lot of our business and attendees come from the West Coast."

Michelle Mendez, Director of Events
Bobit Business Media, Torrance, CA

The makeover includes 1,375 new, best-in-class hotel rooms and suites, a new casino, and 100,000 sf of flexible meeting, catering and exhibit hall space.

Unique Venues

Another of the benefits of the immense meeting infrastructure of Las Vegas is its range of offsite venues, ranging from the extraordinary to the eclectic. And every year, there is something new and innovative.

This year, a lot of the excitement surrounds the new Meet Las Vegas, a three-story, state-of-the-art meeting and event venue that includes training/educational facilities.

Chateau Nightclub & Gardens at Paris Las Vegas, which

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opened in March, is a two-story, 40,000-sf complex featuring six bars, a rooftop dance floor and Parisian gardens.

A very different special-event ambience can be found at New York-New York Hotel & Casino's new Sporting House Bar & Grill, offering more than 130 video monitors and a second-story All-Star Arcade with 10,000 sf of interactive and competitive sports-themed attractions.

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For social events, a popular go-to option has become one of the city's many spectacular nightclubs, which cover a broad spectrum of sizes and styles — including luminaries such as Tao.

"This year, we're doing a Studio 54 party," says Amos. She has used Rain, at hip The Palms Hotel & Casino, and also staged creative events for small groups at the high-end Wynn Las Vegas.

Meanwhile, the new entrants never stop arriving. At the newly renovated Tropicana, a Nikki Beach Club outpost has made its much-heralded debut. The latest location from the trendy nightlife brand that started in South Beach Miami and then spread to places such as St. Tropez, Nikki Beach at Tropicana features a restaurant, outdoor café and bar, swim-up blackjack, sand volleyball courts and a private island in the center of the tropical pool. The beach club includes an outdoor concert space where Tropicana will provide world-class Las Vegas nightlife entertainment, including some of the biggest names in the world.

A new, very creative alternative highly touted by veteran DMC executive Arone is the two-year-old Las Vegas Springs Preserve, located on the archaeological site where water first brought life to the desert eons ago. The modern, environmentally conscious complex includes an amphitheater and an onsite catering team that includes celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck.

Dining and Entertainment

Yet another of the foundational pillars on which Las Vegas has built its globally recognized brand is its dining and entertainment scene, driven by an ever-growing roster of celebrity chefs and a dazzling array of options.

Three new restaurants at Aria have established it as a new fine dining hot spot. They are Todd English Pub; an upscale, eponymous tapas bar from Spanish superstar chef Julian Serrano; and Beso, now operated by Landry's Restaurants Inc.

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Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino will feature Cirque du Soleil's "Michael Jackson The Immortal World Tour" beginning in spring 2013.

Brasserie made its debut at Paris Las Vegas in March. The complex includes a restaurant, retail store and Chocolate Lounge.

Another hot new restaurant is La Cave at Wynn, launched by restaurateur Michael Morton and featuring chef Bill DeMarco's innovative "small plates" that are expertly paired with wines for a diverse, unique dining experience.

In addition to its dizzying array of hotel restaurants, Las Vegas also offers a growing list of privately owned and operated eateries. Among the currently popular is Brio Tuscan Grille, located just off The Strip and serving excellent Italian food in a lively environment.

Marquee Names

Along with its spectacular dining scene, Las Vegas also delivers the widest selection of big-name entertainment on the planet. Long-running favorites include Celine Dion and Elton John, along with comedians such as Jay Leno — or one of seven globally acclaimed productions from Cirque du Soleil. Among the newest of celebrated Cirque productions is "Viva Elvis," currently playing at Aria and "Criss Angel Believe" at Luxor Hotel & Casino. "Michael Jackson The Immortal World Tour" is slated to open in spring 2013 at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino.

Among the big news for 2011 was Celine Dion's March return to Caesars Palace, to reprise her earlier stint several years ago as one of the most critically acclaimed and wildly popular runs in Las Vegas history.

New shows cited as hot tickets by Arone will include Garth Brooks at Wynn and Shania Twain alternating with Dion at Caesars Palace. Meanwhile, Elton John will open a new show.

Wynn has also debuted a new show, Dance with Me, which features an 18-piece orchestra and a live dance interpretation of the classic songs of Frank Sinatra, with digitally remastered recordings and the latest theatrical technology. "It's

one of the most amazing theatrical experiences you could ever have," says Meyer.

When it comes to private entertainment for events, Las Vegas also offers many fun and creative options, from comedians and magicians to jugglers and ventriloquists, with just about everything else imaginable in between.

Golf

Las Vegas feature 56 golf courses, which are another of the essential amenities that make Las Vegas special.

"Golf is very important to a lot of our corporate meeting customers," Meyer says. "That's because more and more in today's business world, companies are looking to get face time with key customers, important vendors or suppliers, or any other person who is important to their business. And golf provides an intimate experience that allows you to get that done."

The globally acclaimed 18-hole, par-70 course at Wynn, designed by Tom Fazio and Steve Wynn and featuring dramatic elevations, waterfalls, streams and a forest, is the only course on The Strip and is only available to groups staying in the hotel.

Not far down Las Vegas Boulevard, and a contender for the title of best links, is Bali Hai Golf Club, featuring an 18-hole, par-71 course designed by Lee Schmidt in 2000. It includes a lush Indonesian-influenced landscape.

Located 20 minutes from The Strip in Summerlin, TPC Las Vegas features an 18-hole, par-71 course designed by acclaimed architect Bobby Weed and World Golf Hall of Fame member Raymond Floyd.

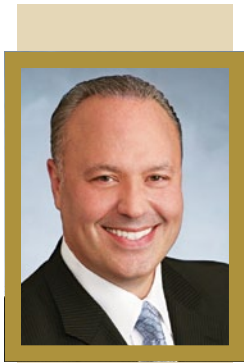
Bear's Best Las Vegas, which opened in 2001, is a one-of-a-kind, par-72 course that features 18 of Jack Nicklaus' favorite holes from his 270 worldwide designs. "It's very popular with corporate meeting groups," says Meyer, "because it's a unique golf experience you can't find anywhere else in the world."

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ASHMORE

Pelican Hill, Newport Beach, CA, has named **Frank Ashmore** as director of sales and marketing. He was director of sales and marketing for The Wigwam, Phoenix, AZ.

Buena Vista Palace Resort & Spa, Lake Buena Vista, FL, has named **Doris O'Neill** and **Bernard Grossman** as national sales manager and sales manager respectively. O'Neill, who will focus on the Southeast U.S. and Latin American markets, most recently served as senior sales manager for the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate. Grossman, who is responsible for the mid-sized group market, most recently served as front office supervisor for the Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, FL.



SERRA

Sergio Serra was named director of sales and marketing for The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun. He was director of sales and marketing for Hilton Cancun Golf & Spa Resort.



ISLAVA

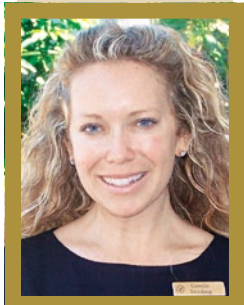
Jane Bethke was named director of sales for Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan, WI. She most recently was with Weight Watchers International in sales and as a motivational speaker.



TRAMMELL

Riviera Palm Springs, Palm Springs, CA, has named **Michael Islava** as director of sales and marketing. He was director of sales and marketing for Lakeway Resort & Spa, Austin, TX.

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, Jacksonville, FL, has named **Pat Trammell** as senior director of sales and marketing. With more than 25 years of hotel and meetings industry experience, she most recently served as senior director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Atlanta, Atlanta, GA.



GOODING

Cinda Culton was named director of sales and marketing for Sorrel River Ranch Resort & Spa, Moab, UT. She most recently served as director of sales and marketing for Chateau on the Lake, Branson, MO.

Katina Athanasiau was named vice president of charter and incentive sales for Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Oceania

Cruises. She most recently worked in charter sales for Royal Caribbean International.

Cerelle Gooding was named director of group sales for The Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii. She formerly served as director of West Coast sales for the Hotel Del Coronado, San Diego, CA.

Michael Snapkoski was named director of sales and marketing for Lansdowne Resort Leesburg, VA. He was vice president of sales and marketing for Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, National Harbor, MD. **C&IT**

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