

# ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT



## Meeting Tech Trends

New Ways to Boost Engagement and Revenue

PAGE 16

Meetups, such as this one sponsored by the Biotechnology Industry Organization, connect participants in advance via social media.

Photo courtesy of Biotechnology Industry Organization

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February / March 2012

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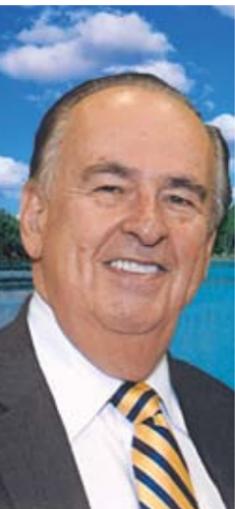


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## Staying Ahead of the Curve



January in San Diego was sunny all over, and not just because of the weather. The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) Annual Meeting, Convening Leaders, reported an increase in overall attendance compared to last year "by a very small margin," but professional planner participation increased year-over-year by 9 percent. This may or may not be in part due to an increase in employment numbers for meeting planners: Survey results from the December 2011 Business Barometer issued by Meeting Professionals International reveal that 10 percent more meeting professionals have seen increased full-time employment in the U.S. and Europe since October 2011, and 15 percent more report increases in part-time and contract employment.

Beyond the numbers at PCMA was the energy I felt walking around the San Diego Convention Center. It called to mind Ronald Reagan's inspiring "It's morning again in America" presidential campaign theme, which seems to ring true today for the growing optimism in the meeting and convention industry. Fueling the buzz and excitement are all the high-tech bells and whistles available to enhance attendee engagement and interactivity before, during and after the meeting — and to boost revenue.

The Virtual Edge Summit, which co-located at Convening Leaders, helped attendees learn how to stay ahead of the curve and leverage the physical side of events with digital strategies, from augmented reality to augmenting the event with a virtual component. And that's where the revenue comes in. According to Michael Doyle, executive director of the Virtual Edge Institute, "Less than 15 percent of events have historically been capturing their content and making it available after the event. With the hybrid elements in the physical and virtual running at the same time, much more content is being captured and then repurposed to drive future engagement." You might say that staying ahead of the curve brings events full circle.

The stories in this issue speak to the importance of staying ahead of the technological curve. SmithBucklin's Brad Weaber on page 8 gets right to the bottom line: "Associations cannot afford to be on the fence about whether or not they should incorporate technology into their meetings. Rather, they need to ask how incorporating technology can be done effectively while generating revenue at the same time." Read on about new high-tech tools used by associations like the Biotechnology Industry Organization (pictured on our cover) to facilitate and augment the attendee experience (page 18); and how CVBs and convention centers are keeping up their own hectic pace to stay ahead of the curve (page 20).

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

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THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

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## AIBTM Reports Spike in Hosted Buyer Group Coordinators

**LONDON, ENGLAND** — The Americas Meetings & Events Exhibition (AIBTM), Reed Travel Exhibitions' premiere provider for the U.S. meetings and events industry, announced that it has more than 50 Hosted Buyer Group Coordinators committed to AIBTM in Baltimore, June 19-21, 2012. According to Reed Travel Exhibitions AIBTM Project Director Steve Knight, group coordinators receive the same VIP treatment as Hosted Buyers. "They have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with top clients through AIBTM's online pre-scheduled appointment system, and they enjoy complimentary travel and accommodations when bringing a qualified group of 10 or more." Additionally, PCMA has committed to bringing 500 hosted buyers and Site has committed to bringing 100 incentive buyers. Space is available, and AIBTM is accepting applications for Hosted Buyer Group Coordinators. Contact Elizabeth Shipman at [eshipman@reedexpo.com](mailto:eshipman@reedexpo.com). [www.aibtm.com](http://www.aibtm.com)

## Atlantis Paradise Island Continues Renovation

**PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS** — According to *Travel Weekly*, despite a financial reorganization, Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas will move ahead with the renovation of 700 rooms in the 3,614-room resort, a makeover of several bars and lounges, an expansion of the sports bars, beach restoration and more. "We continue to reinvest in the property by adding new features, activities and guest services," says George Markantonis, president and managing director of Kerzner International Bahamas, operator of the resort. Winter bookings are ahead of 2010 and "group business this year is forecast to run 12 percent ahead of 2011, which ran 35 percent ahead of 2010," he says. Despite the reorganization, Markantonis says that "there are no changes planned regarding the status of our employees, our sales and marketing initiatives and management. There will be a resolution regarding the financial status in the near future." [www.atlantismetings.com](http://www.atlantismetings.com)



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## New Owners of Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego Reveal Renovation Plan

**SAN DIEGO, CA** — Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego presented the redesign of its guest rooms to meeting planners who attended PCMA's 2012 Convening Leaders annual conference held in San Diego in January. Beginning in May 2012, the entire hotel will be renovated including 1,625 guest rooms, meeting and public space, as well as food and beverage outlets. The project is scheduled for completion in fall 2013. The new owner of Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, a subsidiary of Host Hotels & Resorts Inc. now owns more than 4,600 hotel rooms in the San Diego area. Located on the Gaslamp Quarter's waterfront, Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego overlooks San Diego Bay and is comprised of two connecting towers, the 33-story Seaport Tower and the 40-story Harbor Tower. [www.manchestergand.hyatt.com](http://www.manchestergand.hyatt.com)

## International Association of Venue Managers Restructures

**COPPELL, TX** — The International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) was restructured to respond to

current economic times and meet member needs, according to President and CEO Vicki Hawarden, CMP, who set up the staff into three lines of service: education; sales and business development; and operations and finance. Hawarden says, "The goal is an organizational structure that will ensure we have strong leaders focused on our core business: value to our members, financial stability and growth, and operational excellence." Accordingly, Rodney Williams, DBA, was promoted to vice president of education; Roy Benear was named vice president of sales and business development, and Steve Flamm, IAVM COO/CFO, will continue to oversee operations and finance. [www.iavm.org](http://www.iavm.org)



Hawarden

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## PCMA Launches a New Education Gateway Portal

**CHICAGO, IL** — The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) announced the launch of EduGate — an education gateway portal to facilitate the 24/7, 365-day submission of session proposals and great ideas. With EduGate, PCMA has created universal program submission standards. The portal allows PCMA to immediately assess a speaker's fluency and commitment to its submission, thereby increasing speed-to-session-delivery and staff productivity. EduGate provides for a central database for PCMA staff, program committees and chapter leaders to search for vetted and approved quality education programming. Speakers need only to submit once to be considered for multiyear, multi-event opportunities rather than the resubmissions required in the past. The first test for EduGate will be the 2013 Convening Leaders Call for Presentations, now open through February 29. EduGate was developed in collaboration with PCMA's technology partner, Active Network. [www.pcma.org](http://www.pcma.org)

## The Homestead Begins \$25 Million Transformation



**HOT SPRINGS, VA** — The Homestead, the iconic mountain resort in Hot Springs, VA, began work on a multifaceted \$25 million transformation. Set for completion in summer 2012, The Homestead will debut a new spa and wellness center; Allegheny Springs, a two-acre family adventure area with water attractions; new restaurants and bars; and the new Mini Cascades golf course. The new Jefferson's Grill restaurant will draw inspiration from the nation's first gourmand, Thomas Jefferson, with a farm-to-table menu celebrating the heritage of Virginia's original farmers and present-day artisans including local farmers, ranchers, cheese makers and vintners. Open since 1766, the 483-room Homestead features 72,000 sf of meeting space, three championship golf courses, a downhill ski area, a 48-stable equestrian center and show ring, and a top-rated shooting club. [www.thehomestead.com](http://www.thehomestead.com)

## ESPA Celebrates New Brand, Elects New President

**PRINCETON JUNCTION, NJ** — ESPA, the Event Service Professionals Association, formerly known as ACOM, celebrated the launch of its new name, logo and mission statement, and named a new president at its annual conference held in January at the US Grant in San Diego, CA. David Dvorak, CMP, vice president, catering and convention services, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, is the 2012 ESPA president. New sessions at the conference, which was held prior to PCMA's Annual Conference, included Ideas in Motion — a speed-learning session that encouraged dialogue between planners and CSMs. Additionally, new regional networking sessions, a book club-style event, and a showcase where attendees shared innovative service tools and programs were also featured. ESPA also introduced the Seek & Tweet contest on Twitter — a scavenger hunt-style activity incorporating social media. [www.espaonline.org](http://www.espaonline.org)



Dvorak

## Salt Palace Convention Center Goes Solar

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT** — According to the *Deseret News*, the largest solar energy array in Utah is atop the Salt Palace Convention Center. The array, which is growing by 200 panels a day, will produce just less than 20 percent of the convention center's energy. Kimberly Barnett, senior adviser to Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon, says having 4.5 acres of solar panels on the roof is expected to result in more conventions. Salt Lake City is under consideration by the American Solar Energy Society and the U.S. Green Building Council because of the solar addition, says Shawn Stinson, spokesman for the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The project has definitely caught attention," he says. [www.visitsaltlake.com](http://www.visitsaltlake.com)

Technology



Brad Weaber



## How to Use Technology to Accelerate Business

As associations continue to operate in a cost-conscious environment, it is important to look for new ways to optimize spending and ensure effectiveness. Technology is helping associations provide innovation and value by fueling growth. As a result, associations cannot afford to be on the fence about whether or not they should incorporate technology into their meetings. Rather, they need to ask how incorporating technology can be done effectively while generating revenue at the same time. Here are some ideas on how the application of technology can enhance not only a meeting or event, but an association overall.

### MOBILE APPS GRAB THE STARRING ROLE

With their inexpensive costs and relatively easy-to-use format, mobile apps are making a noticeable impact on associations' meetings. One of the best features of a mobile app is its ability to provide immediate information. Attendees can access a seemingly limitless amount of event information at the touch of their fingertips. Through mobile apps, associations can instantly update and deliver breaking news, such as a change to booth locations or event times, to attendees and exhibitors. This can save on the enormous cost of printing thousands of handouts to simply notify attendees of a room or time change. Mobile apps also provide vendors another touch point with attendees.

Mobile apps also have the ability to bring in an additional stream of revenue for an association's events. For example, with many mobile apps there is the option to customize the home screens. This is attractive to potential

sponsors, exhibitors and advertisers because it means their logos and other pertinent information may be prominently displayed each time a user accesses the app, which many times, is in advance of the event. Therefore, mobile apps give them additional exposure to thousands of attendees. The Car Wash Show is one such event that created a new source of revenue from a mobile app. The show's mobile app increased attendee interaction and engagement for the exhibitors that proactively used the technology. Results show that exhibitors who uploaded handouts and logos to the show's app received 50 percent of the total exhibitor views. Exhibitors that took advantage of these free and relatively easy opportunities increased their visibility and showcased their products and services to thousands of attendees on an ongoing basis.

### TABLETS STREAMLINE EVENT PLANNING, SELLING

The tablet computer brings new levels of efficiency to event management. An iPad works wonders as a substitute for a meeting planner's heavy binder. Rather than lug around a bulky book, planners can load all the information onto a lightweight tablet and have immediate access to floor plans, specs, orders, etc., at the touch of a fingertip. Staff members can answer on-the-spot event questions from attendees, and can also use a tablet to sell exhibitor spaces for future shows. Attendees can use the tablet to view onsite guides and expo floor plans, network with peers and gain access to an unlimited amount of event information.

And more and more exhibitors are embracing the tablet as a sales tool at trade shows and beyond.

### VIRTUAL EXTENSIONS ENABLE CONTINUOUS INTERACTION

Technology changes the rules of member engagement. Rather than just interacting with attendees during the few

### WEB-BASED PLATFORMS OFFER GREATER EFFICIENCIES

In 2011, SmithBucklin launched its meeting management software, which streamlines many facets of the meeting-management process, including maintaining a global hotel and supplier database, creating custom RFPs and developing a multitude of meeting and

*Associations cannot afford to be on the fence about whether or not they should incorporate technology into their meetings. Rather, they need to ask how incorporating technology can be done effectively while generating revenue at the same time.*

days they are at a conference, utilizing certain technologies enables an association to have numerous touch points with members and potential attendees throughout the year. For example, the Independent Oracle Users Group (IOUG) wanted to extend its conference content to a year-round format. To do so, IOUG recorded approximately 40 sessions from its annual meeting and posted them online as webinars. This helped IOUG boost its annual revenue by 20 percent. This showcases how associations can grow by reaching more members more frequently with year-round, low-cost content. In IOUG's case, the extension of its in-person event to virtual audiences was only possible through cost-effective tools such as webinars.

management reports. Client organizations are already experiencing great value from the software. This type of innovative technology is a great way to reduce expenses and create new revenue models that will make events even more profitable.

Associations that take advantage of the latest technology do so to the benefit of members, meeting attendees, exhibitors, and essentially, their own bottom lines. AC&F

*Brad Weaber serves as executive vice president of SmithBucklin's Event Services unit. He is a 26-year meetings industry veteran and oversees all of the company's convention, trade show and event management service offerings. SmithBucklin is the world's largest association management and professional services company.*

# Just What the Doctor Ordered

## Growing Attendance and New Venues Provide Welcome Relief From the Recession's Aches and Pains

By John Buchanan

**M**edical meetings, which represent the single largest sector of the association meeting and convention market, enjoyed a good year in 2010, while much of the industry still struggled from the lingering effects of a deep recession. Total attendance at medical meetings drawing more than 4,000 participants improved 6.7 percent over 2009, according to the Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association (HCEA). Statistics for 2011, not yet available, are expected to show further growth.

"That's a good indicator that major medical meetings are still the place for medical professionals to get their continuing education and network with each other," says Frank Skinner, HCEA's executive director.

Yet despite such good news, the industry still faces a range of issues and challenges, from maintaining attendance and the use of exhibit space to the presentation of top-quality content and the shadow of tough new regulations.

One current issue that's important to both destinations and planners is a growing focus on international attendance. "One of the things we are hearing and seeing is that medical associations are looking for more international attendance, because that's an area of growth for them," says Nikki Moon, vice president of convention sales at the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau. "That challenge of helping planners increase international attendance is one that every major destination is going to face, even though it's really only in its infancy now, because that's where the growth is going to be in the market."

At the same time, however, drawing more international attendees also faces some unique obstacles, such as reduced funding from third-party sponsors, says Wanda Johnson, CMP, CAE, senior director, meetings and education, at the Endocrine Society in Chevy Chase, MD. "That is changing now, so the question then becomes whether those people will be able to get to the meetings in the future," she says. "We haven't seen a significant change yet, but I'm hearing buzz in the medical meeting community that that might be something that will impact attendance in the future."

In addition, Johnson says, sharply reduced research budgets have also begun to impact attendance at her annual meeting, which attracts both doctors and researchers. "The funding situation in research has been a huge factor," she says. "For example, some research organizations that would like to send five people



**Karen Malone**  
Vice President of Meetings  
HIMSS  
Chicago, IL

*"One of the things we work hard on is (exhibitor) brand awareness opportunities at the meeting. We...find out what their individual brand cachet is, and then we find ways to leverage that to build brand awareness for them."*



Photo courtesy of Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center

Meeting planners of medical meetings will be attracted to the brand new Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center when it opens in fall 2013. The medical mart will house permanent showrooms for cardiology, surgery, ob-gyn, imaging, orthopedics, patient care, medical devices and more.

to the meeting can only afford to send two. And that is just the reality. And it is true globally, not just in the U.S."

Another hurdle, the agonizingly difficult and slow process of obtaining visas, apparently will be remedied sooner rather than later. In January, at Walt Disney World Resorts' Magic Kingdom Park in Orlando, FL, President Obama said his administration will improve and speed up the visa process for certain categories of travelers. According to published reports, qualified foreign visitors who were thoroughly screened during a prior visa application may be able to renew their visas without undergoing the current multitiered visa screening process.

### THE EXHIBITION CONUNDRUM

Another current issue causing concern among convention centers and meeting organizers is a significant reduction in the total use of exhibit space. Use of net space declined by 18 percent in 2010 and also recorded a decline in 2009, according to the latest data available from HCEA. "At this point, I'm just speculating, but maybe one reason for that is increased legislative and regulatory complexity that is causing exhibitors to just bring smaller exhibits," Skinner says. "But it could be that's it just the economy, in general, that is causing exhibitors to scale back. It could also be that labor costs going up to the point where exhibitors think that it's becoming too costly to bring larger booths to these shows."

Regardless of what the reasons might be, the reality of the downward pressure on the use of exhibit space is causing associations and meeting planners to take a fresh look at their value propositions. "A lot of meeting organizers are realizing that they

can't take the exhibit hall for granted anymore, and that they have to reinvent the experience for exhibitors and attendees," says Skinner. "And that is going to have to be a collaboration between meeting organizers and exhibitors to really make the exhibit halls a lot more of an educational experience. That means a lot more focus on education on the exhibit floor, as well as more engaging kinds of medical activity that really drives attendees back into the exhibit hall. So as a result of that, what I hear most from both show organizers and exhibitors is a wholesale effort to really make the exhibit hall a micro-environment for education."

Kay Witt, senior vice president of sales at the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau, is one of the many CVB executives around the country who is witnessing the manifestation of the trend Skinner cites. "We do see that some associations are using less exhibit space," she says. "We think that it's primarily because their base is just getting smaller as a result of the Great Recession. But the good news is that we also see that their use of meeting space has been getting bigger as a result of more focus on meeting content and continuing education sessions. But a lot of planners are still trying to find the right focus between those two things."

A related challenge, says Karen Malone, vice president of meetings at Chicago-based Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), is that exhibitors are now looking for more detailed and clearly demonstrable ROI from their show participation. Malone, whose annual meeting draws 32,000 attendees, 1,100 exhibitors and presents 300 education sessions, says the main thing her exhibitors are looking for is access to the market. They provide that by offering a range of opportunities for

gaining visibility, she adds. "One of the things we work hard on is brand awareness opportunities at the meeting. To do that, we sit down with exhibitors to find out what their individual brand cachet is, and then we find ways to leverage that to build brand awareness for them," Malone says.

## CONTENT IS KING

Despite such hotly debated issues as how to maintain and build attendance and the use of exhibits, the overarching factor that is becoming more critical every year is the education content provided at meetings. "Content is a key driver of success and especially of attendance," Malone says. "There's no question about that."

As a result, says Phelps Hope, vice president of meetings and expositions at Kellen Company in Atlanta, "one of the biggest issues for associations and planners today is finding a way to keep meetings fresh and keep the information current from an educational perspective. Those are the areas where there is a lot more pressure on planners now."

And a key element of that pressure "is to make sure that the

*"The most progressive associations are really pressing the issue of discussion and interactivity. That's because a lot of medicine is really about opinions — one doctor's opinion versus another doctor's opinion."*



Phelps Hope  
Vice President of Meetings  
and Expositions  
Kellen Company  
Atlanta, GA

educational content is actually qualified for continuing medical education (CME) credits," he says. "And for a CME session to qualify for continuing education units (CEUs), it has to meet certain criteria. Well, there are a lot of opinion-givers out there who will say this is my opinion or I can sell it as a session, but when you boil it down into the actual hard educational content, I'm finding that more and more are not making the grade, usually because they're representing splinter groups or special interest groups. And either they represent too small a percentage of the population in the field or they are too slanted toward the industry and selling something."

The only real remedy for that ailment, Hope says, "is to make sure that the vetting process is solid, that one of those questionable presentations does not slip through the process. And that vetting has to begin with the call for papers and abstracts. That means your criteria has to be properly set on the front end and

enforced on the back end to make sure you are providing the right kind of content and presenters for your particular meeting."

Complicating the responsibility, he adds, is the pervasive influence of third-party vendors and the critical difference between legitimate education content and what is, in effect, a promotional presentation masquerading as education. "And promotional content, no matter how interesting it might be," he says, "is not really pertinent to the purpose of the meeting or genuine education."

At the same time, Hope adds, another presentation-related issue that is challenging a longstanding model for meetings has been a fast-growing focus on peer-to-peer discussion, as opposed to traditional one-way presentations or lectures.

"The most progressive associations are really pressing the issue of discussion and interactivity," he says. "That's because a lot of medicine is really about opinions — one doctor's opinion versus another doctor's opinion. So what more and more associations are realizing is that doctors really gain a lot of knowledge through interaction and discussion with their peers. And you can't get that from the Internet or the library of fact-based resources. So, the more that associations promote discussion around important topics and the sharing of opinions, the better they are doing when it comes to their meetings. And that is a different model from the traditional model of a keynote speaker who just pushes out information for 75 minutes."

Instead, Hope says, he is seeing more expert-focused panel discussions, workshops and roundtables. And he expects that trend to accelerate further in 2012 and beyond.

## DESTINATION SELECTION

The top 20 health-care meeting destinations in the U.S. hosted 43 percent of all reported health-care meetings in 2010, according to HCEA. And there's no reason to believe that top-of-the-heap cities such as Orlando, Washington DC, San Diego, Las Vegas or Chicago will ever surrender their supremacy to less powerful rivals.

However, they are not resting on their laurels, either.

For example, Orlando — which by some estimates has hosted as many as half of all major medical meetings over the past few years — is in the midst of developing the \$2 billion, 650-acre Lake Nona Medical City — located just five minutes from Orlando International Airport — and includes a new University of Central Florida Medical School that opened last year as well as a host of hospitals and research laboratories yet to come. "That means that in the future, when associations and planners think of us," says Gary Sain, president and CEO of Visit Orlando, "they're not going to think of us just as a great meeting destination, but also as a great medical center." Other key Orlando medical infrastructure cited by Sain includes Florida Hospital and Orlando Health, as well as an ever-growing cluster of innovative bioscience and life science enterprises.



Gary Sain  
President and CEO  
Visit Orlando  
Orlando, FL

*"In the future, when associations and planners think of us, they're not going to think of us just as a great meeting destination, but also as a great medical center."*

Premier convention hotels in and around Orlando embrace the idea of Orlando as a center for medical meetings and all that it represents. For example, Harris Rosen — a well-known Central Florida hotelier who is recognized for his philanthropy and passion for healthful living, developed a more healthful pizza — low-fat mozzarella cheese and turkey pepperoni on a whole wheat crust. Dubbed "Rosen's Perfect Pizza," it is served at all seven of Rosen's area hotels and is now available at local public schools as an alternative to high-fat, high-calorie pizza. Proceeds from the sale of the trademarked pizzas fund educational scholarships.

Meanwhile, New Orleans — which ranks No. 8 on the HCEA list for 2010 — is developing a new \$3 billion medical complex that will be completed in downtown New Orleans in 2014 and will include a University Medical Center in partnership with Louisiana State University, Tulane University and Xavier University of Louisiana. Already completed is a new cancer research center opening in February 2012.

At the same time, Las Vegas is focusing on medical meetings as never before. "We have been doing very well in the medical sector," says Chris Meyer, CMP, CEM, vice president of sales at the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority. "Medical groups have discovered — or rediscovered — the value proposition of Las Vegas," he says. "And word is spreading that Las Vegas is a place that doctors and other medical professionals want to come to. As a result of that, we have become the first destination in the U.S. to create a medical tourism guide, which we launched last October." The Las Vegas Health and Wellness Destination Guide is one sign of the city's rising prominence in the medical sector, which was also supported by new medical infrastructure developments such as the opening of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health.

Meanwhile, new destinations are getting into the fray and finding success. "More and more planners are looking for a different kind of experience and different kinds of venues than they've typically gotten in traditional destinations such as New York, Chicago or Orlando," says Witt. "They're finally starting to look at different kinds of destinations, and Nashville has begun to attract more of

that business. It's safe, it's affordable, and most important it's an authentic kind of experience that is truly different. And you get a lot of bang for your buck in Nashville. And that has never been more important than it is now."

And, Witt says, while other, more well-known destinations are developing new medical infrastructure, Nashville has had it all along. It comes as a surprise to many planners, she says, that medicine is the No. 1 employer in the greater Nashville area.

The Nashville Medical Trade Center, a 1.5 million-sf international trade center for health-care ideas, information and innovation will open in early 2013. Utilizing the existing convention center in downtown Nashville with multiple stories constructed on top, the center will showcase products and services from leading international companies inside a venue of more than 600 permanent showrooms, 140,000 sf of exhibition/trade show space, conference facilities and technically advanced meeting rooms.

In addition, the Nashville Music City Center, a brand new 1.2-million-sf convention center, will debut in 2013 with 350,000 sf of exhibit space and 90,000 sf of meeting space. Adjoining it will be a new 800-room Omni Nashville convention hotel that is officially slated to open in January 2014.

In the meantime, planners who have used Nashville praise it. Johnson held her first meeting there last September, a five-day board review session and clinical meeting for 500 attendees. "Nashville was attractive to us for a number of reasons," she says.



Orlando's Lake Nona Medical City, a health and life sciences cluster, is home to hospitals, universities, research institutions and life science companies.

"One was that there is an endocrine community there because of Vanderbilt University that we could draw on for faculty. But it's also a city that is getting a lot of positive press for a variety of reasons. So it gave us a cost-effective opportunity to do something different." And she agrees with Witt that "bang for the buck" was an important benefit to the association and attendees.

That kind of value proposition, combined with world-class



Photo courtesy of The Chagrin Valley Times

*“What really clinched the deal for Cleveland was when the president... came for a site visit and saw...the facilities and value that Cleveland offers. And the value...was extremely important in a tight economy.”*

**Helen Moss**  
 Founder and Principal  
 Helen Moss Cancer Research Foundation, Cleveland, OH

president and a board member came for a site visit and saw for themselves the facilities and value that Cleveland offers,” Moss says. “And the value that they got here was extremely important in a tight economy.”

**THE NEW PPACA REGULATION:  
 A NIGHTMARE WAITING TO HAPPEN?**

Although the medical meeting industry has long been rife with regulations generated by specific industries, such as the PhRMA code that dictates acceptable activity between pharmaceutical companies and physicians or the ADVAMed rules for device manufacturers, 2012 will see the final prelude to the controversial rollout of the Physician Payment and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

The new federal regulation will require that any “transfer of value” of more than \$10 from a meeting host or exhibitor to a physician — even a cup of coffee and a donut, based on local market value — be recorded and reported.

As a result, the levels of concern and uncertainty are both high because final details of the regulations, which take effect in 2013, are not yet known, says Frank Skinner, executive director of Healthcare Conventions and Exhibitors Association (HCEA). “And one key reason for that,” he says, “is that something called a national provider identification (NPI) number will have to be assigned to doctors and as I understand it, some dentists and nurses. And that NPI number will then be used to report these ‘transfers of value’ to those individuals.”

The bottom line, Skinner says, is much more daunting due diligence at meetings, which some planners and exhibitors already see as a practical nightmare.

“And the other issue is what’s being called ‘aggregated value,’” Skinner says. “That means that if a doctor goes to five different meetings during the year and comes to your booth five times, you will have to also report the total value transferred.”

The Endocrine Society’s Johnson is one of the many planners experiencing some practical anxiety about the new regulations. “Right now, everyone is just waiting to find out what they are going to really mean,” she says.

medical infrastructure such as the Cleveland Clinic, has also begun to attract more medical meetings to Cleveland. The new Cleveland Medical Mart and Convention Center will open in the fall of 2013 with 230,000 sf of exhibit space and 60,000 sf of high-tech, flexible meeting rooms. The center’s 235,000-sf Medical Mart will house permanent showrooms focused on cardiology, surgery, ob-gyn, imaging, orthopedics, sterilization, health-care furnishings, patient care, health-care IT and medical devices. The Westin Cleveland Convention Center will open in summer 2013, adjacent to the Cleveland Medical Mart and Convention Center complex. The former Crowne Plaza will undergo a \$64 million renovation prior to reopening as a Westin, and offer 481 rooms and 26,000 sf of meeting facilities.

Helen Moss, founder and principal of the city’s 11-year-old nonprofit Helen Moss Cancer Research Foundation played a pivotal role in attracting one of the biggest medical meetings Cleveland has ever hosted. The city drew 520 attendees to the annual meeting of the New York-based Society for Integrative Oncology, which previously has only used well-established destinations such as San Francisco.

Moss worked closely with Positively Cleveland and Case Western University Medical School to create an experience that generated a huge success for the association and its attendees. “But what really clinched the deal for Cleveland was when the

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# Get on Board

## Elevate the Meeting Experience with Trendy Tech Tools

By George Seli

**W**hen it comes to enhancing meetings with social media tools, mobile apps and other trendy technologies, associations on the whole are arguably less cutting-edge than corporations. One reason is associations' smaller budgets. Another, as Michelle Bruno, CEM, CMP, president of content marketing firm Bruno Group Signature Events, points out, is that many associations are dealing with "legacy infrastructures" in terms of technology. Thus, they're "trying to retrofit new registration technologies or new mobile apps into attendee management systems from 10–20 years ago, and I think that is weighing heavily on them," Bruno contends.

### CONNECT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

That being said, there is exemplary use of the latest meetings technologies among plenty of associations, including the Washington, DC-based Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO). BIO's annual conference draws around 15,000 biotech professionals, and they all have the opportunity to facilitate and augment their experience with myBIO, a "personal planning tool" running on the Zerista platform. Via myBIO, attendees can review the program and put sessions on their calendar, as well as review attendee and exhibitor lists and mark those with whom they want to connect.

The tool does not represent a new tech initiative for BIO. The 2011 conference was the fourth one featuring myBIO, and "the original concept of scanning exhibitors and companies has always been there," notes Margaret Core, CAE, managing director, sales and marketing, in BIO's Conferences and Conventions Division. "But in 2011 the user interface became more connected with social media tools that attendees might use in their personal lives. We collect the photo and profile information in the registration process, and the data automatically imports to myBIO, along with a link to the participant's LinkedIn or Facebook page. We also provide part of the functionality of myBIO to prospective attendees so they can

*"We collect the photo and profile information in the registration process and the data automatically imports to myBIO, along with a link to the participant's LinkedIn or Facebook."*



Margaret E. Core, CAE  
Managing Director, Sales and Marketing,  
BIO  
Washington, DC

sign in and start looking around at the attendee list, and then once they become a registrant they have full functionality."

Core favors an "open system" that integrates with users' existing Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, instead of a closed community with its own profiles for event participants. "If I put personal time into making my LinkedIn profile, I don't intend to do that at my professional society and then again at my community service project. So I don't want to go into a closed community and redo it all," she argues. "My experience is that if you build it yourself, you're going to isolate yourself."

And BIO is anything but "isolated" in cyberspace, maintaining a YouTube channel with about 200 videos and an 18,000-member LinkedIn group, a subgroup of which is focused on the international convention. This social media presence serves not only to connect existing members, but to pique interest and draw new ones.

For Sam Smith, managing director of Interactive Meeting Technology LLC, expanding membership and annual meeting attendance is one key motivation behind the use of social media. "An association is one organization inside a much larger community," Smith points out. "For example, PMI (Project Management Institute) has about 400,000 members. Well, the community is probably in the millions, so they have a small slice of the pie.

"So how do any of those associations take their annual event and make it a 'hub' for the professional community, and how can they use social media to connect all of the nonmembers?" This is known as "on-boarding" the target audience with the event, and it's done by repurposing the content effectively through social media channels. For instance, "someone can be Tweeting out the highlights of my keynote session, while a different person repurposing that content could be writing a 300-word blog post, or distributing digital media kits," Smith suggests.

Video is yet another promotional channel. "I can have a simple video crew running around capturing the hot things people are talking about and interviewing them: 'What did you think of that comment by Dr. So and So? And that becomes them retelling the event in their own words, and you can put the content on YouTube." Essentially, "the event is this big explosion of content and ideas, and you're asking, 'How can we take that explosion and repackage it so that it also has a life beyond in these digital channels?' You need to decide on a strategy to repurpose the content, and that has to do with the core messages and the core stories that the organization wants to tell."

### THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

The level of engagement through social media is one "data point" that can be used in measuring ROI for the event, but there are several others that can be culled via tech tools, and integrating them is a grow-



Michelle Bruno, CEM,  
CMP  
President  
Bruno Signature Events  
Salt Lake City, UT

*"Now they're using suites of tools to put all that data together and be able to create features and programming and make decisions about the event. That's something different; finally someone is connecting all the dots."*

ing trend. "The idea is a holistic approach to analytics," says Bruno. "We have registration data and data from social media, and you can use RFID (radio frequency identification) to track the behaviors of attendees. These data points combine with the surveys we're all accustomed to. Now they're using suites of tools to put all that data together and be able to create features and programming and make decisions about the event. That's something different; finally someone is connecting all the dots."

Important discrepancies sometimes surface, for example between attendees' indicated preferences and their behaviors. "If at an open registration they're saying they're interested in these products or these sessions, but they actually go somewhere else, that's revelatory," Bruno explains.

Bruno and Smith were both judges on the panel of EIBTM's Technology Watch Award for 2011, and The Active Network Inc. won honorable mention for precisely the kind of holistic analytics



Meetups sponsored by the Biotechnology Industry Organization are easily arranged by utilizing an open system that integrates with users' Facebook and LinkedIn profiles to connect participants in advance.



Samuel J. Smith  
Managing Director  
Interactive Meeting  
Technology LLC  
Minneapolis, MN

***“If you’re using a mobile app, you can update all the agendas with that new room location, and then you can make different kinds of announcements about it.”***

Bruno describes. (San Diego-based Active Network Inc., which was an onsite production partner for the PCMA’s 2012 Annual Meeting, recently purchased Philadelphia-based StarCite Inc.) Its ActiveEvents Insight is a comprehensive suite of mobile and tablet applications that gives the event organizer real-time access to registration data, lead retrieval, social networking, exhibitor management, session tracking, event mobile app usage, housing, financial statements and more.

All of these “technology pieces,” as Smith puts it, have been there, “but what companies like Active Network and Alliance Tech are starting to do is put a dashboard in front of it, so all the information is usable right now, and that’s where the power is,” says Smith. “The question is, can you take immediate action to fix a red flag you spot, or is it just good for analytics? Suppose you see that an education track isn’t getting the attendance you thought it would. Perhaps you did a bad job of guessing which content should be in which room, and you identify that there is an opportunity to switch rooms. And then if you’re using digital signage technology, you can update that one time, and it will update all your digital signage screens. If you’re using a mobile app, you can update all

the agendas with that new room location, and then you can make different kinds of announcements about it.”

Or at least, the analytics can suggest improvements the host company or exhibitors can make for the next event. “If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it,” says Core. “We have specific reports in myBIO that we can share with exhibitors. We also look at the top keywords that attendees used in the search engine and do a ‘gap analysis.’ So if one of our top 20 keywords was ‘personalized

medicine’ and between the exhibitor list and our sessions we didn’t have personalized medicine, then that leads us to try to work the next year on having that topic better covered.”

### TRACKING TOOLS

The winner of the EIBTM Technology Watch Award can also support ROI measurement by tracking attendee behavior, in a different way. ITN International’s Citywide Attendee Credential, a badge that doubles as a free pass to public transit and tourist attractions throughout a host city, utilizes NFC (near field communication) technology, which is like a very short-range RFID where signal detection depends on user authorization.

An NFC chip can work like a “mobile wallet” carrying, say, 50 event dollars that attendees can use to make purchases, and what ITN did was expand that capability beyond the event into the community, specifically the city of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, which features a mass transit system as well as many restaurants and other venues that are NFC enabled.

The event was IBC, and “to our knowledge it’s the only event ever to use the event credential for electronic access; many events have issued branded tickets, but not where the actual show credential is used for access,” explains Mike Sorgani, vice president of sales and marketing for ITN International, located in Bethesda, MD.

Not only does the event credential (which ITN calls a BCARD) enable a DMO to grant attendees access to its city’s infrastructure and attractions and thus co-brand the city with the event, but event hosts are also enabled to track attendees’ purchasing, control access and provide exhibitor lead retrieval. “We encode into the BCARD all of the credential user’s contact information as well as any demographic data the client wants to provide to the exhibiting companies,” says Sorgani. “In addition to that we encode access rights, meaning that some registrants are allowed to attend some educational sessions and other categories of attendance are not. We have systems in place that



Photo courtesy of ITN International

The BCARD is an event credential utilizing NFC technology developed by ITN International that supports ROI measurement by tracking attendee behavior. The badge doubles as a free pass to public transit and more.

will read the credential, looking for a particular access code. Then the exhibiting companies would use our device with our application to collect contact information on the people that visit them and their exhibit, and in addition to that we allow them to build in custom surveys. Then we have built an entire back end that allows the exhibiting company and/or the client immediate real-time access to the data,” explains Sorgani.

“The event organizer can thus report on where every single visi-

## Tweeting Out the Tips



Twitter isn’t just for convention hosts and attendees to provide ongoing updates and commentary on the event. It can also be used by CVBs that want to keep delegates posted on local venues and happenings. Nina Simmons, online marketing manager at the Greater Phoenix CVB and “downtown Phoenix expert,” is among the trailblazers in this

area, communicating with attendees through their conference hashtag to provide something like a virtual concierge service. “We ask the association if they have a hashtag for the conference, and if they do and they’re OK with us taking part in the conversation, we’ll do that,” Simmons explains. “We like to find out when the conference is having a free

night, and that way we can let them know what places in proximity of the conference are having a happy hour or other specials. But then we can also help attendees navigate the city via Twitter, for example if they’re not sure how to get from the airport to the hotel or if they’re looking for a certain kind of restaurant.” It all begins with a “welcome to Phoenix” Tweet that lets attendees know live help from the CVB is just a click away. —GS

tor to the event went and left their information. Since it’s a city-wide credential, we could report that John Smith used it for the metro, and we could even get down so far as to say he used it at these three metro stops and then visited these two museums and these two retailers,” says Sorgani. (Attendees at the time of registration are asked if they want to opt out.) Can we expect such a city-wide credential to be deployed at a U.S. convention in the near future? That depends on the city. “To our knowledge, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Atlanta and Philadelphia have NFC-type installations,” Sorgani says. Thus, what happened in Amsterdam might

tion to an accuracy of 1.3 meters. This “indoor positioning system” is ideal to facilitate attendees’ navigation of large conventions that use multiple halls and session rooms.

### THE CONVERGENCE TREND

Navigating the world of mobile apps is challenging for event organizers these days, with everything from video and Web-based apps; to those that serve to make conference materials paperless (floorplans, agendas and exhibitor directories); to those that offer services like attendee “matchmaking.” One major trend here is “convergence,” where multipurpose mobile apps for phones, tablets and other mobile devices are gaining popularity over standalone apps by different companies. “Think of a Swiss army knife,” says Bruno. “The trend is driven largely by the market and the buyers, who are the event organizers, because they’re complaining that it’s like a revolving door in their office. Everyday somebody is hawking a new mobile app. So there was this pressure on developers to bring the products together.”

A distinct trend is the rise of do-it-yourself (DIY) mobile apps, which provide the benefits of lower costs and more control on the data published. Products in this category had the highest number of entries in Tech Watch, including finalist Genie Mobile. “Their strength is that they have a very moderately priced mobile app, and the organizer can up to the last minute add content to the app by themselves,” Bruno explains. “In the old days they would have to go to the app developer to do that. So the trend is that the intermediary is no longer needed.”

DIY apps tend to be simpler (e.g., without fancy graphics) and will eventually pressure other developers to bring down prices on some of their products, Smith believes, because “if you just want something simple you can go to Genie Mobile.” In fact, Smith holds that this year the sheer number of app suppliers should create more competition and opportunities for negotiation that will ultimately push overall app pricing down. Budget-conscious association planners can then make a new year’s resolution to invest in more apps that will enhance and facilitate attendees’ experience, as well as perhaps their own.

***“The event organizer can thus report on where every single visitor to the event went. Since it’s a citywide credential, we could report that John Smith used it for the metro...then visited these two museums and these two retailers.”***



Mike Sorgani  
Vice President of Sales and  
Marketing  
ITN International  
Bethesda, MD

also happen in these cities, where the life of a convention is effectively extended on a daily basis through co-branding.

While both NFC- and RFID-based technologies can be used to track where attendees have been, another kind of tool actually helps them get where they want to go: the wayfinder. Rather like an indoor Google Maps, such a tool must lay out a route for a user that is much more fine-grained than an outdoor map. “That’s the big issue with this technology,” says Smith. “When you’re inside you may need to know what’s within two feet of you.” Now, Wifarer, another Tech Watch finalist, has figured out how to do that with wireless technology, essentially refining a venue’s existing Wi-Fi systems to pinpoint a smartphone’s loca-

# Staying Ahead of the Curve

By Kelle Barr

## Attracting Association Meetings With New Technology, New Builds and More

**B**efore Vicki Hawarden, CMP, became president and CEO of the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) last summer, she oversaw several departments at Meeting Professionals International (MPI) — including event planning.

Hawarden also has held executive positions with the National Recreation and Park Association, American Association of Blood Banks and International Association for Exhibition Management. In short, she knows her way around site selection and has, in recent years, watched convention centers make great strides to attract functions — including technological upgrades and additions.

“I see convention centers building in more technology and flexibility so the space can morph into whatever the customer needs it to be,” Hawarden says. “Convention centers are staying on top of ever-evolving technologies. The main push now is for Internet access and bandwidth throughout the building to keep up with demand. Digital signage and way-finding are also big, given that signage is typically costly for customers.”

They are also doing more homework, Hawarden says, adding the advantages of logistical solutions and relationship-building into the mix, including connecting the centers to new convention hotels via walkways and bridges.

“I do think it’s vital. It’s part of the flexibility piece, since this makes it possible to expand the convention center space, or to meet in both a larger venue and a smaller, more intimate one,” she says. “Plus it takes the weather out of the equation, somewhat.”

Alongside these enhancements, cultivating solid rapport with clients and strengthening communications are steps she sees centers refining to make sure the bookings keep coming.

“Convention centers are also doing a much better job of engaging customers before they build or remodel, so they know what the customers need and want up front.”

Hawarden also made the push for association planners to utilize every tool that the local CVB offers, citing details of a 2010 event when 1,500 MPI members convened from all over the globe at Cancun’s Moon Palace for their annual meeting.

The Cancun Convention & Visitors Bureau performed critical roles assisting Hawarden and her team in executing the large event, helping to maximize time and achieve MPI’s specific objectives within budgetary and timetable limits.

“The CVB was absolutely essential; not only was the facility new to us, but so was the country and its particular regulations. They coordinated all of our site visits, and they connected us to all the local venues and gave us their insights on which ones would best meet our goals,” she says.

“We never had any visits or meetings without their presence; they served as our main point of contact and resolved many issues on our behalf,” adds Hawarden.

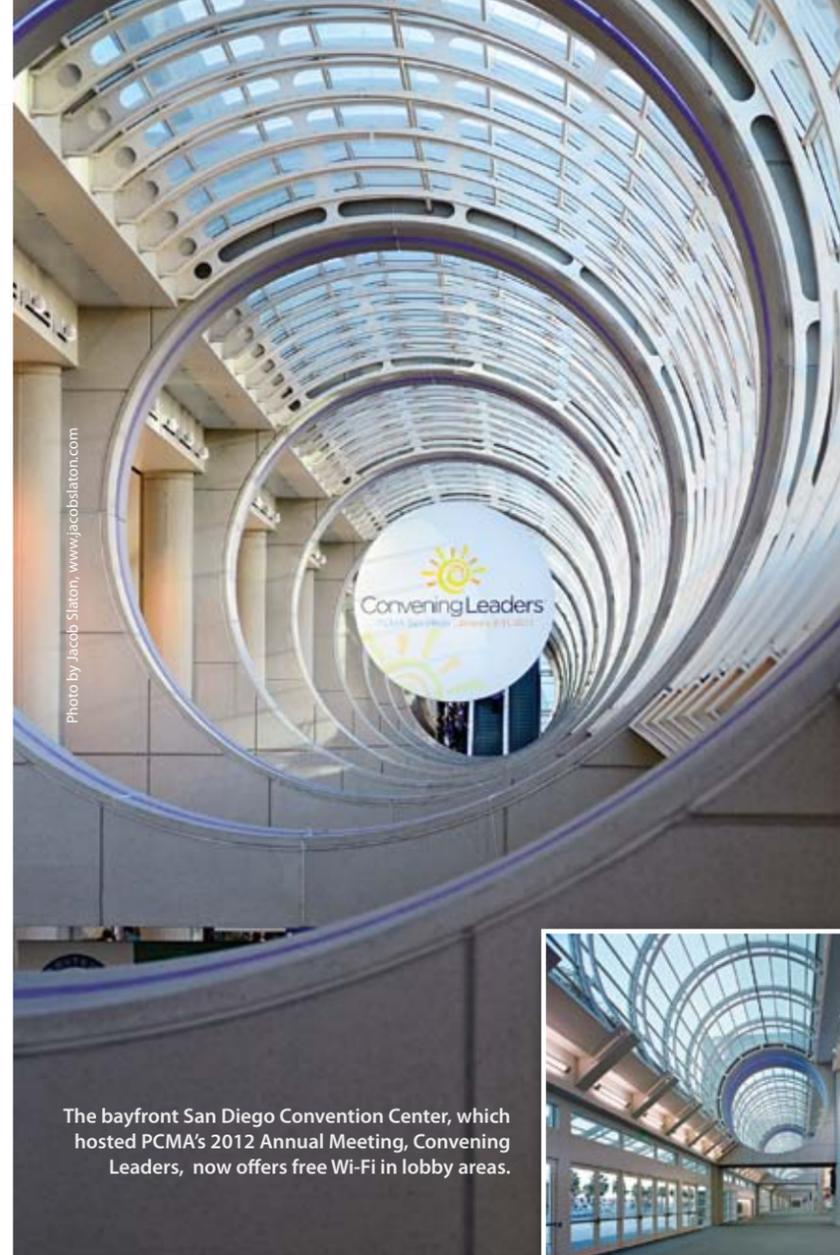
### ADVANCING CVB TECHNOLOGY HELPS CENTERS THRIVE

CVBs are taking the same kinds of initiatives — using ever-evolving technology to attract as many events as possible to their city’s convention centers and hotels.

An important way to do so is to simplify the planner’s job, according to Margie Sitton, senior vice president of sales and services at the San Diego Convention and Visitor’s Bureau.

Gone are the days when a planner waded through multiple proposals to choose housing venues suitable for a function, at least in San Diego. This CVB’s cutting-edge lead system — iLead — does much of the grunt work to simplify site selection.

“We re-engineered our lead system two years ago so that we can communicate with planners,” Sitton says. “When we get a lead, we create a link for that person to access iLead, and we push the leads out only to hotels that fit a planner’s needs. We have 131



The bayfront San Diego Convention Center, which hosted PCMA’s 2012 Annual Meeting, Convening Leaders, now offers free Wi-Fi in lobby areas.



Photo courtesy of San Diego CVB

Leaders. The four-star Omni San Diego Hotel, located across from the convention center, is one of four head-quarter hotels that helped accommodate the group. Underscoring the value association groups bring to a destination, San Diego predicted an immediate return of \$11.8 million in economic impact from PCMA’s meeting.

### TEXTING AND TWEETING FROM A MEETING

Smartphone tools and social networks that once existed for amusement or personal use are now fully integrated into the association world, and venues are working to keep pace with the trend.

One example is the 2,100 attendees at the annual meeting for the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) who were encouraged to send their feeds via Twitter to the world during their three-day annual conference in New Orleans last November.

Derrick Johnson, II, CMP, director of meetings and professional development for NAGC said that the live tweet feeds and their responses were broadcast on screens during the programs at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside hotel, where the conference was held.

“We also had a texting program that the CVB set up for us to help with marketing and promotion,” Johnson says. “Members were texted with the city’s best deals during the event. They got offers for restaurants, bars, shopping and entertainment all over New Orleans. It was a great benefit for members who are text-savvy.”

### SITE SELECTION ASSISTANCE AND ROI CALCULATION

Christine Shimasaki, CDME, CMP, is managing director of empowerMINT.com, and the Destination Marketing Association International’s (DMAI) Event Impact Calculator.

Both are DMAI strategic initiatives: empowerMINT.com is a national electronic destination finder designed to hand planners a roster of bureaus to choose from based on criteria they feed into the empowerMINT Web portal. There is even an online tutorial, led by Shimasaki herself, explaining how to use the system.

“The whole purpose behind empowerMINT is to really articulate and communicate to meeting planners the value of working with a CVB and to find them all,” says Shimasaki, who is based in San Diego. “It makes it very easy for planners to search and find a CVB with all information on the local convention center and hotels.”

If a planner is considering several destinations with a specific size requirement, Shimasaki says, they can use the portal, which

hotels to choose from; the nice thing is that we’re not contractually obligated to contact each of them, so there are no ‘pat proposals.’”

With iLead’s real-time advantage, all venues can edit content and tailor responses with custom photos, videos, links to websites and more. Additionally, they know just who they are competing with.

“Everything is time-stamped. We know when the lead comes in, we know when it goes out, and the hotels and planners know it, too. It’s very interactive,” Sitton says. “The fact that it’s real-time and that planners can see their progress makes it very exciting for them. Planners love iLead, and it has been great for San Diego,” Sitton says.

It must be working: Nearly 4,000 attendees descended on the sunny city in January when the San Diego Convention Center and the San Diego CVB co-hosted the annual Professional Convention Management Association’s (PCMA) Annual Meeting, Convening

will transport them directly to the CVBs who will jump in and continue the simplification process in unfamiliar cities.

What about the investment? How does a CVB or a planner quantify the economic value a meeting or convention will bring to a destination and demonstrate ROI to stakeholders?

The answer, according to Shimasaki, is DMAI's new Event Impact Calculator, a destination- and event-specific online tool developed in partnership with Tourism Economics. DMOs and planners subscribing to the calculator can now analyze the total economic impact of a face-to-face event by entering their event's data — including attendance, date, event type and duration.

"This is important," Shimasaki says, "because not all meetings are created equal." For planners, knowing how much your business is worth is powerful leverage during negotiations.

### MAKING CONVENTION CENTERS SMARTER

When David Renzi, CMP, director of meetings and advertising for the American Helicopter Society International (AHS), brought 1,500 aerospace engineering professionals to Virginia Beach last spring, he relied on the Virginia Beach Convention

Center professionals for the event's specialized requirements.

"We cater to a very technological audience," says Renzi, who was honored with the Meeting Professional of the Year Award at the Event Service Professionals Association Annual Meeting in January. "This meeting provides the chance for technical professionals — aerospace engineers and designers — to pass on their latest accomplishments and newest developments for helicopters and other vertical-lift technologies."

To accommodate, according to Dave Wilson, event manager at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, adjustments were made — including more than 500 wireless connections for attendees to utilize — but the additions were nothing the center wasn't prepared to tackle.

"The association required numerous Internet connections on the trade show floor, as well as a large amount of bandwidth for registration requirements," Wilson says. "Fortunately, this facility has been outfitted with the latest infrastructure by the Internet and telecommunications provider, Smart City."

Amy Chisholm, CAE, CMP, who is director of meetings for the Building Owners & Managers Association (BOMA) International, says Smart City Networks provided stellar service for her recent convention of 4,000 real estate professional members at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center in California.

"Smart City is the exclusive provider for telecommunications and Internet service at the convention center so we had to use their services," Chisholm says. "But it was a very positive experience. They gave us quotes well in advance, and everything was set and ready as ordered. When the exclusive provider gives good service and value for the money, it's very much appreciated."

Last July, Smart City Networks formed a relationship with Origin Digital to offer simplified videostreaming packages for convention center events nationwide, an initiative which Smart City Networks' president, Mark Haley, says provides functions with superior video services.

"Events are utilizing video experiences to supplement a show's live presentations and demos, but to work seamlessly, the technology needs to be in place to accommodate the additional demand that streaming video places on a network," Haley says. "We're committed to enhancing the experience through video."

The Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL, showcased new ways to stay connected when The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) held its annual trade show there last February. Monster Media and Smart City Networks partnered to provide six mobile hot spot lounges with free Wi-Fi, charging stations, and three interactive kiosks, which detected body motion to trigger digital touch displays promoting the HIMSS mobile website, as well as live digital QR codes that users could scan with their smartphones, sending them directly to the HIMSS mobile website. Smart City and Monster Media unveiled an expanded interactive digital system for the first

time at The National Association of Broadcasters Show last April at the Las Vegas Convention Center (see photos opposite).

### FREE WIRELESS ACCESS (AND MORE!) SEALS THE DEAL

The 1,001-room Omni Dallas Hotel, which has 110,000 sf of meeting space, opened last November as headquarters hotel for the Dallas Convention Center. The new property, connected to the convention center by skybridge, is one key to being able to host what Phillip Jones, president and CEO of the Dallas Convention & Visitor's Bureau, calls "The Super Bowl" of all industry functions when ASAE's Annual Meeting & Exposition comes to Dallas this August with 6,000 attendees. Jones believes that adding free Wi-Fi to the Dallas Convention Center helped to facilitate the booking.

"Very recently, we noticed that some of our competitors were beginning to offer free Wi-Fi," Jones says. "We are making the technological upgrades at the convention center right now to be able to

accommodate the bandwidth necessary to do this. Before, it cost about \$10 per day for someone to access the wireless Internet." The enhancement will roll out by the end of March, making work easier both for attendees staying at the center and for those who are not.

"Some of them had free wireless at their hotels but not at our convention center," he says. "And it was limited on some of the trade show floors so that made things difficult sometimes."

The trend is becoming widespread throughout the nation's major centers, Jones says. He considers the investment crucial for larger convention centers to draw events of the ASAE magnitude — and to remain competitive in an ever-evolving technological age. Jones says that ASAE's annual meeting in August "is a huge opportunity for us to introduce Dallas to key decision-makers who are in the position to book major association meetings in the next 10 years."

Read on to find out how other convention centers across the country are investing for their futures.



Last spring's National Association of Broadcasters Show was the first group to experience a new interactive lounge environment (above) developed by Smart City and Monster Media and showcased at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The digital experience included a portable plasma touch-screen wall, kiosk with interactive content, and charging stations (right).



Photos courtesy of Smart City Networks



Renderings of San Jose Convention Center's 125,000-sf expansion, which will help the city compete for large association groups.



Photos courtesy of San Jose CVB

## Convention Center Highlights From Coast to Coast

**San Jose, CA.** Coming in fall 2013, the San Jose Convention Center will showcase freshly renovated spaces as well as unveil a new 125,000-sf, integrated convention center expansion, which will include a 35,000-sf ballroom and 25,000 sf of flexible meeting space. The convention center, which will remain open during

the project, will boast a total of 550,000 sf of usable space when the \$120 million project is complete. Other major improvements include more outdoor event space, better way-finding and upgraded technology, and more breakout flexible space.

Team San Jose's CEO Bill Sherry, who is serving as the conven-



Photo courtesy of Anschutz Entertainment Group

A rendering of the Los Angeles Convention Center's proposed 20,000-sf addition, which will replace the 40-year-old West Hall.

tion center project executive, noted: "The new convention center will become an icon for San Jose and increase Team San Jose's competitive edge selling San Jose as a destination in the meetings and convention marketplace." Sherry, who also continues to serve as aviation director at Mineta San Jose International Airport, successfully piloted the airport's \$1.3 billion modernization project to an under-budget, early completion. In anticipation of the greater drawing power of the newly expanded convention center, Team San Jose has restructured its sales organization to include a stronger presence in the Midwest and Northeast.

Says Team San Jose Vice President of Sales and Marketing Diana Ponton, "There are now groups we can sell to in these markets who were interested in Team San Jose's renowned service model — that has 97 percent of planners saying they would return — but who couldn't book us before due to convention center size."

**San Diego, CA.** A proposed \$520 million expansion of the San Diego Convention Center, which just hosted PCMA's annual meeting in January, would add 961,187 sf, doubling the floor space of meeting rooms and ballrooms, bringing the total square footage of floor area to 2.75 million sf. Consultants estimate that the expanded center could attract an additional 25 events annually.

**Los Angeles, CA.** Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) recently announced plans to replace the Los Angeles Convention Center's existing West Hall. The new 20,000-sf hall, which will connect the existing South Hall with AEG's proposed NFL football stadium, would better accommodate large conventions. AEG previously unveiled plans to build the new stadium, Farmers Field, which will be situated next to the new convention center hall and would provide additional event space for groups. Timelines are not established yet, but it is speculated that the convention center construction would be completed a few years ahead of the stadium, which is aiming for a 2016 opening.

"The Los Angeles Convention Center modernization component of the event center development project will replace the four-decade-old West Hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center with a modern facility contiguous with the South Hall exhibition space," says Pouria Abbassi P.E.,

general manager and CEO, Los Angeles Convention Center. "The flexibility and efficiency inherent in contiguous exhibit hall design is considered an attractive feature to event organizers and planners."

**Long Beach, CA.** The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, with its more than 300,000 sf of exhibit space, is undergoing a major repositioning and upgrade to provide a boutique-style ambience. The center has invested \$20 million over the past three years for new furniture, seating, carpeting and wall coverings, with more furniture added near function spaces to create "minipods" for attendees to meet and network, according to the center's spokesperson Bob Maguglin.

"We cater to association conferences, and all of the meeting space has been completely renovated," Maguglin says. "We're really excited about the renovations."

**Nashville, TN.** In early 2013, Nashville will welcome the 1.2-million-sf Music City Center, which will feature a 350,000-sf exhibit hall as well as 57 meeting rooms and a 57,000-sf ballroom. Opening a little later in 2013 and serving as the headquarters hotel, is the Omni Nashville Hotel, which will offer 800 guest rooms and 80,000 sf of meeting and event space for up to 2,700 people. The convention center hotel also will integrate with the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which will provide another 10,000 sf of meeting and event space. Music City Center has pre-booked more than 600,000 total room nights.

**Philadelphia, PA.** The Philadelphia Convention Center's five-year, \$786 million expansion project came to a close in the first quarter of 2011. The center's 2.3-million-sf facility now covers four city blocks on 20 acres in central Philadelphia. It is the largest single public works project in Philadelphia history and the nation's 14th largest facility. Among new features of the LEED-certified center is a glass atrium entrance soaring 100 feet above the ground and a ballroom that accommodates 6,000 attendees.

The Philadelphia Convention Center is billed as a technology



Photo courtesy of Nashville CVB

Nashville's Music City Center, which opens in spring 2013, will incorporate a living, 4-acre green roof, designed to prevent storm-water runoff.

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leader, boasting the industry's highest bandwidth Internet connectivity, along with new technological advances including digital signage and remote attendance. With walkability being crucial for large functions, there are 8,500 hotel rooms within a 15-minute walk of the Philadelphia Convention Center.

**Anaheim, CA.** The Anaheim Convention Center will break ground on its new Grand Plaza, a 100,000-sf outdoor addition to



Photo courtesy of Omni Dallas Hotel

The Omni Dallas Hotel, which opened on 11-11-11, is connected to the Dallas Convention Center via skybridge. The city will host ASAE's annual meeting this August.

its function and meeting space, in the spring of 2012 and will finish by the year's end. Water fountains, outdoor seating, dining and unique landscape design will highlight the Grand Plaza, which Charles Ahlers, president of the Anaheim Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau calls "spectacular" for meeting attendees. "Our excellent, year-round sunny weather is the perfect backdrop for this space," he says. "Here groups can dine al fresco, listen to concerts, or attend receptions and exhibitions."

Advancing technology is high priority. As of January, the 1.6-million-sf, LEED-certified convention center will offer free Wi-Fi to all of its guests with standard 128K-upload and 256K-download capacity throughout the center.

**Orlando, FL.** The Peabody Orlando finished a \$450 million expansion in late 2010, including the addition of a covered walkway to the Orange County Convention Center. It's an elegant venue for a large gathering with 1,641 guest rooms and 300,000 sf of function space. It is now one of the largest Forbes Four Star, AAA Four Diamond hotels in the eastern half of the U.S. The new Hilton Orlando also is connected to the OCCC via open-air walkway, and Rosen Centre Hotel recently opened a new skywalk to the convention center.

**New Orleans, LA.** Nearly every hotel in the city has undergone renovations, repositioning or rebranding in recent years, according to Tara Letort, director of group communications and public relations at the New Orleans Convention &

Visitors Bureau. This includes the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center with a \$50 million renovation underway since December of 2011. The renovations follow \$93 million in improvements made to the 27-year-old facility over the past five years. Debuting in early 2013 will be a new 60,300-sf Great Hall, 25,400 sf of prefunction space, a rooftop terrace, executive club lounge and a 4,660-sf Signature Room.

The Hyatt Regency New Orleans reopened last fall after a \$275 million redesign. The hotel, situated next to the Louisiana Superdome, has 1,193 all-new guest rooms and the largest amount of meeting space in the city at 200,000 sf.

**Las Vegas, NV.** In January Smart City Networks installed a digital signage network at the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC). The system includes 12 video walls, offering exhibitors and event planners a high-impact way to publicize their information and services to thousands of attendees. The planned \$890 million expansion of the LVCC that was put on hold during the recession may soon be back on the drawing board.

**Indianapolis, IN.** The Indiana Convention Center's 2010 expansion (which nearly doubled its previous size) and Lucas Oil Stadium, joined together by walkway, means that the two now have a combined 745,000 sf of exhibit space. The Indiana Convention Center is connected by skywalks to 4,719 hotel rooms — more than any other convention center in the nation.

Lucas Oil Stadium — home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts and the 2012 Super Bowl — is an all-weather venue that independently boasts 179,000 sf of exhibit space and seats 63,000 for even the largest of events.

**Sandusky, OH.** Midwest meeting options just expanded with the opening in January of Kalahari Resort's newly expanded convention center. The 120,000-sf addition more than doubles the size of the previous space, bringing the total to 215,000 sf, accommodating 5,200 attendees. High-tech touches include interactive white boards, digital signage, videoconferencing, and advanced sound and audio-visual equipment.

**Seattle, WA.** Why choose Seattle Southside for an association meeting? With Southside's four cities situated 15 minutes south of downtown Seattle and 20 minutes north of Tacoma, economics are key, according to Seattle Southside Visitor Services. Hotel rates are 20 to 30 percent less expensive than those in downtown Seattle, so meetings and events are much more affordable at the area's 9,000 hotel rooms and more than 850,000 sf of meeting space. An abundance of free parking, free airport shuttles and inexpensive public transportation means that meeting in Seattle Southside saves planners and their attendees a pocketful of cash. A light rail system provides convenient accessibility to and from downtown Seattle for post-meeting entertainment and dining. The ShoWare Center in Kent accommodates up to 6,000 attendees, and the Tukwila Community Center has meeting space for up to 700 people and views of Mt. Rainier. AC&F

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# Florida

## Where 'Attraction' Is the Name of the Game

By George Seli

Florida's primary cities share many qualities that attract association meetings, from warm weather to outdoor activities to top-notch (and relatively affordable) lodging and meeting facilities. But each city — from Miami to Jacksonville — has a distinct character and culture to go along with the ubiquitous palm trees. Whether it's the elegance of Naples, the history of St. Augustine, the electricity of South Beach, the Cuban flavor of Ybor City, or the world-renowned theme parks of Orlando, delegates can look forward to very different experiences under the rubric of a "Florida meeting," and a planner can find a Floridian city to match their interests and demographics. For Diane Williams, director, meetings and events for the Alexandria, VA-based International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), the match is fairly obvious: Orlando.

Generally considered the centerpiece of Florida's meeting industry, Orlando is also on the cutting edge of the theme-park industry, and the IAAPA has contracted to hold its meetings there for the next eight years, according to Williams, and most recently

visited the city last November. "Many of our members felt that going to Orlando was like coming home because it has that high concentration of parks," she says. "And the new developments in our industry normally hit Orlando first, such as when The Wizarding World of Harry Potter opened (at Universal Orlando Resort) in 2010. We were there in November of that year and did a buyout of the Harry Potter area for our big Thursday night event. Attendees just loved having exclusive use of the rides."

The group also has done "behind the scenes" facility tours of Disney's Hollywood Studios, SeaWorld and Legoland. "Being in Orlando eight years, we definitely want to stay ahead of the curve, so we're working with all the facilities in that area to know what they're developing, what's coming online in '14 and '15 when we will be there. Our members want to see the latest," Williams explains. "So Disney is coming on board with Fantasyland, and we want to get in there when it opens." It's also quite easy for the IAAPA to bring in top speakers in the theme park industry "when you're sitting in their backyard," she adds. For example, "we had Jim Atchison, CEO of SeaWorld, speak at our breakfast last year, and he just drove over from his house."

The attention Orlando gets from the IAAPA speaks to the world-class caliber of its attractions. The Attractions Expo 2011 drew about 25,000 industry professionals from many countries, an increase from the previous year, Williams reports. "Considering everything that the entire industry has gone through on a global level (economically), we were very pleased with those numbers." Among the 35 or so contracted hotels were some of Orlando's major properties, including the 1,641-room Peabody Orlando (300,000 sf of meeting space), 1,001-room Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek (more than 122,000 sf) and the Rosen hotels. Williams lauds the city's CVB, Visit Orlando, as "a huge help to us and a great partner. They do a lot of promotion for us, assisting our communications department in developing coverage for our event through radio interviews and newspapers, in the local press and also on a national scale."

Three hotels now connect to the 2.1-million-sf Orange County Convention Center (OCCC): The Peabody Orlando, the

Hilton Orlando (with 1,400 guest rooms and 175,000 sf of meeting space) and the Rosen Centre Hotel. Rosen Centre, which offers 106,000 sf of meeting space, recently renovated its 1,334 guest rooms as well as its Grand Lobby, hospitality suites and presidential suite. Debuting in the fall is an 18,000 sf ballroom. Meanwhile, the Rosen Plaza Hotel (60,000 sf), situated next to the convention center, has just completed a renovation of all 800 guest rooms.

Another stellar property, Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, will be able to host larger association meetings with the January 2013 completion of an additional 46,000 sf of meeting space. In total, the 720-room hotel will offer more than 128,000 sf of event space.

Universal Orlando Resort recently announced new entertainment options, including a new Blue Man Group show at Universal CityWalk, and, coming this spring, a new Superstar Parade and a newly upgraded "Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man" experience. Debuting this summer is a "Despicable Me" attraction, Hollywood Drive-In Golf experience and an immersive retail entertainment experience. Universal also recently announced that it will offer meeting groups staying at the three on-site Loews hotels golf privileges at partner courses Cypress Golf Club and Windermere Country Club as well as a dedicated golf coordinator who will plan and manage golf events.

Speaking of golf, as of last fall, Arnold Palmer Golf Management now operates, manages, maintains and helps promote all five Walt Disney World Resort courses including Disney's Palm and Magnolia, Lake Buena Vista, Osprey Ridge and Oak Trail golf courses. In Walt Disney World Resort entertainment news, construction is expected to begin in 2013 on a new themed land in Animal Kingdom based on the James

**"Many of our members felt that going to Orlando was like coming home. ...And the new developments in our industry normally hit Orlando first."**

Diane Williams, Director, Meetings and Events  
International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, Alexandria, VA

Cameron film "Avatar." A Fantasyland expansion project, featuring a ride-through "Little Mermaid" attraction, is scheduled for completion in 2013.

### TAMPA

At the mouth of the Hillsborough River on Florida's west coast lies Tampa. With the exception of Busch Gardens, the city is a departure from Orlando's theme-park extravaganza, and many groups appreciate the change of pace. "We've been to Orlando



In 2013, Walt Disney World Resort will be celebrating the opening of a new "Avatar"-themed land and the expansion of Fantasyland.

several times and decided to break out of the box and try something different, and we liked Tampa very much," comments Lisa L. DeGolyer, chief executive, conferences and education for the Atlanta, GA-based Construction Owners Association of America (COAA). "In 2010 in Tampa we had 234 attendees, and when we were there in 2008 we had 231. And the economy has been tough the last few years, but these are among the highest attendances that we've had, so we've held strong in Florida."

Both years, the COAA Fall Owners Leadership Conference has been held at the Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina. The 719-room property offers 50,000 sf of meeting space and will be renovating its three restaurants: IL Terrazzo, Café Waterside and Champions. "It is a beautiful upscale property on the water with fabulous meeting space," says DeGolyer. "The food both times was top notch, and the guest rooms are impeccable."

Describing herself as something of a "meeting space snob," DeGolyer notes that the Marriott met all of her expectations in that department, featuring "a very nice large foyer space outside of the ballrooms that is the perfect place for our boutique exhibitors. We don't have a big exhibition. All 25 can be out in the foyer space, and they get the traffic all day long, so attendees can mingle with exhibitors."

The city of Tampa had several points of interest for COAA attendees. "Our delegates are interested in buildings and architecture, and we typically organize an architecture tour in the area. So we arranged a guided tour of the Tampa Museum of Art and the University of Tampa," DeGolyer relates. "At the museum we had the builder, the designer and the owner represented on the tour, and they took our group through the museum and explained the modern architecture. The group loved it." The COAA is apparently just one of many groups that appreciates The Tampa Museum of Art/Cornelia Corbett Center, which recently received the prestigious American Architecture Award. It is the only building in Florida to win the award, and only one of two in the entire Southeast.

Next, the group visited the university and toured Plant Hall, the main building. Formerly the old Tampa Bay Hotel, Plant Hall is a leading example of Moorish revival architecture in the southeastern U.S. "We had a member of the university's design and construction services team presenting, and I had to



A new Blue Man Group show just debuted at Universal CityWalk, featuring new technology, new experiences and a new finale with original music.

drag the group away afterwards to get them back on the bus," DeGolyer says.

A more specialized art museum in Tampa is The Florida Museum of Photographic Arts, which has just moved to Rivergate Tower in the Downtown Tampa Arts District. The museum occupies the second and third floors in Rivergate's Cube, a soaring, six-story atrium recognized as one of the most impressive interior spaces in Tampa. The museum is scheduled to open its first exhibition in the building in March 2012.

## MIAMI

The Florida arts scene is also vibrant in the Miami area with the October opening of a brand new, \$51 million performing arts venue: the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center. And delegates who bring their families will note that The Miami Children's Museum on Watson Island has invested more than \$200,000 on facility upgrades and exhibits, while the Miami Seaquarium unveiled Sea Trek Reef Encounter in December. The \$400,000 addition provides an underwater walking journey through the park's Reef Aquarium while wearing a state-of-the-art dive helmet that allows guests to breathe freely as they encounter tropical fish, stingrays, eels and other sea creatures.

Planners also have upgrades and expansions to be enthused about at Miami's hotels. For example, The Doral Golf Resort & Spa, a Marriott Resort recently completed a \$16 million resort-wide renewal in preparation for the resort's 50th anniversary this year. The transformation includes a new golf course, The Jim McLean Signature Course, a renovation of The Spa at Doral and a new Latin-inspired steak house, Mesazul. The 693-room Doral offers nearly 72,000 sf of meeting space.

The Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach recently completed a \$220 million renovation begun in 2008. The project includes a redesign of the hotel's Historic Tower, the addition of the 21-story Ocean Tower, a new steak house, the Elle Spa and more. As a result, the Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach has almost doubled in size from 349 guest rooms to 631 oversized guest rooms and now offers 28 meeting rooms with 46,000 sf of flexible indoor meeting space and 25,000 sf of outdoor event space with ocean and Intracoastal views.

A major upscale property is the 790-room Loews Miami Beach Hotel on South Beach, housing 65,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting space. Rick Eisenman, CAE, president/CEO of Glen Allen, VA-based association management firm Eisenman & Associates Inc., recounts a very positive recent experience at the Loews with one of his clients, a statewide contractors association. "The hotel blew me away with the level of service — not just to me. It's easy for a staff to target one person and make sure their needs are met, and I've seen that before. But every one of our members got equally attentive service," remarks Eisenman, who illustrates with a couple anecdotes. "One of the members had a

cough and one of the servers that was out there said, 'I've got my grandmother's secret recipe.' He gave the drink to the gentleman, and it got rid of the cough. Somebody else wasn't going to attend the breakfast and just came down to grab two plates for himself and his wife, and one of the waiters said, 'Let me go up with you.' He carried some of the food and rode the elevator up to the attendee's room." That kind of personalized service "doesn't happen everywhere," Eisenman stresses.

The group was comprised of only about 150 members, and there was a national medical association in the hotel at the same time, Eisenman says. But the larger group's meeting space was on a different floor and "we never got run over by them; we didn't feel like we were the small fish." Program highlights included a banquet with a Blues Brothers band performing. The Loews cu-



The 392-room Turnberry Isle Miami features championship golf, a private beach club, spectacular outdoor venues and a 40,000-sf conference center.

linary staff "prepared an entire grouper (a fish) sitting up on a plate where they just peeled off pieces to serve attendees," says Eisenman. And for the first breakfast of the meeting, a representative from the Greater Miami CVB delivered a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation on the history of the city and gave attendees suggestions for their free-time activities.

Eisenman & Associates Inc. has about 30 clients, and of those that meet outside their home state, probably 75–80 percent have or will go to Florida, according to Eisenman. Construction association members in particular "don't do much work during the winter, and it's a good time to get away and have a warm-weather meeting," he explains. It happens that the program at the Loews was "the first program we've done in Miami, but it will not be the last," he says.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

"America's First Resort Destination" is much more than a sun 'n' fun locale; it's a place where groups can experience the legendary resorts of financier Henry Flagler and the distinctive architecture of Addison Mizner. A prime example of the latter is the

1,043-room Boca Raton Resort & Club, built in 1926. It features the renovated 26,037-sf Grand Ballroom, as well as 34 conference rooms totaling 24,000 sf within The Cloister and The Tower. Delegates can also convene in the Mizner Center (80,000 sf) or the more intimate Yacht Club (7,700 sf). Another major resort in the county is Palm Beach Gardens' PGA National Resort & Spa, with 339 guest rooms and 23 meeting rooms. The resort offers a 33,900-sf, self-contained conference center.

Large associations have at their disposal the 350,000-sf Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach, just three miles from Palm Beach International Airport. It features a 100,000-sf exhibit hall, a 25,000-sf ballroom, and 23,000 sf of breakout space. Currently on the drawing board is a 400-room Hilton hotel to be constructed next to the convention center, with a completion target of 2015.

Within walking distance of the convention center is the famed Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, which consists of three performance spaces, all of which are available for group rentals: the 2,200-seat main concert hall, a 300-seat intimate theater and a 1,000-seat outdoor amphitheater. New additions include the Cohen Pavilion, with banquet facilities, and a 10,440-sf ballroom.

Another bastion of the Palm Beach arts scene is the Norton Museum of Art, one of Florida's largest art museums. It accommodates banquet seating for small and large groups up to 300, or a standing cocktail reception for up to 500 guests. Other group-friendly cultural venues in the county include the Boca Raton Historical Society, Boca Museum of Art and The Harriet Himmel Theater in CityPlace, West Palm Beach's popular shopping and dining complex. And as far as shopping goes, it's hard to top Palm Beach County, where attendees on their free time can explore, for example, Worth Avenue in Palm Beach or Mizner Park in Boca Raton.

## DAYTONA BEACH

Daytona Beach is literally looking better to groups with a multimillion-dollar refurbishment of its historic 87-year-old Pier, set to reopen in May with a Joe's Crab Shack, rickshaw service and more. Groups can tour the Pier after convening at the Ocean Center Convention and Entertainment Complex or one of the hotels in the surrounding Ocean Walk Village, a six square-block area that is home to the Wyndham Ocean Walk Resort, Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort and the Ocean Walk Shoppes and Ocean Center. In total, the Village offers groups 300,000 sf of meeting space and 1,200 guest rooms. Just up the road in Daytona Shores is the upscale Shores Resort & Spa, with 212 guest rooms and 20,000 sf of meeting space, some with ocean views.

The Marriott is located on Richard Petty Boulevard, and indeed Daytona is known for its International Speedway and Richard Petty Driving Experience, which allows visitors to strap in and take several high-speed laps around the speedway. "The

**"We've been to Orlando several times and decided to break out of the box and try something different, and we liked Tampa very much."**



Lisa L. DeGolyer  
Chief Executive  
Conferences and Education  
Construction Owners Association  
of America  
Atlanta, GA

World Center of Racing" is now offering new all-access VIP tours, which allow fans to view never-before-seen areas of the speedway, including the Daytona 500 Club President's Row and the Driver's Meeting Room.

But Daytona is not just a city for "gear heads." It has its cultural side as well, highlighted by the Museum of Arts & Sciences, a Smithsonian affiliate. The MOAS recently debuted the Helene B. Roberson Visible Storage Building, a 4,400-sf addition that displays important works from the museum's collection in an open storage format and contains art and artifacts not currently on exhibition. The first display of the Visible Storage Building includes items from the Arts in the Age of Napoleon Collection, one of the finest collections of Napoleonic holdings in the Southeast. Historic dining is also on the menu in Daytona, where groups can now experience Rose Villa in Ormond Beach. The five-star restaurant is housed in a home built in the late 1800s.

## NAPLES

"There is a different vibe in the Naples/Marco Island area," describes Richard Miseyko, CMP, CMM, president of St. Petersburg, FL-based Site Search Inc. "It can be very high end with your Marriotts, Ritz-Carltons and La Playas, but there's still that casual elegance. You don't see the urban sprawl you see in other parts of the state. For instance, when you drive down U.S. Route 41, the signage for the Denny's, etc. is very small and low to the ground so you don't have a lot of the neon and media clutter that would intrude on the overall look of the area."

Eighty-five percent of Site Search's business is in the association market, and Miseyko notes that when delegates arrive in Naples, they will definitely feel they have "escaped" from the rigors of the office. "It's hard to put a price tag on that feeling, but it's very important," he says. The atmosphere lends itself especially to board retreats, and, at press time, Site Search was working with the Palm Beach County Bar Association on its Fourth of July executive retreat, destined for Naples. Planners seeking aid from the Paradise Coast's CVB can't go wrong, Miseyko insists. "Their

CVB competes shoulder to shoulder with any other in the state as far as assistance in distributing leads, arranging site inspections and so on."

And there are plenty of fine hotels in Naples and Marco Island to inspect, particularly the new developments:

The Ritz-Carlton, Naples Beach Resort recently completed \$6 million worth of new venues and enhancements, such as a new sushi bar; a two-story Beach House that's suited for spe-



The Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront features an expansive outdoor event area overlooking the St. Johns River.

cial events; and Nature's Wonders, an interactive sanctuary for children. In addition, the 10,125-sf Vanderbilt Ballroom now features motorized ceilings. The 450-room hotel offers 70,000 sf of meeting space.

The Naples Grande Beach Resort has been rebranded as the Waldorf Astoria Naples. The 474-room resort brings the first Golden Door Spa to the East Coast and a Strip House steak house to complement its more than 107,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club has renovated its 317 guest rooms, opened a new pool event area and refurbished its golf course. The hotel offers 34,000 sf of meeting space and spectacular outdoor beachfront event areas to enjoy the famed sunsets over the Gulf of Mexico.

The Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort, Golf Club & Spa has completed a multi-year renovation that totaled more than \$200 million. The latest addition is a \$2.5 million lobby redesign resulting in the new lobby bar and sushi restaurant, Korals. The project also introduced a new 24,000-sf Balinese spa, a redesigned The Rookery Golf Course at Marco and restored Island and Capri ballrooms. The 727-room hotel offers 225,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

#### JACKSONVILLE/PONTE VEDRA BEACH

At 840 square miles, Jacksonville is the largest city in the continental U.S. But, according to one spokesperson, a visiting associa-

tion group can count on a small town-style welcome: "Downtown Jacksonville is a tight-knit business community that rolls out the red carpet for guests: banners throughout downtown, warm welcomes at the airport and more."

Groups will find unique meeting and event spaces at the historic Florida Theatre, opened in 1927 in the downtown area, as well as a variety of cultural venues such as The Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts, The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens and The Museum of Science & History. Families will enjoy a visit to The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, which features the second largest animal collection in the state.

The downtown area features the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, with 160,000 sf of meeting space, and the popular Jacksonville Landing, a dining and entertainment district fronting the St. Johns River. Attendees can take a water taxi up and down the river to restaurants, museums and other entertainment venues. Close to all the action is the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, which bills itself as the largest convention hotel in Northeast Florida. The hotel offers 963 guest rooms — a majority of which overlook the river — and 110,000 sf of meeting space, including a 28,000-sf ballroom. A large outdoor terrace space overlooks the St. Johns River. The 354-room Omni Jacksonville Hotel (14,000 sf) recently renovated its entire meeting space, while the 159-room Sheraton Jacksonville (10,000 sf) recently added a new 3,483-sf ballroom.

Nearby St. Augustine boasts the 301-room Renaissance World Golf Village Resort and Convention Center, which recently completed a patio renovation, offering an additional 15,000 sf of climate-controlled event space. The resort offers 101,000 sf of meeting and event space together with the adjoining World Golf Hall of Fame.

Also accessible from Jacksonville is Ponte Vedra Beach, where smaller association meetings can find a home at the historic Ponte Vedra Inn & Club. The 250-room resort was built in 1928 and features a freestanding Resort Conference Center with 25,000 sf of flexible meeting and banquet space (17 rooms).

And on Amelia Island, the 249-room Omni Amelia Island Plantation is in the midst of a complete resort renovation called "The Re-Imagination of the Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort." The \$85 million project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2013, and will add 155 new oceanfront rooms and suites, and 20,000 sf of meeting space, increasing the total meeting space at the resort to 70,000 sf.

Locales such as St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and Amelia Island offer a compelling combination of history, elegance and sun-filled relaxation, like many of Florida's cities, from Naples to Palm Beach. Add in cosmopolitan Miami and the entertainment mecca that is Orlando, and a planner has different ways to make a productive convention feel a bit like a vacation. That feeling translates to stronger attendance numbers the next time around in Florida. AC&F

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**UNIVERSAL Orlando RESORT**  
MEETINGS & EVENTS



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The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau has named **Neil J. Mullanaphy**, CHME, as senior vice president of sales based out of the Washington, DC, office. With more than 26 years of sales and marketing experience, he formerly served as executive director of sales and marketing for the Hawaii Convention Center/SMG.

The Kansas City (MO) Convention & Visitors Association has appointed **John Heeney** as vice president of convention sales. Heeney, who brings 25 years of sales experience to the organization, most recently operated his own contract sales organization, Rising Tides.

NYC & Company, the official marketing, tourism and partnership organization of New York City, has announced the appointment of **Rachael Nocera**, CMP, to regional director, national accounts, Midwest region, based in the Chicago area. She previously worked as manager, meeting and convention sales with Tourism Vancouver in Chicago.

The Santa Fe (NM) Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Debra Stottlemeyer** as sales manager. She formerly was director of sales at Hotel Andaluz, Albuquerque, NM.

**Megan Tomlinson** has joined the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority as national sales manager responsible for selling the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia. She was national sales manager for the Valley Forge Convention Center, Valley Forge, PA.

**Craig Thompson** was named convention sales director for Cleveland Medical Mart & Convention Center, Cleveland, OH, responsible for non-medical trade shows and conventions. He was national sales manager at the International Exposition Center in Cleveland.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin, Lake Buena Vista, FL, has named **Angel M. Faire** as national sales manager for the Midwest region, responsible for corporate groups. She was senior sales manager for the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort.

The Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate in Orlando, FL, has named **Jean Spaulding** as director of sales and marketing. She formerly served as senior vice president, resort sales and marketing, Noble Investment Group.

**Heather Ives Hernandez** has joined the sales team at the George R. Brown Convention

Center, Houston, TX, as the national sales manager responsible for corporate accounts. She was corporate sales manager for the InterContinental Houston hotel.

**Charles Snyder** was named sales manager for the Pasadena Convention & Visitors Bureau, Pasadena, CA, responsible for corporate and SMERF markets. He formerly served as director of convention sales for the Los Angeles Convention Center.

**Lindsey Taylor** was named sales manager for Visit Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, LA, focusing on university and non-profit markets. She earned a Bachelor of Science with concentrations in public relations and advertising from the University of Southern Indiana. AC&F

**ASSOCIATION**  
CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

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# Free Information

An up-to-date listing of important contact information for leading hotels, resorts, conference centers and CVBs.

ADVERTISER	PH #	WEB ADDRESS	CONTACT	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau	714-765-8888	<a href="http://meetings.anaheimoc.org">http://meetings.anaheimoc.org</a>	Mindy Abel	<a href="mailto:meeting.inquiry@anaheimoc.org">meeting.inquiry@anaheimoc.org</a>
ARIA Resort & Casino	866-718-2489	<a href="http://www.ariasvegas.com">www.ariasvegas.com</a>	Tony Yousfi	<a href="mailto:meetings@ariasvegas.com">meetings@ariasvegas.com</a>
Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa	609-317-7729	<a href="http://www.theborgata.com">www.theborgata.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:meetings@theborgata.com">meetings@theborgata.com</a>
The Broadmoor	719-577-5777	<a href="http://www.broadmoor.com">www.broadmoor.com</a>	John Rovie	<a href="mailto:jrovie@broadmoor.com">jrovie@broadmoor.com</a>
Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-933-8448	<a href="http://www.miamimeetings.com">www.miamimeetings.com</a>	Ileana Castillo	<a href="mailto:ileana@miamimeetings.com">ileana@miamimeetings.com</a>
Greensboro Area Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-344-2282	<a href="http://www.visitgreensboronc.com">www.visitgreensboronc.com</a>	Ava Pope	<a href="mailto:apope@visitgreensboronc.com">apope@visitgreensboronc.com</a>
Hilton Orlando	407-313-4300	<a href="http://www.thehiltonorlando.com">www.thehiltonorlando.com</a>	William McKay	<a href="mailto:orloc-salesadm@hilton.com">orloc-salesadm@hilton.com</a>
Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino	800-545-6040	<a href="http://www.innofthemountaingods.com">www.innofthemountaingods.com</a>	Jo Kazhe	<a href="mailto:jokazhe@innofthemountaingods.com">jokazhe@innofthemountaingods.com</a>
Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Sandusky, OH	419-433-7759	<a href="http://www.kalahariresorts.com/oh/conventions">www.kalahariresorts.com/oh/conventions</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:OHGroups@kalahariresorts.com">OHGroups@kalahariresorts.com</a>
Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI	608-254-3314	<a href="http://www.kalahariresorts.com/wi/conventions">www.kalahariresorts.com/wi/conventions</a>	Kevin Shanley	<a href="mailto:WIGroups@kalahariresorts.com">WIGroups@kalahariresorts.com</a>
Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando	888-322-5531	<a href="http://www.uomeetingsandevents.com">www.uomeetingsandevents.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:meetings@universalorlando.com">meetings@universalorlando.com</a>
Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-452-7829	<a href="http://www.visitlongbeach.com">www.visitlongbeach.com</a>	Iris Himert	<a href="mailto:irish@longbeachcvb.org">irish@longbeachcvb.org</a>
MGM Grand Las Vegas	800-929-1112	<a href="http://www.mgmgrand.com">www.mgmgrand.com</a>	Ruth Leis	<a href="mailto:hotelsalesleads@lv.mgmgrand.com">hotelsalesleads@lv.mgmgrand.com</a>
The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club	800-866-1946	<a href="http://www.naplesbeachhotel.com">www.naplesbeachhotel.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:groupsales@naplesbeachhotel.com">groupsales@naplesbeachhotel.com</a>
New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center	504-582-3023	<a href="http://www.mccno.com">www.mccno.com</a>	Keith Levey	<a href="mailto:m-s@mccno.com">m-s@mccno.com</a>
Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau	405-297-8912	<a href="http://www.visitokc.com">www.visitokc.com</a>	Robin O'Connor	<a href="mailto:roconnor@visitokc.com">roconnor@visitokc.com</a>
Omni Hotels & Resorts	972-871-5623	<a href="http://www.omnihotels.com">www.omnihotels.com</a>	Mark Wykes	<a href="mailto:mwykes@omnihotels.com">mwykes@omnihotels.com</a>
Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate	407-238-6526	<a href="http://www.omnihotels.com/findahotel/orlando-championsgate/meetingfacilities.aspx">www.omnihotels.com/findahotel/orlando-championsgate/meetingfacilities.aspx</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:mcocha.leads@omnihotels.com">mcocha.leads@omnihotels.com</a>
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club	800-234-7842	<a href="http://www.pontevedra.com">www.pontevedra.com</a>	Tony Fitzjohn	<a href="mailto:sales@pvresorts.com">sales@pvresorts.com</a>
Reunion Resort, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection	877-449-9768	<a href="http://www.grandgolfresorts.com">www.grandgolfresorts.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:groups@salamanderhotels.com">groups@salamanderhotels.com</a>
Rosen Centre Hotel	407-996-9840	<a href="http://www.rosencentre.com">www.rosencentre.com</a>	Todd Frappier	<a href="mailto:tfrappier@rosencentre.com">tfrappier@rosencentre.com</a>
Rosen Plaza Hotel	407-996-9700	<a href="http://www.rosenplaza.com">www.rosenplaza.com</a>	Victoria Hall	<a href="mailto:sales@rosenplaza.com">sales@rosenplaza.com</a>
Rosen Shingle Creek	407-996-9939	<a href="http://www.rosenshinglecreek.com">www.rosenshinglecreek.com</a>	Leslie Menichini	<a href="mailto:sales@rosenhoteles.com">sales@rosenhoteles.com</a>
Royal Caribbean International	800 762-0458	<a href="http://www.royalcaribbeanincentives.com">www.royalcaribbeanincentives.com</a>	Lori Cassidy	<a href="mailto:royalmeetingsandincentives@rccl.com">royalmeetingsandincentives@rccl.com</a>
Seattle Southside Visitor Services	206-971-0408	<a href="http://www.seattlesouthside.com">www.seattlesouthside.com</a>	Meilee Anderson	<a href="mailto:meilee@seattlesouthside.com">meilee@seattlesouthside.com</a>
South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-797-8050	<a href="http://www.southpointmeetings.com">www.southpointmeetings.com</a>	Maureen Robinson	<a href="mailto:sales@southpointcasino.com">sales@southpointcasino.com</a>
Team San Jose	408-792-4521	<a href="http://www.sanjose.org">www.sanjose.org</a>	Mark McMinn	<a href="mailto:mmcminn@sanjose.org">mmcminn@sanjose.org</a>
Universal Orlando Resort	888-322-5531	<a href="http://www.uomeetingsandevents.com">www.uomeetingsandevents.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:meetings@universalorlando.com">meetings@universalorlando.com</a>
The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino	702-414-4202	<a href="http://www.venetianpalazzomeetings.com">www.venetianpalazzomeetings.com</a>	Chandra Allison	<a href="mailto:chandra.allison@venetianpalazzo.com">chandra.allison@venetianpalazzo.com</a>
Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-700-7702	<a href="http://www.vbmeetings.com">www.vbmeetings.com</a>	Al Hutchinson	<a href="mailto:ahutchin@vb.gov">ahutchin@vb.gov</a>
Walt Disney World Resort	321-939-7112	<a href="http://www.disneymeetings.com">www.disneymeetings.com</a>	Anne Hamilton	<a href="mailto:meetings@disneyworld.com">meetings@disneyworld.com</a>
Washington Hilton	202-328-2080	<a href="http://www.hiltonsofdc.com">www.hiltonsofdc.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:dcawh-salesadm@hilton.com">dcawh-salesadm@hilton.com</a>
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	<a href="http://www.westin.com/lasvegas">www.westin.com/lasvegas</a>	Sandra Horvath	<a href="mailto:shorvath@westinlv.com">shorvath@westinlv.com</a>
The Westin La Cantera Resort	210-558-2229	<a href="http://www.westinlacantera.com">www.westinlacantera.com</a>	Group Sales	<a href="mailto:info@westinlacantera.com">info@westinlacantera.com</a>
Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino	520-796-4923	<a href="http://www.wingilariver.com">www.wingilariver.com</a>	Denise Heintz	<a href="mailto:denise.heintz@wingilariver.com">denise.heintz@wingilariver.com</a>
Wynn/Encore	888-320-7117	<a href="http://www.wynnmeetings.com">www.wynnmeetings.com</a>	Steve Blanner	<a href="mailto:hotelsales@wynnlasvegas.com">hotelsales@wynnlasvegas.com</a>



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