

ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

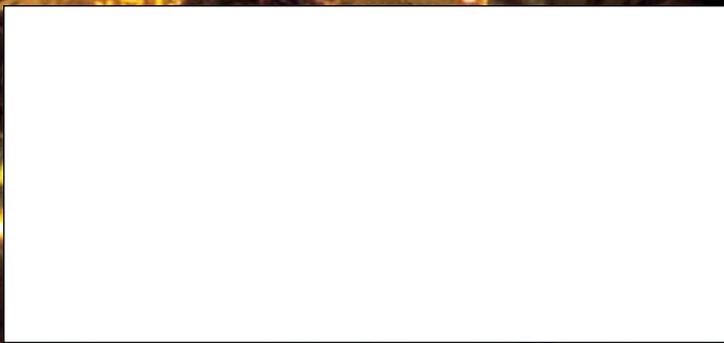
APRIL/MAY
2012

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT



Las Vegas

A Sure Bet to Boost Attendance **PAGE 28**



Karen Malone, Vice President Meeting Services for the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society chose The Venetian (*background*) and Palazzo as headquarters hotels for HIMSS12.



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ISSN 21628831

USPS 003500

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

April / May 2012

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Photo courtesy of Turnberry Isle, Miami



Photo courtesy of SEMA

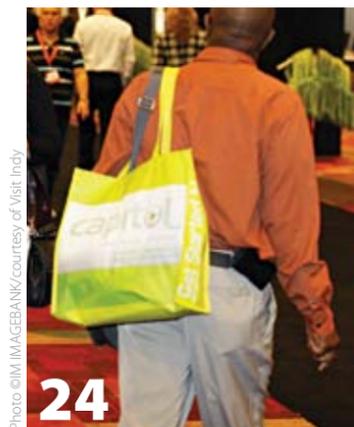


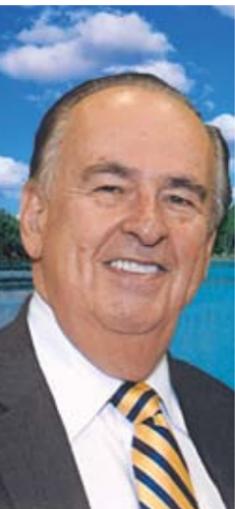
Photo © iMAGEBANK/courtesy of Visit Indy

On the Cover: Karen Malone, vice president of meeting services for the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society used 16 Las Vegas hotels to house nearly 37,000 attendees in town for HIMSS' annual conference and exhibition February 20–24.

Karen Malone photo by Oscar Einzig Photography for HIMSS. Background photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands.

Association Conventions & Facilities is published bi-monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies \$12.00 U.S.A. only. Yearly subscription price is \$60.00 in the U.S.A. Canada and foreign is \$125.00. Back copies \$13.00 plus shipping and handling, U.S.A. only. Distributed without charge to qualified personnel. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send Form 3579 address changes to Association Conventions & Facilities, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Nothing contained in this publication shall constitute an endorsement by Coastal Communications Corporation (Association Conventions & Facilities), and the publication disclaims any liability with respect to the use of or reliance on any such information. The information contained in this publication is in no way to be construed as a recommendation by AC&F of any industry standard, or as a recommendation of any kind to be adopted by or to be binding upon any advertiser or subscriber. Reproduction of any portion of this publication by any means is strictly forbidden. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited photographs or manuscripts. Subscribers: Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: Circulation Department, Association Conventions & Facilities, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Provide old and new addresses including zip code. Enclose address label from most recent issue and please allow five weeks for the change to become effective. Printed in U.S.A. © 2012.

Las Vegas Is Pumped!



It's hard to keep a good destination down. Like a heavyweight prize fighter getting knocked to the mat, you just knew that Las Vegas, with its world-class meetings muscle, would soon be back on its feet. We've been hearing lots of positive numbers coming out of Las Vegas, which reported the second highest visitor total in its history in 2011 — and a nearly 6 percent increase in the number of events hosted in 2011 over 2010.

It seems that in 2012 this upward trend is continuing. Karen Malone, vice president meeting services for the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) who graces our cover, illustrates why this is so in our Las Vegas feature on page 28. The HIMSS annual conference and exhibition in February drew almost 37,000 attendees needing 19,000 hotel rooms on peak night. Karen notes that when they use other cities for this mega citywide convention, they need to use upwards of 70 hotels. In Las Vegas, with its heavyweight inventory of 150,000 hotel rooms, they needed only 16. The group used the Sands Expo for their exhibition and all the meeting space at The Venetian. Attendees appreciated The Venetian's vertical meeting space, which eliminates long treks between sessions, facilitating attendance at more sessions as well as more time to enjoy the city that never sleeps. Karen says, "As an attendee said to me, 'There is such a different energy and vibe about this meeting.' I think the energy of the meeting plays off the energy of the city." Beyond the infrastructure are the intangibles of expertise and service. "We literally had one of the very best experiences we've ever had with the hotels in Las Vegas," she recalls. "They were absolutely on top of it."

With Las Vegas on a roll, it should come as no surprise that the top executive representing America's No. 1 trade show destination should assume a leadership role in pumping up the meetings industry nationwide. Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority, began his term as chairman of the U.S. Travel Association in March, calling for a new agenda to strengthen the \$460 billion meetings and events industry. "In Las Vegas, we pride ourselves as being the 'meetings capital of the world'...we understand the value of face-to-face meetings. As chairman of the U.S. Travel Association, I see an opportunity for the entire industry to work together to build a stronger future and take a seat at the table in Washington."

It's great to know that with Las Vegas leading the way, destinations all across the country are flexing their muscles again, thanks in large part to the attendance-drawing power of association meetings and conventions.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

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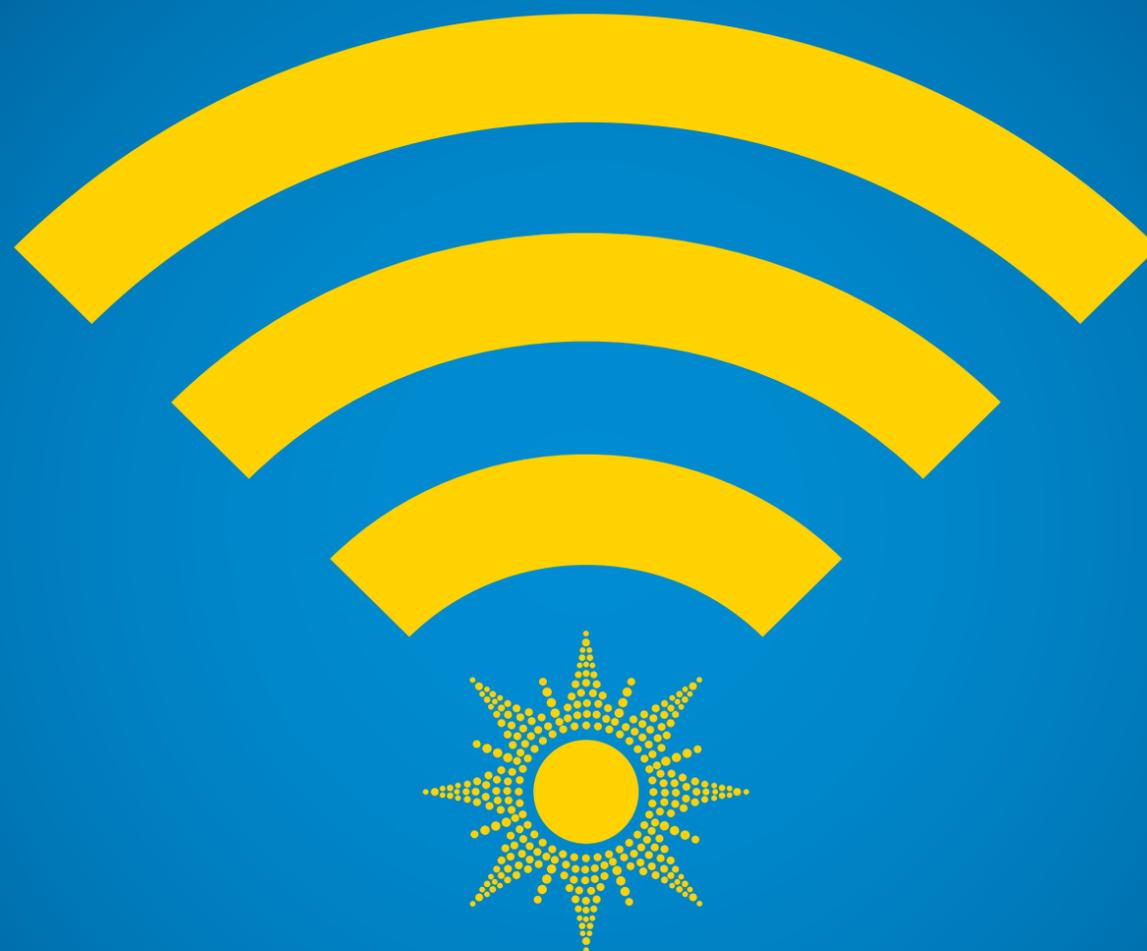
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For more information or to receive a customized event planning consultation, visit anaheimoc.org/freewifi or call 714.765.8888.



San Francisco's Moscone Center Renovation Enters Final Phase

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — A "new" convention center is emerging in the North and South buildings of the Moscone Center in San Francisco.

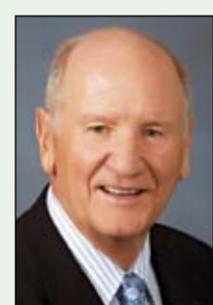


D'Alessandro

"Our very first step was to ask our customers what changes they'd like to see. The point of this whole project was to meet their needs and exceed their expectations," said Joe D'Alessandro, president and CEO of the San Francisco Travel Association (SF Travel). "Those suggestions were our guideposts every step of the way." A total of \$56 million was spent on re-creating the two buildings, with a combined 1.2 million sf of function space. The American Thoracic Society will be the first group to meet at the Moscone Center for their 2012 International Conference, May 18-23. A \$4.5 million wireless system has been installed, providing high-speed service to as many as 60,000 devices at one time. Other upgrades include new carpet, paint, lighting and ceilings; renovations to restrooms; upgraded lobbies and kitchens; and significant infrastructure projects including major upgrades to HVAC systems, elevators and escalators, digital signage and telecom/data cabling systems. Designed to meet LEED Gold green building standards, the "new" Moscone Center will optimize energy performance to exceed 20 percent of the former building usage, greatly reduce water consumption and incorporate a new building automation system for chiller, HVAC, electrical and lighting controls. www.sanfrancisco.travel



Rendering of the Moscone Center's newly renovated South Upper Lobby.



Ahlers

Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau Chief to Step Down

ANAHEIM, CA — Charles Ahlers, president of the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau (AOCVCB), recently announced that he will step down as the president of the organization at the end of 2012. An industry veteran with 28 years of service with the AOCVCB, he served as president since 1992 and was a convention sales manager from 1972-1979. "I have been fortunate to be able to realize many accomplishments during my four-decade career in this industry. I have worked for five distinct destination marketing organizations, and it seems fitting at this time to finish my visitor industry career on a high note. This Anaheim Resort community and all of Orange County have evolved into a leading leisure and business destination, and I'm very pleased to have played an active role in shaping what it is today," Ahlers said. The AOCVCB will conduct an executive search for a new president. Ahlers will continue with the organization as an advisor. www.anaheimoc.org

ASAE Great Ideas Conference Posts Recordbreaking Attendance

WASHINGTON, DC — During the ASAE Great Ideas Conference in March, 616 attendees gathered at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, CO — an 8 percent increase from last year and the largest Great Ideas Conference ever. ASAE introduced a variety of learning formats including the Executive Leadership Program on Innovation. "A theme that resonated during the conference was the need for collaboration, which I think is critical for associations to engage in because it will help us move our associations forward," said ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, CAE. "Great Ideas is a unique opportunity for members to delve deep into issues like innovation, new learning styles and structures that will engage members, and provide insight on how to remain relevant in a changing environment. This year's increase in attendance illustrates how important these issues are in our community and the need to continually explore new ideas." In 2013, the ASAE Great Ideas Conference will celebrate its 10th Anniversary, March 24-26, at The Peabody Orlando in Orlando, FL. The ASAE 2012 Springtime Expo (#STExpo12) will be held May 3 in Washington, DC. www.asaecenter.org

Hyatt Transforms In-Room Televisions Into Virtual Concierge

CHICAGO, IL — Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced it is transforming the standard in-room television into a fully connected, interactive entertainment center and virtual concierge at its full-service properties across the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean. Depending on availability in each location, guests will have access to interactive entertainment, hotel services, local information and advanced features. For example, guests may be able to use their hotel room television to browse the Internet, order room service, stream a movie or conduct business, among many other options. Meeting and group planners will be able to send customized messages, information and updates directly to the rooms of their attendees. Approximately 60,000 guest rooms across Hyatt's North America properties are scheduled to receive the new technology over the next two years. www.hyatt.com

Final 2011 CEIR Index Results Positive

DALLAS, TX — The outlook is positive says the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), which released the "CEIR Index Report, an Analysis of the 2011 Exhibition Industry and Future Outlook." Despite a sluggish macro economy, the overall exhibition industry posted a relatively strong rebound of 2.7 percent, outpacing real GDP growth by 1 percentage point in 2011. The gain in the exhibition industry was reflected in all four metrics of measurement. This marks an end of three consecutive years of declines. The relatively strong rebound was better than expected, finishing 15 percent higher than the forecast. Since the number of attendees tends to be a leading indicator, strong growth in that area bodes well for the industry going forward. www.ceir.org

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board is New Name for LA INC.

LA INC. The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau changed its name to the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. "Our previous name, LA INC., did not reference the industry that we serve, nor did it clearly delineate our Los Angeles geography to our growing number of international visitors," said Mark Liberman, president and chief executive of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. In addition, LA INC. was often confused with "LA Ink," TLC's reality show about a Hollywood tattoo parlor. Before LA INC., the board was known as The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau. www.discoverlosangeles.com



Stephanie Pace Brown

Stephanie Pace Brown Named Head of Asheville CVB

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce named Stephanie Pace Brown as senior vice president and executive director of the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (Asheville CVB), effective June 15, 2012. Brown currently serves as president and CEO of the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association in Alexandria, VA, where she has led a team of 22 since 2007. Brown replaces Kelly Miller, who led the Asheville CVB from 1999 to 2011. The Asheville CVB is a department of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce and is the contract agent for the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, a quasi-governmental entity which oversees tourism marketing, sales and product development efforts utilizing the county's 4 percent occupancy tax revenues. www.ashevillechamber.org

Greater Miami and The Beaches Sets New Visitor Records

Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) President & CEO William D. Talbert, III, CDME, announced that overnight visitors to Greater Miami and the Beaches grew 6.7 percent to a record-breaking 13.4 million overnight visitors in 2011, fueled by a 7.2 percent increase to a record 6.5 million international visitors and an increase of 6.2 percent to a record 6.9 million domestic visitors. Latin America accounted for more than 4.4 million overnight visitors in 2011, a 9.2 percent increase over 2010. Brazil surpassed Canada in number of overnight visitors with more than 634,000 to become Greater Miami's No. 1 international market in 2011. A record \$20.7 billion in visitor expenditures was generated in 2011, a double digit increase of 10.1 percent over the previous year. Solid and record-breaking attendance in Miami was reported in 2011 for organizations such as the American Statistical Association, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, American Society for Radiation Oncology, American Academy of Periodontology and more. www.miamimeetings.com

Meet Minneapolis Exceeds Sales Goals

Meet Minneapolis, Convention and Visitors Association, announced that the destination sales team achieved a successful Q1 2012 by booking 97,388 future hotel room nights beating their goal by 23 percent. Many convention groups that have been to Minneapolis recommitted to returning to the city in future years, including Railway Interchange, a convention of four separate railway industry organizations that co-locate four separate events at one location, and selected Minneapolis for 2015 and 2019. The sales successes mirror the strong first quarter results seen in Minneapolis hotels, which are beating the nationwide results in occupancy and RevPAR (revenue per available room). www.minneapolis.org

Philadelphia's Convention Center Drops Labor Management Fee

The Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority (PCCA) announced on April 4, 2012, that the PCCA has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to the existing contract between the PCCA and Elliott-Lewis Corporation to eliminate, effective July 1, 2012, the 8 percent labor management fee that has been charged to customers and exhibitors for supplying unionized labor services at the convention center. www.paconvention.com

ASAE University Launches New Certificate Program in Association Management

WASHINGTON, DC — ASAE introduced a new certificate program in Association Management designed for professionals with fewer than five years of association experience. Participants



Graham

who take all five one-day courses at ASAE headquarters in Washington, DC, will earn the Certificate in Association Management and earn up to 27.5 hours towards their certified association executive (CAE). ASAE is licensing the content of the five one-day courses and training qualified instructors to deliver this program worldwide. The

course titles are Essential Practices in Association Management; Effectively Managing Volunteer Committees and Task Forces; Membership Development; Communications and Public Relations; and Developing Your Leadership Potential.

"This new certificate program will help association professionals apply a more systematic approach to their work and improve the success of their organizations," said ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, CAE. "It's a great opportunity for association professionals to gain a solid foundation in the profession and a good understanding of the role associations play within society. This program will help to build a pipeline of future association professionals in the association management field." ASAE

University is offering the five courses during Association Management Week, July 16–20. www.asaecenter.org

Conventions Help Push New Orleans Visitation Up 5.6 Percent

NEW ORLEANS, LA — New Orleans' tourism industry welcomed 8.75 million visitors in 2011, an increase of 5.6 percent, or



Perry

462,263 from the number of visitors in 2010 (8.3 million). Those 8.75 million visitors spent \$5.47 billion, a \$180 million increase over 2010 and the highest spending in the city's history, according to a study released March 26. Among those surveyed, 23.5 percent were in New Orleans for a convention, association, trade show, corporate meeting or general business travel; and 58.6 percent of business travelers extended their stay for pleasure for an average of 2.1 days. Said Stephen Perry, president and CEO of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, "Tourism...is fueled by marketing, public relations and aggressive sales strategies. In order to reach our goal of 13.7 million visitors and \$11 billion dollars by 2018, the hospitality industry is seeking to raise its own additional funding for marketing. Tourism funding is a tremendous investment in job creation, the expansion of our cultural economy, the restoration of our core infrastructure, and new tax revenue generation that benefits every citizen in every neighborhood in New Orleans." www.neworleanscvb.com

Association Executives Attend Annual Insights Conference at Disneyland



ANAHEIM, CA — More than 25 association executives discovered innovative business ideas and were inspired by Disney creativity at the fourth annual Insights Conference held by the California Society of Association Executives (CalSAE) at the Disneyland Resort in February.

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1 Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Ahmeenah Young, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Convention Center and Jack Ferguson, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau at the Pennsylvania Marketplace Expo during Meeting Metropolis April 3–5. 2 Peter O'Neil, chairman of ASAE's board, addresses the ASAE Great Ideas Conference at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs March 25–27. 3 His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, chairman of Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, opened the 6th edition of GIBTM March 26–28. 4 The NPE2012 international plastics exposition opened in Orlando's Orange County Convention Center April 2 after meeting in Chicago for four decades. (L to r) William R. (Bill) Carteaux, president and CEO of SPI, which produces the show, Orange County Mayor Theresa Jacobs and Visit Orlando President and CEO Gary Sain celebrated the opening, which posted a 30 percent increase in attendee registrations compared to 2009. 5 First-time attendees network at the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors-International 32nd Annual Conference in Denver March 25–28. 6 New Orleans hosted the American Pharmacists Association Annual Meeting March 9–12. 7 The Atlanta CVB welcomed 43 corporate and association meeting planners for a two-day FAM trip that included a visit to the 2012 Masters at Augusta National Golf Club.

Photo credits: 1. Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau; 2. ASAE; 3. GIBTM; 4. Visit Orlando; 5. Robert Levy Photography; 6. Robb Cohen Photography; 7. Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau



Speakers

Phelps R. Hope, CMP



The Ever-Changing Model for Presenters and Speakers

Presenters and speakers have been constantly evolving their model for engaging and relating to audiences for decades. Back in the old days, audiences would take what speakers had to say at face value. Since the age of innocence ended long ago, audiences these days want not only speeches that relate directly to them, they want to dissect presenters' stories, and they want proof that what is being told to them is accurate and applicable to their industries and business strategies. That is where meeting planners and presenters must work together to ensure the audience gets what they need.

TARGETED CONTENT

What used to work is now obsolete. It's all about tech and sustainability coupled with targeted content generation that is more personal and pertinent. Gone are the days of canned speeches. That's where the meeting planners come in: Our job is to understand what is appropriate for our audiences. We conduct topic surveys ahead of time and give that information to our speakers so that they can research and tailor their messages and materials to what the audience really desires to hear.

BLENDED PRESENTATIONS

Speakers and presenters come in all shapes, sizes and qualifications. You have your Bill Gates, your general CEOs, and you have your industry specialists who are talking about what is trending now. While most audiences would gladly sit and listen to Bill Gates talk about his methods for success and how they can relate without too much interac-

tivity, they would want to ask a few seeded questions and have some filtered focus activity with the CEO of a company. With industry specialists, that interaction increases even more: They would want panels, workshops and seminars with several different speakers to hear different perspectives and be able to ask questions.

RELEVANCE THAT'S TIMELY

Speakers on all levels are also required to do more homework now and be more sincere and timely with the information they're presenting. What was trending 10 weeks ago may not be trending now — and planners also have to keep up with the trends as well. Considerations of the economy and how it impacts funds for sponsors and attendees, and technological advances that may reshape how industries do business are all things that can change every 10 weeks.

Take, for example, one of our clients, whose conference includes education and demos for all things regarding mobile device applications. As we plan for their annual conference, we have to think about how mobile apps are the new frontierland, and how to keep the topics relevant and up to date. That means that the title for best app developer is still up for grabs, and so we're having the speakers reduce their presentations and speeches to only 10 minutes, instead of the typical 90, similar to the TED model. (The springtime TED Conference hosts 50 speakers, each limited to 18 minutes, plus many shorter presentations). Attendees will want to hear from as many speakers as possible — to hear a full spectrum of stories and opinions from app developers and to connect with them later to drill deeper into the details.

ON-DEMAND AGENDAS

Younger generations of business professionals want meeting planners to run parallel structures — where the chat rooms dip back and forth from deep discussions to general topics. Planners can have flip boards and get content input from audiences onsite that is used in real-time to shape how the conference plays out. Connectivity is also a

ally setting foot in a conference room, as virtual attendees have grown over the past few years thanks to technological advances in webcasting. Today, conference speakers can tweet-up an event or continue the debate (post-meeting) on Twitter. In addition, the speaker can provide follow-up questions via Facebook, presented as an online poll. We find the Web an additional way to extend the duration of the

Younger generations of business professionals want meeting planners to run parallel structures — where the chat rooms dip back and forth from deep discussions to general topics. Planners can have flip boards and get content input from audiences onsite that is used in real-time to shape how the conference plays out.

big priority for the younger audiences. It is vital that planners promote why their speakers are so pertinent and how they got to be where they are. To relate or see themselves in a speaker's story of how they started out all makes for a better educational experience for the attendee.

EDUCATION THAT GOES ANYWHERE

Speaking of education, it, too, has evolved. With the Internet, learning and networking are no longer limited to the dates of the conference. Before, during and after are all opportunities to create and maintain interest and information-sharing. Attendees aren't even limited to actu-

event, forge an ongoing connection with attendees and ultimately create more value in attending.

When the right content focus meets the right audience, when presentations become organic and when agendas are designed — in a sense — by the attendees benefiting, we as meeting planners are truly practicing in a market-driven meetings economy. AC&F

Phelps R. Hope, CMP, is vice president of meetings and expositions for Kellen Meetings, a division of the Kellen Company, an association management company (AMC) with offices in Atlanta, Chicago, New York City, Washington, DC, Beijing and Brussels. He can be reached at phope@kellencompany.com or 404-836-5050.

Travel Procurement

Michael MacNair



Tips to Boost Revenue, Savings, Support and Control

Associations are different than corporations when it comes to travel procurement. That said, a successful travel procurement system delivers the same powerful results. Associations have a combination of staff travel (road warriors, VIPs, periodic travelers), committee travel (reimbursed and unreimbursed) and convention travel. Considering these traveler types, a slightly different approach should be taken to deliver increased revenue, savings, support and control. Our experience managing travel for more than 100 associations tells us that the common issues are as follows: lost savings (not picking the lowest rates); unleveraged volume (staff, committee and convention); poor data (compliance, benchmarking, traveler tracking); biased rate search tools (online and call in); inconsistent service at various touch points; procurement systems leadership deficiencies; ineffective authorization process; and wasted time. Considering these common challenges, we suggest these opportunities:

- 1. Leverage potential travel.** Make sure you can define and control the full scope of the travel you pay for and influence (staff, committee, and convention). Suppliers negotiate best with those who have this knowledge. Suppliers want you to buy more from them than you would normally buy. If you can demonstrate these items, you can secure small business agreements, meeting discounts and even direct deals (discounts, status upgrades) for large volume accounts. There is an agreement for almost anyone. Hotel, car, and even travel management company (TMC) agreements also can be negotiated.
- 2. Enhance travel policy.** Your travel policy is THE internal document to limit your organization's liabilities, ensure

compliance with expected value, streamline the travel process and provide systemic direction. It should be specific and address supplier commitment (airline, travel company, hotels), which processes and policies are required and suggestions to make life easier on the road. It should match your culture. Most important, it should define the value the organization expects travelers to consider by defining what the lowest available fare is. Is it the lowest non-stop, lowest on their favorite supplier list, lowest from their preferred airport or lowest booked a day out? Cover incidentals and then provide it to your travel company to enforce.

- 3. Expand considerations.** Airline sites are biased, public sites are incomplete and biased, yet there are more fares in more places than ever before. Do your homework and pick a supplier partner that offers online and call-in options that ensure your team considers all the fares in the marketplace.
- 4. Develop consolidated online/call-in travel system.** Find a quality TMC who focuses on associations as a partner. The travel community is segmented, so work with someone who knows what you need. Make sure they have experience in all facets of association travel in an online and call-in environment (staff, committee and convention).
- 5. Expect quality transactional and strategic service.** The systemic requirements of a great travel procurement program can be significant. Make sure you receive strategic support from your travel partner's account manager who has association experience and can help you update your travel policy, preferred supplier agreements, procedures (data collection), service enforcement and training. Doing this right ensures that the transactions turn out right.

- 6. Enhance and integrate meeting management.** Most business online travel systems have small meeting management tools that can handle registration, housing and travel for meetings of up to a few hundred. Leverage this capability and expertise. These travel tools also integrate with large meeting management software. Combine the travel in these two areas for leverage.

legal counsel. Consider data privacy, emergency support and compliance requirements. Rally the influencers and engage them. Fee resistance is usually the setback. Remember, 97 percent of the transaction is the travel and 3 percent is the fee. Would you pay \$10 more to save \$50 and get the other benefits described above?

- 9. Benchmark results and evolve.** Having a mechanism

Your travel policy is THE internal document to limit your organization's liabilities, ensure compliance with expected value, streamline the travel process and provide systemic direction.

- 7. Develop and promote convention air sites.** We are currently customizing convention air sites allowing convention attendees to move to an air travel page right from your housing page. It promotes meeting discounts for air transportation and provides online access to these fares. If your meeting is large enough and it is promoted well enough, it could generate a sizable amount of free tickets.
- 8. Sell consolidated travel procurement.** Make sure your executive team will commit and be ready to define the opportunities for savings, control, service and productivity for all parties. Discuss the liabilities of not being in control of the whereabouts of rogue travelers to HR and your

to track results is the key to managing your supplier relationships and keeping travelers committed. When we perform a review we compare their ticket costs with other similar customers and the national average. We share best practices and evaluate the results of agreed upon action items. Expect leadership on this effort from your TMC and get the facts so you receive the credit you deserve. AC&F

Michael MacNair owns MacNair Travel Management, a privately owned American Express Representative Office, which has helped organizations develop a clear Travel Management System. MacNair, author of Smooth Landings, conducts travel management seminars for many organizations, such as the Global Business Travel Association. www.macnairtravel.com, 703-836-1100.

The Simple Truth Events at Golf & Spa Resorts Energize Attendees and Improve ROI

By Stella Johnson

Photo courtesy of Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate

Golf's legendary champion — the affable Arnold Palmer once mused "Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated." How true. And so it also goes as meeting planners strive to attract attendees to a convention at a premier golf and spa resort where they can follow their bliss on the lush golf course and then indulge in a golf-specific spa treatment. That's the *simple* part. To help planners navigate the occasional *complicated* parts of the process, consider the following suggestions from our experts and fellow meeting planners.

WHERE TO START

One of the first items on the agenda is to find the appropriate golf and spa resort for the group. It's important for planners to know their audience well as they begin their search for the right fit.

Mike Wolfe, president of WAM Enterprises LLC and owner of WAM Golf, an online resource for golf news, courses and destinations, posted a list that's a good place to start (www.technorati.com/sports/article/what-makes-a-golf-course-great).

Wolfe's site lists 10 categories: history; prestige or status; world ranking; location; scenery and views; course conditions; the clubhouse; the layout or signature hole; difficulty and service.

Wolfe suggests that golf buffs are sometimes attracted to a golf course for the wrong reasons such as its history (ah, walking the same paths as the golf greats), prestige and status (courses so difficult to get on you only hear rumors about them), and world ranking (the chance to say you played on the No. 1 course in the world, country or state), and that golfers (and planners) should strive for more stringent standards.

He claims it's more important to check out the scenery and views, course conditions and the layout or signature hole. "But, whether it's the service, layout or location, there is something about a great golf course that makes us return," says Wolfe. And meeting planners should have an acute sensitivity as to which ones those may be. After all, that is one reason why events at golf and spa resorts build attendance and ROI.

SERVICE AND REPUTATION COUNT

With all due respect to the experts, oftentimes an experienced association meeting planner knows better. It's not just the golf course but the total golf and spa resort environment they're scrutinizing.

Take Diane Gleason. She has 20 years of event management and trade show management experience and has been with the Alexandria, VA-based National Air Transportation Association (NATA) for 10 of them as director of conferences and meetings.

According to Gleason, NATA holds two leadership conferences, one CEO Roundtable, four board meetings, two committee meetings, and various educational seminars/webinars in a given year. Gleason says she prefers golf and spa resorts for all their upscale events and particularly likes the intimate feel of Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge, a handsome 70-unit property located in Orlando, FL, founded by the legendary golfer 50 years ago last fall. In March, Mr. Palmer, who lives on property in season, graciously hosted the PGA Tour's annual Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard, which Tiger Woods won (for the seventh time) after two years without a victory.

The award-winning Bay Hill Club & Lodge offers 27 holes of golf, the Arnold Palmer Golf Academy, tennis, a full-service spa and salon, fitness center, four dining locations, and 9,000 sf of meeting and banquet space. "Golf and spa resorts like Bay Hill allow small- to medium-size groups to be the 'big fish in the pond,' and you get more attention and time from the staff than one would at some mega resort. For instance, everyone at Bay Hill greets you like family. Upon arrival and within hours, the staff all knew my name and continually offered assistance with every project I was handling. They were fast to offer options, too, to help save on money and time," she adds.

Having used many golf and spa resorts in the past for NATA's up-

scale events, particularly winter board meetings, Gleason also states that Bay Hill, in particular, is exceptional due in part to the longevity of the staff and the good, old-fashioned hospitality it offers.

"I met several staff members who have worked at Bay Hill for 20–40 years, including the tennis pro, Todd Harris, who has been there for 41 years. That can say a lot about the place in which you are holding your meeting."

As for golf legend Arnold Palmer, Gleason raves that "he stands for integrity, consistency, professionalism and dependability in his

"Golf and spa resorts like Bay Hill allow small- to medium-size groups to be the 'big fish in the pond,' and you get more attention and time from the staff. For instance, everyone at Bay Hill greets you like family."



Diane Gleason
Director of Conferences and Meetings
National Air Transportation Association
Alexandria, VA

professional career, and that carries through into the management of the club."

For such association events, Gleason reflects that golf and spa resorts offer groups and their meeting attendees a reprieve of the standard "four walls" one finds in many other venues. "Most golf and spa resorts are located in unique locations, too," Gleason notes. "These locations allow for different activities to be included on the agenda of the program. They also have alternative venues for networking events, which can energize a program. And, for associations representing members who are well-traveled, golf and spa resort locations are what these members choose for themselves when on vacation and have come to expect at meetings as well."

More than this, Gleason believes that since planners are responsible for providing not only an educational environment for its association members but opportunities for them to network and conduct business as well, what better locale than a first-class golf and spa resort. "In this age of technology where people can communicate without the traditional 'in-person' time frame, a prime location that intrigues an association member or guest to attend is a must," she says.

When it's time to select a site for a meeting, particularly a golf resort, Gleason notes that the name connected to the course is very important, as is the case with Arnold Palmer and Bay Hill, as it is so recognizable and thus, a huge draw. "Planners must know their audience and how best to use activities such as golf to create just the right atmosphere for business and networking to be conducted," she says.

Arnold Palmer's philosophy is to be the "best of the best," which

The 16th hole at the Greg Norman-designed National golf course, one of two championship courses at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate.

applies to all his endeavors including the Spa at Bay Hill. Many guests are surprised to find such a full-service spa available at a golf club and lodge. However, as NATA's attendees (mostly men) tackled Bay Hill's 27 championship holes of golf, their spouses availed themselves of the spa's offerings such as Swedish massage, Deep Tissue massage and Hot Stone massage, among several others. The spa menu also features complete skin care services as

well as salon services. The area also houses sophisticated exercise equipment and a fabulous outdoor pool and café.

"Again, I always stress that hosting meetings or events at a leading golf and spa resort gives the attendees a break from cookie-cutter meeting rooms and activities that one finds at downtown hotels. It's a relaxing space to unwind and have fun at the end of a long day of intense meetings," says Gleason.

Photo courtesy of PGA National Resort & Spa



Golf and Charity Perfect Together



The Hospice of Palm Beach County Foundation stages its Annual Celebrity Pro-Am Tournaments at PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, FL (pictured top left after Tiger Woods' spectacular 62 on Sunday at the 2012 Honda Classic) and at Atlantis Country Club, also in Palm Beach County, FL (pictured top right). Lauryn Barry, special events manager for the Hospice of Palm Beach County Foundation, shared her views about golf resorts and her experiences at PGA National Resort & Spa, which recently completed a \$65 million revitalization program. The 379-room resort sports 90 holes of golf on five courses including the famed Champion course — home to the PGA Tour's Honda Classic. In addition to 40,000 sf of meeting space, the resort boasts a 40,000-sf European-style spa with 32 treatment rooms and its famous Waters of the World outdoor mineral pools.

AC&F: What do you look for in a championship golf course?

Barry: No. 1 is the reputation of the course, then pace of play, staff support and great food and beverage. One of the most important things in a championship course is the vistas. A day on the golf course should be like a day on vacation.

AC&F: What's the desired effect?

Barry: You want your group to come off the course and feel the wow factor. Then, you know you have succeeded in your goal as a meeting planner, and the attendees will return next year.

AC&F: Any particular wow factors?

Barry: I happen to like designers who utilize waterfalls and hump-back bridges — those stick in your mind. I also like a logical layout. I am not impressed by gimmicky holes, and they only make the game more difficult to play. That will sometimes scare off your participants.

AC&F: Why did you select the PGA National Resort & Spa?

Barry: I've mentioned reputation of the golf course but also reputation in the whole golf community, convenience of holding the golf tournament and cocktail reception in the same location, quality of the food and banquet rooms, hotel amenities and so on. PGA National Resort provided our attendees with all of that, plus delicious food during our event, top-notch service and a beautiful, scenic setting for our two-day fundraising event.

AC&F: How did you use PGA's course for your event?

Barry: This was a fundraising golf tournament, so golf was an integral part of the association's event. PGA National

Resort provided us the ability to customize our tournament while maintaining the customer service, support and course expertise for which they are known. That's what I mean about golf community.

AC&F: Did the event include the spa?

Barry: The spa created some value-added packages our participants could take advantage of on their own time, and a lot of them did. PGA National Resort & Spa offered us gift certificates to use as auction items for our events, which were greatly appreciated.

AC&F: Your overall impression?

Barry: The resort also offered the unique ability to provide our participants with great food and atmosphere for our kickoff cocktail party combined with championship golf the next day. In addition, holding our event at PGA National Resort & Spa offered our participants the opportunity to enjoy great amenities before and after the events. The room rate provided to us allowed our guests to extend their stay and turn the weekend into a mini-vacation. The hotel staff was accommodating and supportive, and always went above and beyond to ensure the success of our event and our guests' enjoyment. We are already looking forward to this year's event (2012) at PGA National in December! — SJ

SPAS APPEAL TO YOUNGER GENERATIONS

Millennials don't want to be bored, they want to have fun and network, and they are very serious about establishing a reasonable work-life balance. So it's important for planners to create opportunities for them to play golf and wind down at the spa.

In fact, a growing number of planners suggest that there's a sea change going on when it comes to spas — so much so that they often include spa use during negotiations, give spa certificates as in-room gifts for attendees and as prizes for golf tournaments. Planners are also working in new spa services and treatments during meeting breaks, and they promote spa visits on the conference website and at registration.

Even so, the golf course still rules. "Sure, given a choice between a golf resort with a spa or a golf resort without one, most planners would lean towards the property with a spa. But, the championship course, that's prime," says Carolyn Price, president of CMP Management Inc., an association and event management company based in Austin, TX.

"Aside from being fun, the two components as to why this is so is that five hours on the golf course provides a lot of quality time to build relationships with other members, much more so than networking during a 15-minute break," she says.

Secondly, it provides the perfect opportunity for social responsibility and the chance to use the proceeds from a golf tournament for charitable causes. "This generally allows an organization to place added emphasis on player involvement because it's not merely for personal enjoyment," Price adds. "Tying the tournament to a cause elevates the value of the whole event and the overall conference or meeting agenda as well," she says.

Price notes that it depends on the client/organization and nature of the event as to how important it is to have an onsite spa at the resort. "Having a spa component can and does increase the perceived value of the meeting or convention to its members or attendees," she says.

From her professional experience, Price observes that spa options can be managed in a variety of ways. She prefers

offering a golf tournament at the beginning of the conference, and then adds options for spa services throughout the meeting.

For instance, The Alamo Chapter of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) holds its annual conference and exposition at the end of each year at The Westin La Cantera Resort in San Antonio, home to two championship golf courses. AFCEA held their annual Alamo ACE Golf



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Photo courtesy of Turnberry Isle Miami

The Turnberry Isle Miami spa's three floors are connected by a grand spiral staircase that showcases a fountain and a glass dome skylight.

Tournament at both of the resort's championship golf courses — the La Cantera and the Palmer courses. "Holding a golf tournament in conjunction with their conference and exposition is a significant component of the Alamo Chapter's annual event especially because the funds benefit charitable foundations," says Price.

Before, during and after, spa services at Westin La Cantera's Castle Rock Health Club & Spa were offered at a discount to conference attendees who availed themselves on an individual basis and at their own convenience, according to Price. In addition to a comprehensive menu of spa treatments, Castle Rock also offers Mee Time, a set of stretches and massage therapy designed especially for golfers that warms the neck, back and shoulders "to improve flexibility and avoid injury during the game."

The sold-out event was a tremendous success. "The overall goal was to raise a minimum of \$7,500 for Operation Comfort, the foundation supporting wounded warriors, and we produced an event that garnered in excess of \$10,000 for that foundation," Price says.

NEW & NEWSWORTHY

The \$50 million makeover of Southern California's **La Costa Resort & Spa** transformed every area of the Spanish mission-style resort including the redesign of 474 guest rooms and suites out of a total of 611. Approximately 100,000 sf of expanded, flexible indoor and outdoor meeting space was revitalized, and a top-to-bottom makeover was completed of the conference center, now called The Coastal Events Center, which includes new meeting planner suites that combine live/work space. The picturesque 43,000-sf Spa at La Costa boasts 28,000 sf of redesigned indoor space and features an all-new stone path adjacent to the herb garden — a Reflexology Path — a truly unique feature. In addition, the Spa Café space was expanded. The spa features experiential packages such as Rejuvenate & Repower, especially designed for groups. Golf at La Costa includes the all new 18-hole Champions Course, along with four renovated holes on the South Course.

San Diego's legendary **Hotel Del Coronado** features the newly enhanced Spa at the Del with eco-friendly salon products and the popular Reflection Package including a 50-minute Be

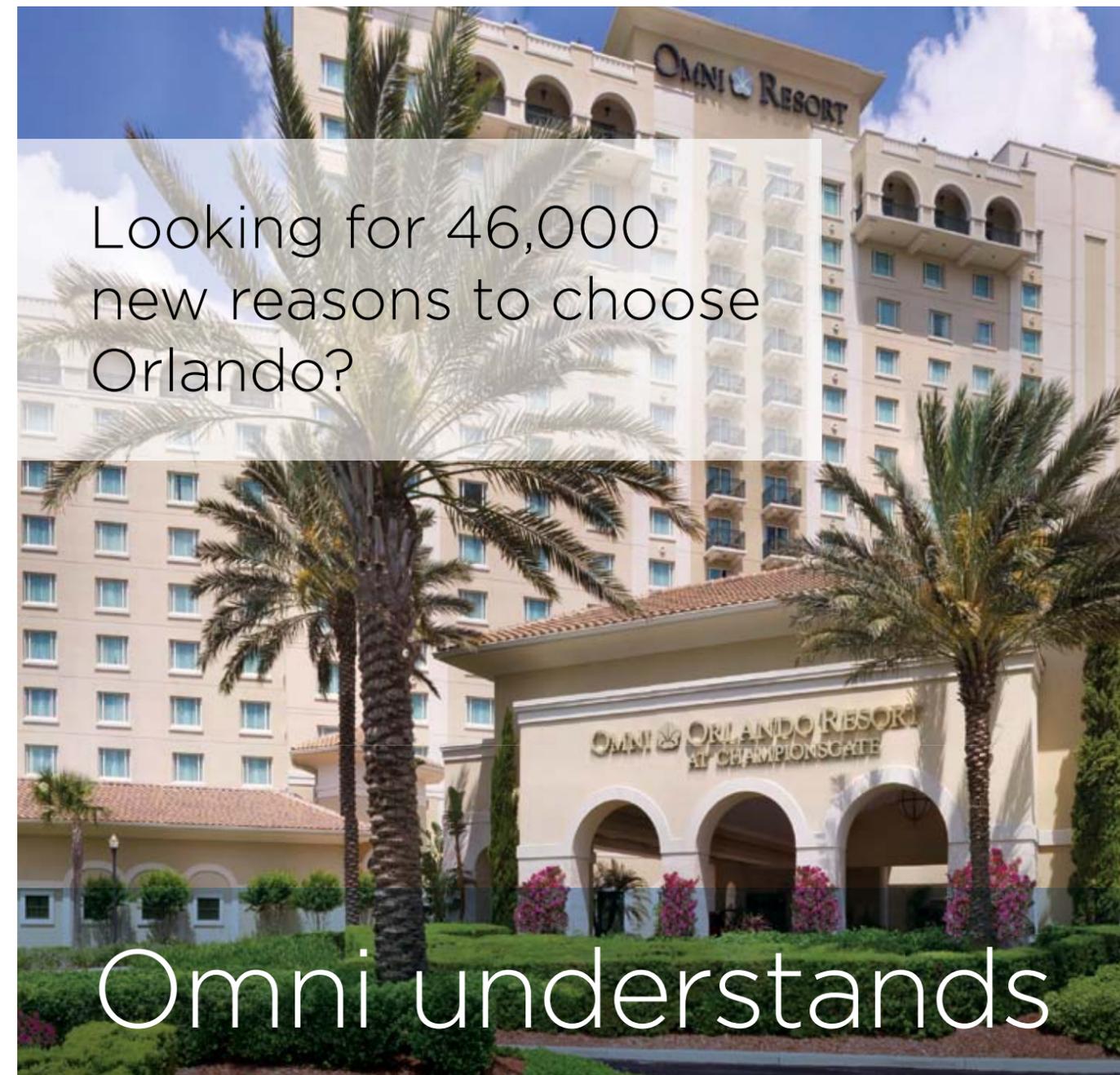
Organic facial, 60-minute Ginger pedicure, 45-minute manicure or hydrating hair treatment, shampoo and style. The hotel is a National Historic Landmark and the oldest hotel in the U.S. to receive Green Seal certification.

Located midway between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, the 392-room **Turnberry Isle Miami** completed a \$2 million renovation of its Orchid Building — one of four guest room towers. Turnberry Isle Miami boasts more than 40,000 sf of meeting space, a 25,000-sf Spa and Fitness Center with 23 treatment rooms and extensive menu of treatments, a 3,650-sf fitness center and a wellness program. Turnberry Isle's two Raymond Floyd-redesigned championship golf courses include the Soffer and the Miller, which offer lush, tropical grounds and hundreds of birds, part of an Audubon program.

News from the **Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate** includes the addition of Mokara Spa to the 720-room golf and spa resort. Replacing The Spa at Omni Orlando, the new Mokara Spa offers signature treatments and products of the spa brand, which is a part of the Omni Hotels & Resort families, currently operating seven spas throughout the U.S. The Mokara Spa features the eponymous Mokara massage, which combines a variety of massage techniques and specialty oils designed to help guests re-energize, detoxify and simply relax. The Hydrating Wrap, a service unique to Omni Orlando Resort, drenches the skin in a treatment of exotic oils high in vitamins A, B, C and E, leaving the skin nourished and replenished. The award-winning golf courses include the Greg Norman-designed International — a 7,363-yard, authentic links-style course and the National — a traditional American-style layout cut from 200 acres of woodlands, wetlands and orange groves.

At **The Greenbrier**, located in White Sulphur Springs, WV, the National Historic Landmark resort offers four championship golf courses and a 40,000-sf spa. Recently, The Greenbrier Classic was awarded the designation of "Best in Class Tournament on the PGA Tour" by the PGA Tour itself. Also, The Greenbrier Spa, a luxury 40,000-sf spa, is the only Forbes Travel Guide Five Star mineral spa in the world, and among only 29 spas to achieve a five-star rating.

The Homestead golf and spa resort in Hot Springs, VA, was built 10 years before the start of the American Revolution in 1766. Thomas Jefferson, among other notable guests, is said to have stayed there in 1818 for three weeks to soak in the natural mineral spring waters. Nestled among the Allegheny Mountains, The Homestead has 483 rooms and 72,000 sf of meeting space. Its Euro-style spa, with all of its modern treatments and services, houses both the original Jefferson Pool with 40,000 gallons of flowing spring water, as well as the Ladies Pool, which was added in 1836. Three championship golf courses include the Cascades Course, designed by William Flynn; the Old Course, a Donald Ross design boasting the nation's oldest tee in continuous use; and the Robert Trent Jones-designed Lower Cascades. AC&F



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Today's Trade Shows and Conferences

By John Buchanan

Deliver Serious Buyers, High-Tech Connectivity and Experiential Learning

Despite dire prognostications about the future of the meeting and convention industry during the depths of the Great Recession, the good news this year is that meetings, trade shows and conventions are more important than ever to all three major stakeholders: associations, attendees and exhibitors. And the outlook is positive: The overall exhibition industry posted a strong rebound of 2.7 percent in 2011, marking the end of three consecutive years of declines, according to The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) 2011 Index Report.



Peter MacGillivray
Vice President Events and Communications
Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association, Diamond Bar, CA

"We're making sure that the activities we're investing in are delivering the kind of environment and experience that will give our members confidence that they are getting a return on their investment."

That said, however, meetings and events face unprecedented levels of scrutiny, expectation and change. But one thing that hasn't changed — and ironically has been reinforced by recent history — is the underlying perception of their value.

"After all the debate of the past few years, there continues to be a recognition now that face-to-face meetings have a value-added component that virtual meetings will never totally replace," says Catherine Lincoln, CAE, senior manager, international and humanitarian, at the American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck (AAOHN) in Alexandria, VA. "A few years ago, a lot of observers were saying, 'Oh, people will no longer jump on a plane and go to a big convention center for four days.' But today, people are recognizing that those kinds of meetings have a special value all their own, with a rich mix of activities and opportunities for networking."

Despite such newfound enthusiasm, notes Amy Ledoux, CMP, CAE, senior vice president, meetings and exhibitions, at ASAE in Washington, DC, the post-recession industry faces what her organization's Meetings & Expositions Council now sees as a trio of overarching challenges.

The first is an ongoing shift from a buyer's market to a seller's market. "The opportunity to negotiate very favorable contracts through 2008 and 2009 and even into 2010 was very good," says



Education sessions are more relevant and briefer at SEMA's annual show in Las Vegas — giving the 130,000 attendees more time to explore the trade show floor.

Ledoux. "Now that the economy is turning around and there is a little bit less availability, rates are going up, and attrition and cancellation clauses are returning to pre-2008 terms. They're getting more strict. And that is going to be a big challenge for a lot of associations and their members. That's going to be a big issue now," says Ledoux. Part of the reason: Despite an encouraging economic uptick, most meeting budgets remain tight. And that, combined with rising costs, means a double-whammy for many planners.

The next most important trend, as ASAE sees it, is a continuing debate about and lasting repercussions of a recession-fueled trend toward outsourcing, a practice motivated by staff reductions that put many meeting planners out of work. "And now that a lot of organizations have outsourced, and they've also seen that it has worked, some are less likely to add those jobs back as the economy recovers," adds Ledoux. "But others are looking at bringing some of those jobs back, because there are some that were not happy with an outsourced relationship." The key issue now, she says, is the balance between a focus on core competencies, such as continuing education, and those that can advantageously be

outsourced. And in turn, the ever-broadening discussion of strategic meeting management has caused more and more associations to come down on the side of outsourcing as a cost-effective best practice.

The third trend Ledoux cites is increasing vendor consolidation. "We're seeing more consolidation of vendors such as general contractors and audio-visual providers," she says. "And there has also been more consolidation within hotel chains. So, in the future, there might not be 10 brands. There might only be five brands, so to speak. The same thing is happening with the airlines. And all of that means less competition."

In simple economic terms, that means that a buyer usually gets a better deal with six or eight bidders rather than three. And such consolidation is also likely to speed the pendulum swing toward a seller's market. But, Ledoux says, for some major associations, such consolidation might actually offer increased buying power. "By putting all their eggs in one basket, so to speak," she says, "some associations will actually get better deals and have a more efficient process."

DELIVERING VALUE FOR ATTENDEES AND EXHIBITORS

While such supply-side issues are certainly important, an issue that is arguably more important is the perception that attendees and exhibitors have about the essential value of a particular meeting or show. In fact, that's the trend that Steven Hacker, the Dallas-based president of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE), sees as the most critical to a recovering market.

"There is an overriding trend I see that might be defined as striving to achieve higher value," says Hacker, a 40-year veteran of the association industry. "And it is a direct outcome of the economic hardships of the last three or four years. It doesn't matter whether it's a trade show, a convention or a major meeting, but among the embedded objectives today is a high-value return. And relevance. The meeting market has become much more serious and less frivolous. Events are much more grounded now for obvious reasons."

As a result, Hacker says, there is a marked change in the way meetings and events are being planned. "You see it in intellectual exercises like learning opportunities," he says. "It was common, in the old days, for a small group of individuals — often known as the education committee or the annual meeting planning committee — to get together as veteran members who made decisions about what sessions would be most relevant for members. Today, that kind of model has been turned upside down. And you have a much larger cadre of members, intentionally crossing all demographic strata, including everything from new entrants into the industry, all the way up to CEOs, who are reaching out to peers and soliciting their input. So, it's much more of a distillation process. And as a result, what you see today at many meetings is a very diverse offering of topics, intended for different career levels and individual audiences."

Even major associations that host some of the largest and most successful shows in the history of the industry, such as the Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association (SEMA) are paying rapt attention.

"We've spent a lot of time assessing all of the things that we do to make sure that they deliver value," says Peter MacGillivray, SEMA's Diamond Bar, CA-based vice president of events and communications, who hosts 130,000 attendees at an annual trade show in Las Vegas. "We're making sure that the activities we're investing in are delivering the kind of environment and experience that will give our members confidence that they are getting a return on their investment."

CONTENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

When it comes to an attendee's perception of value, nothing is more important than the educational or business content delivered at the event. And one clear trend driving that dynamic now is shorter, more focused presentations.



"We'll see more collaboration and joint meetings between two societies from different countries that join...to put on a meeting. Or two different branches of the health field that decide to collaborate on a single meeting."

Catherine Lincoln, CAE
Senior Manager, International
and Humanitarian
The American Academy of
Otolaryngology-Head and Neck
Surgery, Alexandria, VA

"Attention spans are getting shorter," says Martin Bay, CMP, director of meetings and expositions at Kellen Company in Atlanta. "We had a show recently in San Francisco where each presenter was allowed 15 minutes. And we did about 30 of them. You're going to see more and more of that kind of approach." (See page 10.)

Deborah Sexton, president and CEO of PCMA in Chicago, agrees that an enhanced focus on content and brevity are now driving the association meeting market. "In the past," she says, "you'd go to a traditional conference and you'd have 60-, 75- and 90-minute sessions. And everything followed that pattern — regardless of whether the topic warranted that much time or not."

Now, Sexton says, PCMA has pioneered a concept called the Learning Lounge, which delivers much shorter and much more narrowly defined topics of specific interest to well-defined constituencies within its broader membership.

"I'm hoping that more and more meeting and convention

professionals are thinking about things like that and the topic of 'meeting architecture' and what is going to really deliver what the attendee is looking for," Sexton says. "And that has as much to do with how the content is delivered as it does with what the content is. But the point is to make the attendee more receptive to learning. And that is critical to our industry. The important message is that our industry is no longer going to be about getting attendees to go into lecture hall after lecture hall all day long for three or four days. That is no longer as effective as a more engaging, more focused approach. When people leave their offices to go to a meeting today, they have to be excited about what — and how — they're going to learn at an event and how that knowledge will impact their ability to do a better job in their organization."

Hacker concurs that a commitment to high-quality educational content is more important than ever before. "The industry is becoming much more mature and sophisticated," he says. "And we are gaining respectability because of the adoption of academic theories that have been proven to be effective — especially in the area of adult learning. So today, you're seeing the introduction of experiential teaching rather than textbook-based teaching."

At SEMA, MacGillivray and his team have heard that sermon loud and clear, too. "We've made a real effort to make sure that the education we deliver is world-class — that it's relevant and thought-provoking," he says. "We use our content to attract people to our show. But we also want to make sure that we deliver on the promise and have them go home feeling really good about the time they spent going to our various sessions."

MacGillivray has worked to develop shorter, more compelling presentations. "And a related issue for us is that our attendees are so anxious to get out onto the show floor and see what's new," he says, "so we don't want to burden them with long seminars or other presentations that keep them off the show floor."

EXHIBITORS AND ROI

Sensitivity to the show floor and the interests of exhibitors is another key component of the post-recession business equation.

Sexton, Hacker and MacGillivray agree that one big trend that has been developing for the last several years is pre-set appointments between buyers and sellers on the show floor. "And one contributing factor in that," Sexton says, "is that today, because of technology, anyone who is going to a show that has not done their research first to determine precisely who they want to see is not doing their job properly. The days of attendees wandering up and down the aisle to see who's exhibiting are gone. Now, smart attendees are doing all of their homework in advance. So, setting appointments in advance makes perfect sense."

At the same time, MacGillivray says, there's ever-increasing pressure from exhibitors to demonstrate a tangible ROI from show participation. Consequently, SEMA began offering pre-set appointments three years ago and has worked each year since to

enhance that capability. "We are doing more to identify who some of the most major attendees are and helping them connect with exhibitors," MacGillivray explains. "But part of that is making sure that exhibitors do it right. They have to understand that you're not just bringing any buyer to them, you're bringing significant buyers that represent a significant amount of business. And they have to be prepared for that. They have to have the bandwidth, as we do, to deliver on the promise of that process."

Meanwhile, Bay sees exhibitors becoming more and more aggressive in other ways in terms of what they want to do at a show to generate interest and traffic. For example, he says, at a recent event, one exhibitor installed a batting cage and hired legendary Major League Baseball player and former Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda to autograph baseballs. "It took a lot of effort to get that approved," Bay says. "But it worked great."

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

The most powerful technology-related trend is an accelerated embrace of hybrid meetings, which extend the event beyond its traditional face-to-face, fixed time parameters. And now that hybrid meetings — and digital events in general — have finally been accepted as an inevitability by planners, their role will only grow.

"But there are still many large association today that still don't have a digital strategy, which is unfortunate," Sexton says. "But I also think that sooner rather than later, we'll now see them start to embrace that capability."

SEMA is now starting to explore what MacGillivray dubs "the perpetual show." That means providing the ability of people who did not attend the live event to partake of its content, or enabling attendees to revisit key content that is perceived as vital to their ongoing business. And at the same time, SEMA is using the aggressive merchandising of such content delivery to lure non-attendees to become attendees at a future event. "And in effect, that becomes a way to monetize your content beyond just those people who paid to come to your show," he says.

At AAOHN, Lincoln and her colleagues are engaged in a similar initiative. "I think we'll see more of a trend in which at least some of the presentations are broadcast in real time, or staggered for consumption," she says. "And we will be doing that for the first time this year at our annual meeting with some of our most important endowed lectures from very distinguished speakers."

Lincoln, like many planners, is also witnessing more and more impact from social media. She and her team use Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. She finds such technology particularly powerful as a tool for international outreach, as yet another way of grooming future association members and meeting attendees. "It's particularly important to us in reaching people in the Middle East and Far East and Africa, as well as Latin America," she says. "And in some cases, those people are not actually coming to our annual meeting, but they still want to engage with the academy."



At the AAO-HNSF 2011 Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO in San Francisco, incoming president J. Regan Thomas, MD, and Mrs. Thomas propose a toast to the guest countries of Australia, France, Germany, Japan and Switzerland.

THE BIG CAUTION — AND THE FUTURE

Although the association meeting market is recovering, and also evolving into a higher level of sophistication, Hacker and Sexton share a concern about the future.

As a longtime observer of and participant in the association market, Hacker says, he has become keenly aware in recent years that "some associations could get by even though they may have been operating archaically, or in ways that are obsolete, for decades. That meant that their members had a high tolerance for inefficiency. Well, that has changed. And I am gravely concerned that there are too many associations out there that are not investing the time, energy and resources and attention that they need to in order to remain relevant. And I would not be surprised to see somewhat shocking attrition among those associations that just don't seem to get it. Their members will abandon them."

That said, he revisits his point about time-honored but now ineffective education committees. "There are many associations that are still doing things that way," he says. "And they are facing the twin challenges of quickly retiring baby boomer members at the same time the younger generations are coming up through their career paths. And those younger members are going to be disappointed by the irrelevance of the education programming. So in the space of a year or two, you could see a 10,000-attendee convention shrink to 2,000 people very easily. That's how the wheels will come off if you're not paying attention."

For her part, Lincoln foresees positive and innovative changes in the near-term. "I think we'll see more collaboration and joint meetings between two societies from different countries that join together to put on a meeting," she says. "Or two different branches of the health field that decide to collaborate on a single meeting. But I definitely think we'll see more collaboration. And that will be a good thing for all concerned."

Hacker predicts a transformational integration of a global audience into what have until now been primarily U.S. events. One key element, he says, will be the explosive economic growth in Asia. "And that is going to change the nature of the meetings and the culture of the host organizations," he says. "So we need to be prepared to be better global operators. But at the same time, we are notoriously slow on the uptake on the issue of globalization. And if we don't address that, we will suffer the consequences." AC&F

The New Green Guidelines

How the Sustainable Meeting Standards Will Change the Event Landscape

By Harvey Chipkin

The Unitarian Universalist Association, reflecting the culture of the organization, made a strong commitment to sustainability in its meetings almost 10 years ago. A couple of years later, the annual general assembly, usually numbering around 4,000 delegates, was slated to go to a city with no commercial recycling available. “We went out and found a hauler named Woody,” says Janiece Sneegas, Ph.D., director, general assembly and conference centers, “and did our own recycling.”

The country — and the meetings industry — have come a long way since that incident, culminating in the recent completion of the new APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Meeting Standards that lay out specific and consistent sustainability guidelines in nine areas ranging from audio-visual to transportation. Suppliers and planners are hoping that the new standards will make it easier to plan and — on the supplier’s side — to welcome a meeting that is as sustainable as possible given all the circumstances related to that place and group.

As of February, industry professionals began to have access to most of the new standards, produced as a partnership between the Convention Industry Council’s Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).



Lawrence Leonard, CMP, COO
Convention Industry Council
Alexandria, VA

“I like to describe the standards as a shared scorecard. They give us a way to line up environmental concerns in city A with city B. They allow professionals to compare venues and suppliers.”

ASTM has published seven of nine standards in these areas:

- Audio-Visual
- Communication & Marketing Materials
- Destinations
- Exhibits
- Food & Beverage
- Onsite Office
- Transportation

Still to come:

- Accommodations (*currently undergoing final balloting through ASTM*)
- Meeting Venue (*being prepared for publishing*)

Each of the standards addresses specific sustainable elements: staff management and environmental policy, communications, waste, energy, air quality, water, procurement and community partners. Much of the work was done by the APEX Green Meetings and Events Practice panel, consisting of 300 planners, suppliers and sustainability experts. ASTM provided comprehensive input, review and feedback from its experts.

The standards emerged originally from conversations between the Green Meetings Industry Council (GMIC) and the Environmental Protection Agency, according to Lawrence Leonard, CMP, COO, of the Convention Industry Council (CIC). EPA staff were looking to develop guidance they could provide to their own planners when selecting suppliers to reduce the environmental impact of their own meetings. That led them to approach GMIC. They both realized the project needed to be brought to a recognized organization to create dialogue, and that’s how CIC became involved.

“This has very much been a stakeholder-driven process,” says Leonard, “along with the expertise brought by ASTM.”

These standards, says Leonard, “are meant to be complementary to the green certification programs out there. The standards are not meant to displace those programs. I like to describe the standards as a shared scorecard. They give us a way to line up environmental concerns in city A with city B. They allow professionals to compare venues and suppliers.”

Leonard says that the standards were meant to be: adaptable,



Photo by Nancy Eric, courtesy of Oregon Convention Center

“It would behoove suppliers to look at the standards and be able to tell planners what level they are achieving,” says Brittin Witzenburg (above), sustainability coordinator for the Oregon Convention Center. “That would make it easier for planners to compile their reports.”

accessible and flexible. “They are very modular because there are nine separate categories. If you’re a catering company and interested only in food and beverage, you can look to those standards.”

Also making the standards flexible, says Leonard, are four levels of attainment. Level One is built entirely around cost savings and, he says, “are accessible to any planner or organization. They are a no-brainer.” Levels two, three and four “offer pathways to levels of improvement,” says Leonard, “Those already on a sustainable track can look to those.”

In general, says Leonard, “We tried to make a business case for sustainability, and to a large degree that’s been done. The conversation should no longer be about, ‘should we be doing this’ but rather ‘how do we do this strategically?’ How do we make this part of our DNA even in a tough economic environment?”

PLANNERS LOOK TO NEW STANDARDS

Amy Spatrisano, CMP, principal with Meet Green in Portland, OR, and a founder of GMIC, has been a longtime advocate of environmental standards. She was at the earliest meetings related to the development of the APEX standards. “We wanted to start a conversation with how the industry could work together with the government to bring these standards about,” Spatrisano says. “By bringing in APEX we were able to have representation from the entire industry. We were new to the ASTM process of developing standards, and ASTM was new to our industry — so it was a great learning experience for both partners in the process.”

“In 2007,” says Spatrisano, “people were aware of green meetings but would still ask: What is a green meeting? I can give you my definition but what is yours? A lot of people started to make claims that they were greening their meetings or becoming sustainable — but there was nothing to benchmark them against. Now we have those benchmarks.”

“The standards are unique because they demand both supplier

and planner accountability,” says Spatrisano. “It’s too early to know how this will work in the marketplace. What we do know is that if the supplier and planners don’t do their part, then neither group can say they’ve planned an environmentally sustainable event.”

“We felt we would get better buy-in if this wasn’t just left to the suppliers,” says Spatrisano. “Sustainability is about everybody working together. If everyone is not on the same page, it will be difficult to put together a sustainable event. It’s also about thinking differently and integrating practices that are beneficial socially, environmentally and financially.”

As to the planner’s responsibility, Spatrisano pointed to the destination standards, where a planner can ask: Is there recycling available for commercial properties? Do they have good public transportation? Is the convention center within walking distance of major hotels?

While the standards will place responsibility on the shoulders of planners, Spatrisano believes that will be hugely beneficial. “All large organizations are now engaged in corporate social responsibility and have made public statements that they will reduce carbon output. Planners must make sure their meetings are walking that talk. It’s about the reputation of their organizations.”

“These standards make it easier for planners,” says Spatrisano. “They don’t have to think about what to ask a hotel or venue. Before the standards, planner questions were all over the map. Now there is common ground.”

Though Sneegas’ association was highly motivated to aim for sustainability, she herself was initially reluctant. “I met with Amy early on, and she told me I didn’t have to go this alone and didn’t have to do everything at once. We just had to take the first step and see where that took us. Long story short — we got on the path and are absolutely committed to this journey.”

“Every year,” says Sneegas, “we make more strides to the point where we do front-of-the-house composting in almost every city.”

We also measure waste and energy use — and our big measurement is our diversion from landfill.

“A lot of planning goes toward all this,” says Sneegas, “and what the standards do is allow you to have conversations when you’re engaging with supplier partners, because both groups should meet these standards.”

“The standards also give you a common set of criteria where you are both trying to meet,” says Sneegas. “This starts with the RFP. And when I contact venues, it’s not just me the planner anymore. I have the authority of APEX and ASTM behind me.”

“We have already built the standards into our contracts,” says Sneegas, “and, in other cases, we can go back and include them retroactively. We have saved money doing this. We have cut down on paper usage by tons. We reuse signage every year. Our attendees are so involved that the convention office will get calls from people saying the hotel had changed their towels when they didn’t want them to.”

Vicki Hawarden, who recently became president and CEO of the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) but who served previously as a conference planner at Meeting Professionals International, says, “All of our convention centers have been striving to do the right thing. Knowing what the right thing is has been the challenge. The mantra until now has been progress — but the question was: progress toward what? Everybody looks at this as being able to have a common goal. It gives us something to measure ourselves by. Also, the time is coming when this might be imposed on us, and we want to be ahead of that.”

“At MPI, we worked to get some standards and created some tools. But all we could do was keep moving the ball forward. We encourage planners to put these standards into their RFPs.”

“For our own meetings,” says Hawarden, “this will be part of the evaluation for selecting venues for our own meetings. We are starting to demand leadership from our venues. The planner will be able to say: I will only consider Level X of the standards or above. This may not be the only factor, but it will definitely be part of the evaluation.”

VIEW FROM THE VENUES

As chairman of the sustainability committee for IAVM, Brad Gessner, general manager of the San Diego Convention Center and a longtime environmental advocate, had input in the development of the APEX standards. Sustainability has been a passion throughout his

“This is on everybody’s radar and is catching fire. And it’s not going to change. Not a month goes by that I don’t get a call from a planner with 5,000 members asking for help on lighting or water reduction.”

Brad Gessner
General Manager, San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA

“When I contact venues, it’s not just me the planner anymore. I have the authority of APEX and ASTM behind me. We have already built the standards into our contracts.”



Janiece J. Sneegas, Ph.D.
Director, General Assembly and Conference Services
Unitarian Universalist Association
Boston, MA

career, says Gessner, well before it became a major issue. Gessner, who received the City of San Diego 2011 Recycler of the Year Award on behalf of the center (see photo below), pitched the idea of a basic recycling center in San Diego in 1988. The center earned a LEED-EB Silver certification for existing buildings late last year.

“I have to wear two hats,” says Gessner. “One is to protect our members so any standards don’t put a burdensome onus on the facilities. There are some iterations in the new standards that we may not agree with that fall disproportionately on facility managers. But we agree that the standards are necessary.”

“Everything environmental has overlap,” says Gessner. “For instance, about two years ago we did a complete lighting retrofit to 100 percent fluorescent. Our foot candles went up slightly but the quality went up a lot. And it will save 40 percent on electricity — paying for itself in two years. Also, we’re up to 46 percent on recycling what we use, and our goal is 60 percent.”

“Our sales force is constantly being asked by planners to talk about the environmental issue,” says Gessner. “We are able to tell them that we are using the appropriate cleaning materials, and that our food and beverage department is not only composting but also donating food. We are told constantly by sales teams and show managers that our environmental polices may not be the reason we were chosen, but it certainly played a large role.”

“About 50 percent of show managers have questions about our environmental programs,” says Gessner. “And we tell the others anyway. We feel that every show is interested on some level. We tell our own people that they need to be working this into their operations. Even if they’re not 100 percent on board with this, they will probably have to be eventually because of laws and regulations.”

Environmental concerns, says Gessner, “have become a big part of inspection tours. This is on everybody’s radar and is catching fire. And it’s not going to change. Not a month goes by that I don’t get a call from a planner with 5,000 members asking for help on lighting or water reduction.”

David Richard, area director of sales and marketing for Starwood Hotels, with oversight at The Phoenician resort in Scottsdale, says sustainability has become important to the property — with more sustainable menus and water stations rather than bottled water at breaks.

“We have a green council made up of our associates,” says Richard. “We measure the waste at our banquets. We also try to design our menus to eliminate waste. We have established a benchmark for waste so we can continue to eliminate it.”

The Oregon Convention Center (OCC) was the first facility of its kind to earn LEED certification in 2004 and, says Brittin Witzenburg, sustainability coordinator for the facility, “We realized early, partly because this is so important in Portland, that we do business this way. We also realized that for some planners this was something they were every attracted to. Groups are definitely interested in a more sustainable event, and so it becomes a collaborative process.”

The general manger for food and beverage at OCC was involved in the standards development, and, says Witzenburg, “Once these standards are available and people see how they work in practical terms we will be able to see how it plays out. Managers will ask what sections they should get involved with; which components will be easy and which will not.”

Planners are motivated to get involved, says Witzenburg. “A lot of the standards involve things that many folks already do. Other areas will have to be worked on. It would behoove suppliers to look at the standards and be able to tell planners what level they are achieving. That would make it easier for planners to compile their reports.”

“A good portion of maintaining these buildings sustainably,” says Witzenburg, “is that you pay attention. Sustainability has to be integrated into every department and every decision.”

Leonard Hoops, a veteran of a number of CVBs and currently president and CEO of the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association, says, “I have long seen the need for standards in the industry. It’s the right thing to do. In San Francisco we used to host massive conventions from Oracle, the tech company, and they had their own standards. Not everybody can do that, and when I worked with them, I realized that industry standards were inevitable.”

Hoops says that destinations will look to their own advantages in sustainability. “We have a central U.S. location, and 4,700 rooms attached to the (Indiana) convention center by covered walkway — so there is no need for local transportation. There are many more rooms within walking distance.

“We recycled 60 tons of material last year,” says Hoops, “We also have a food rescue program. Any unused food is repurposed. We use green field cleaning products, and there is an option to buy biodegradable serviceware.”

Combining the resources of CIC, APEX and ASTM “was a good marriage,” says Hoops. “They should be well thought out. We will put together an internal team of our stakeholders and look

to the standards to see where we are not as strong as we can be and what we can do to elevated our levels.

“And we will also leverage the strengths we do have,” says Hoops, “by pointing to the standards when they show us achieving at a high level. There will be a brief period when we might have a competitive advantage on some of these things. But then at some point everybody is doing it.”

WHAT NOW?

Education is the next step for the APEX/ASTM standards. “GMIC is spearheading the educational process,” says Spatrisano. “From now on the standards will be our guidelines. Before, we had to make it up based on our individual expertise and knowledge. Now that the standards are in place, there is something to look to. Also, attendees are becoming more sophisticated about all this.”

CIC will provide education information at the CMP Conclave (June 9-11, Tampa, FL) as conference sessions and as a full-day preconference workshop powered by GMIC. CIC is also working with member organizations to provide information and resources for developing education tailored for different industry segments and to identify opportunities for other educational offerings.

“The success of the programs will depend on whether people engage in them,” says Spatrisano. “It would be tragic if the work of all these volunteers was for nothing. These standards are voluntary but the government will be looking to see how well they are followed. If

“These standards make it easier for planners. They don’t have to think about what to ask a hotel or venue. Before the standards, planner questions were all over the map. Now there is common ground.”



Amy Spatrisano, CMP
Principal
Meet Green
Portland, OR

anybody is not doing it now, at some point they may have to.”

“We are just beginning our conversations with planners about standards,” says Witzenburg. “We will be developing a solid strategy on promoting the standards and communicating with planners.”

“Our mission,” says Sneegas, “is to bring others along on this path. We would go to a city that does not have the highest sustainable practices and try to work with them. We would love to be at Level Four all the time but we are realistic,” says Sneegas. “We understand that people are still at different levels. But I am very hopeful the standards will have a major impact on the industry. They present a tremendous opportunity. It’s up to us whether they will be successful.”

AC&F

Las Vegas

A Sure Bet to Boost Attendance

By Karen Brost

When Elvis sang the song “Viva Las Vegas” in his iconic 1964 movie of the same name, little did he know that his rallying cry would still hold true nearly 50 years later. Although this popular meeting destination went through some tough times in the recession, it has certainly bounced back. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) reports that the city attracted 38.9 million visitors in 2011, the second highest total in its history.

The LVCVA credits part of this increase to the recovery of the convention industry. The city hosted 8.8 percent more business travelers and 5.7 percent more events in 2011 than in the previous year. It also racked up 22 consecutive months of year-over-year growth in visitation and average daily room rates through the end of 2011.

Here’s another impressive statistic. Las Vegas was named the No. 1 trade show destination by the Trade Show News Network

for the 17th year in a row. In 2010 the city hosted 60 of the 250 largest shows in North America, ranked by net square footage utilized. It also hosted six of the 10 biggest shows, the largest of which is the International Consumer Electronics show that requires 1.4 million net sf of space.

While many cities have a single large convention center, Las Vegas has three: The Las Vegas Convention Center with more than 2.1 million sf of space, the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino with more than 1.6 million sf of space, and the Sands Expo & Convention Center with 1.2 million sf of space. A fourth convention and exhibition venue is in the planning stages south of Las Vegas near the Henderson Executive Airport, according to news reports: Investors are being sought for the proposed 4-million-sf AeroQuest USA International Trade and Conference Center.

CITYWIDE SUCCESS

The Chicago-based Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) chose Las Vegas as the site of its annual conference and exhibition February 20–24. The event attracted nearly 37,000 attendees. The headquarters hotel was the Venetian/Palazzo, and the exhibition was held at the Sands Expo and Convention Center located adjacent to the hotels.

The 4,000-suite Venetian Resort Hotel Casino is the largest AAA Five Diamond property in the country and a LEED-EB Gold-certified resort. The 3,000-suite Palazzo Las Vegas is also a AAA Five Diamond property, and it is LEED Silver certified. When combined with the Sands Expo, the Venetian/Palazzo complex offers 340 meeting venues and more than 2.25 million sf of flexible space on five levels, including the 85,000-sf Venetian Ballroom.

Karen Malone, vice president meeting services for HIMSS, appreciated the convenience that Las Vegas offers for such a large citywide meeting. “It’s such a compressed package, it makes it so convenient for the attendees and the exhibitors,” she explains. “Often, because of the size of our meeting, we have to go miles and miles outside the convention center district to get the hotel packages that we need. Here in Las Vegas, we didn’t go farther than three-fourths of a mile to get the 19,000 rooms that we use on peak night.

“We ended up using 16 hotels,” she continues. “When you con-

sider that in other cities we use 70 hotels to get our hotel package, that was one of the benefits of Las Vegas. It was a much more consolidated package.”

She describes some of the other advantages of meeting in Las Vegas. “It’s got good airlift. It has a lot of flight accessibility. It’s affordable to get in and out. The hotels are fairly affordable, and there’s just a multitude of things to do and see in the city. There’s no question about it, as an attendee said it to me, ‘There is such a different energy and vibe about this meeting.’ I think the energy of the meeting plays off the energy of the city.”

She was also pleased with the meeting space her group used. “We used all of the meeting space at The Venetian at the conference center, and then we used the meeting rooms at the Sands as well as all of the exhibit space. It worked very well for us. It can always be a challenge when you’ve got split halls, but we found a way to make it work by the way we laid out our floor and anchored the two levels.” Her event had 1,100 exhibitors.

Malone says that her attendees enjoyed the change of pace that Las Vegas offered. “It was a different venue for us because we’re generally in venues that are linear. They’re long, and this particular venue is more vertical. The meeting space is all stacked. Once the attendees got acclimated on the first day, I would hear them say, ‘I really like this — everything is only an escalator away versus many, many feet away in some cases. We run a lot of education sessions, so that’s a lot of walking.’”

She describes an interesting phenomenon that had developed as a result of the size of her meeting. “In prior years (some attendees) had actually started to select sessions they were going to based on proximity. Was that not funny? In this case, because the session rooms were so close, they could really go to the sessions they wanted to versus the ones they thought they had to go to based on how easy it was to get there.

“We had a fantastic experience with the hotels,” she sums up. “There has always been the perception that meetings are a secondary priority in Las Vegas over the gaming, but we literally had one of the very best experiences we’ve ever had with the hotels in Las Vegas. They were absolutely on top of it. We’ve probably had the fewest issues we’ve ever had in any city with the hotels in Las Vegas. We were very pleasantly surprised.”

ALL-IN-ONE CONVENIENCE

Lynn Thomas, executive director of the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) headquartered in Santaquin, UT, explains what makes the city such an attractive destination for association meetings. Her organization chose the South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa as the site of its Annual Conference in March. “Las Vegas has so much to offer with things to do — from entertainment and round-the-clock fun city life to nature and outdoor activities. It has something for everyone. We have already had many of our association members stating they

“We’ve probably had the fewest issues we’ve ever had in any city with the hotels in Las Vegas. We were very pleasantly surprised.”



Karen Malone
Vice President Meeting Services
Healthcare Information and
Management Systems Society
Chicago, IL

are choosing to come to this year’s conference and bring their families to make it a vacation because it is Las Vegas.

“We have also been hearing from our members that the affordability of the hotel and the area is drawing them,” she adds. “And the free parking in Las Vegas is unique (compared to) other large cities — that is a huge savings for people. Las Vegas has generated a lot of enthusiasm for our conference this year.”

Held for the first time in Las Vegas, EAGALA’s 13th Annual Conference attracted more than 500 attendees from 40 countries, the event’s highest attendance ever.

Thomas explains why her association chose South Point. “Our conference requires specific facility logistics, namely we need an equestrian arena, conference center and hotel which can accommodate our size and be near each other. When we found out about the South Point Casino, we were very excited — this is the only facility in the U.S. which has all three of these needs under one roof. It’s as if they built South Point just for EAGALA.”

South Point offers 71,000 sf of conference space, an 80,000-sf column-free pavilion and 22,000-sf ballroom. There are 2,163 accommodations, with spacious standard guest rooms measuring 500 sf. South Point also has a 64-lane bowling center, a 16-screen movie theater and, most important for EAGALA, a 4,600-seat equestrian arena and 1,200 climate-controlled horse stalls.

“On top of that, we were very pleased with the rates South Point offers — with its rooms, food and diverse in-house entertainment,” she adds. “Not only is South Point affordable, but it’s beautiful. The rooms are very spacious, nice and clean. The equestrian center and conference center are beautiful. We have had the opportunity to eat at most of the restaurants in the casino and all have had good food at good prices. South Point is also very easy to get to — within 15 minutes of the airport and right off the I-15 exit. Its location alone makes it one of the most convenient facilities we have used. We are looking forward to having a very successful conference at South Point.”

THE RIGHT FIT

Lynn Twaddle, executive director for the Nevada Surplus Lines Association, wanted a facility that would be the right fit for her organization’s Law Group 2012 Spring Meeting for approximately 60 attendees. The Westin Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa fit the bill.

“It’s a smaller facility,” she explains. “This is a professional group,



Photos p. 28 and 29 by Oscar Elniza Photography for HIMSS

Looks like an Elvis sighting at the opening reception for HIMSS12, held in February at the Venetian/Palazzo and Sands Expo in Las Vegas.



Lynn Thomas
Executive Director
Equine Assisted Growth and
Learning Association
Santaquin, UT

“We need an equestrian arena, conference center and hotel which can accommodate our size and be near each other. ...It’s as if they built South Point just for EAGALA.”

so it’s more of a business meeting than a social meeting, and The Westin is more conducive to what we’re doing. We’re not doing entertainment. We’re not doing a full-fledged convention. It’s a small group, and they have all the access to the equipment that we need for a meeting this size. It’s a smaller, professional-type facility to have a meeting in.” The 826-room Westin is located just off The Strip and near the Las Vegas Monorail, which travels to the Las Vegas Convention Center. It has 20,000 sf of event space divided into 15 meeting rooms, including two ballrooms.

Another option for smaller association meetings that distinguishes itself in the mega-resort-mecca of Las Vegas is New York-New York Hotel & Casino. The hotel offers more than 21,000 sf of meeting space and 2,024 guest rooms, including 104 suites. The meeting rooms pay homage to the city that inspired them with



The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association hosted its 2012 Annual Conference at South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa, which boasts Las Vegas’ only equestrian arena.

names such as Staten Island, Tribeca, Union Square, Central Park and the Brooklyn Bridge. Better yet, actual replicas of the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Empire State Building serve as unique venues, offering space for meetings and receptions.

HIGH-TECH TOUCHES

Attendees hailing a cab in Las Vegas may find themselves in one of the 1,000 taxis now outfitted with a new interactive network showcasing the Wynn properties: Wynn Las Vegas and the

adjacent Encore. The touch-screen, GPS-driven technology provides real-time, location-based messaging and information. One thing a passenger might learn is that the Tower Suites and spas at Wynn Las Vegas and Encore were recently awarded five-star ratings from the Forbes Travel Guide. Wynn Las Vegas features 2,716 newly renovated guest rooms and suites, 15 restaurants, a nightclub, 18 holes of golf onsite, The Spa at Wynn, 223,000 sf of meeting space, 74,000 sf of retail space, a casino and a Ferrari and Maserati dealership. Encore showcases 2,034 suites, 60,000 sf of meeting space, six restaurants, a casino, two nightclubs, The Spa at Encore, and 27,000 sf of upscale retail outlets in the Encore Esplanade, which is undergoing a renovation through 2012.

Aria Resort & Casino, a AAA Five Diamond resort offers approximately 300,000 sf of meeting space in one of the most technologically advanced buildings in the world. The resort offers videoconferencing capabilities, 7,500 strands of fiber optic cable that enable live TV broadcasts, built-in plasma TVs and HD projection screens in the meeting rooms, and a concert-quality sound system. Planners are given a key code to access the Crestron Control Panels in the meeting rooms so they can control music, lighting, cable TV and DirectTV. Or, they can use a remote touch panel to access the controls wirelessly.

MGM Grand is the first hotel in Las Vegas to feature an interactive video wall in the grand lobby. The wall, made up of three 16-screen sections measuring 16 x 9 feet, streams a live Twitter feed for any guests on or off property who use the @MGMVideoWall handle. Real-time hotel feedback, chatter, polls, contests and more are on display 24/7.

All of MGM Resorts International’s Las Vegas properties — MGM Grand, Aria, Bellagio, Mandalay Bay, The Mirage, Monte Carlo, New York-New York, Luxor, Excalibur and Circus Circus — offer free smartphone apps with detailed, up-to-the-minute property information as well as passcode-protected options for meeting planners to send news, updated meeting schedules, event registration and other meeting-specific information to attendees.

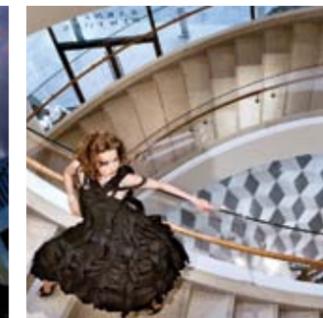
In addition, MGM Resorts International launched Passkey’s GroupMAX booking technology across its Las Vegas hotels last summer. The system’s booking website allows guests to make their reservations from any Web browser or mobile device, while meeting planners can access critical data from live dashboards. Reservations via GroupMAX booking websites directly transfer to MGM Resorts’ internal reservation system.

MOB SCENE

One of the city’s more “notorious” venues, the Las Vegas Mob Museum, opened downtown on February 14th, the 83rd anniversary of the St. Valentine’s Day massacre in Chicago. Housed in a former federal building from the Hoover era, the museum is filled with interactive exhibits on the history of the mob. It presents both sides of the story, from the mob’s side and from the side



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What's New

No matter how many times a group meets in Las Vegas, there's always something new to see and do:

The Las Vegas Convention Center is expanding free Wi-Fi service to include all public areas; and a permanent digital signage network was installed in January. The convention center's \$890 million expansion plan, put on hold during the recession, may soon be back on track. "We are anticipating going back to our board of directors later this spring or early this summer to review our options to reconsider our expansion plan," says Terry Jicinsky, senior vice president of operations for the LVCVA.

Caesars Palace recently opened its 668-room Octavius Tower, for a new total of 3,960 guest rooms. Debuting in 2013 across from Caesars Palace will be The Linq, a 200,000-sf retail, dining, entertainment and hospitality district featuring the world's tallest observation wheel — The Las Vegas High Roller — with cabins that offer service and food for up to 40 people.

Flamingo Las Vegas is currently remodeling two-thirds of its 3,500 hotel rooms as part of a \$10 million rebranding and renovation project expected to be completed this spring.

MGM Grand Las Vegas is remodeling all 3,570 guest rooms and 642 suites in its main tower. As of February, more than 1,200 of the redesigned rooms were open, with the rest of the rooms to be updated by September. The AAA Four Diamond MGM Grand is incorporating smart sustainability into its ongoing guest room renovation in the main tower with LED lighting; improved thermostats and solar shades; upgraded faucets and showers; and 100 percent biodegradable bath amenities. In all, MGM Grand offers 5,044 guest



M Resort Spa and Casino recently debuted LUX, a new special event space on the 16th floor, offering sweeping views of the Las Vegas Valley and Strip.

rooms and 600,000 sf of meeting space including the 92,000-sf Marquee Ballroom and the 16,800-seat Grand Garden Arena.

M Resort Spa Casino recently introduced an additional 25,000 sf of meeting space known as the "M Pavilion," bringing the property's total meeting space to 92,000 sf. M Resort also recently debuted LUX, a 7,200-sf special event suite on the 16th floor with an outdoor terrace featuring a fireplace and views of the Las Vegas Valley (see photo above).

Bellagio recently completed a \$70 million remodel of all 2,568 rooms in its main tower. The new Hyde Bellagio is a 12,000-sf indoor/outdoor event space overlooking the mesmerizing Fountains of Bellagio.

In January, the Las Vegas Hilton was rebranded and is now known as the **LVH Las Vegas**. The rebranding included the launch of a new website, www.thelvh.com.

The Lake Las Vegas community in Henderson has welcomed two new properties: The 359-room **Ravella at Lake Las Vegas** (39,000 sf of meeting space) debuted in February last year; and the former Loews Lake Las Vegas Resort was converted to **The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort and Spa** and reopened in March after a \$4 million renovation. The Westin has 493 accommodations, and more than 94,000 sf of meeting and banquet space.

The new **Smith Center for the Performing Arts** opened in downtown

Las Vegas in March with three theaters, including the 2,050-seat Reynolds Hall.

More signs of the downtown's resurgence will be the opening in 2013 of Fifth Street Gaming's 650-room **Downtown Grand Casino and Hotel** on the site of the former Lady Luck Hotel & Casino, next to the Mob Museum. The hotel is part of Fifth Street Gaming's Downtown3rd redevelopment project, which also will comprise four blocks of meeting space, retail, a lifestyle center and more. Also debuting downtown will be the expansion of Las Vegas' original casino founded in 1906, **The Golden Gate Hotel & Casino**, which is adding a five-story luxury tower to be completed in July.

In entertainment news, the hit show Blue Man Group is moving to the **Monte Carlo** hotel in the fall. It currently runs at The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino.

Aria Resort & Casino announced that a new Cirque du Soleil show "Zarkana" will preview this October and open at the resort in November, replacing the "Viva Elvis" show, which ends in August.

Set to open in December 2012 at **MGM Grand** is the new nightclub Hakkasan Las Vegas, which replaces Studio 54.

Music legend Carlos Santana has signed on for a two-year run at the House of Blues at **Mandalay Bay**. His performances at the newly reconfigured venue will begin in May. — KB

of the law. The venue is available for private events. "It could be pretty much anything from a cocktail reception to a buyout where they could have one part of the dinner on each floor," explains Mike Doria, spokesman for the museum. "They could start out with cocktails and eat in the courthouse and kind of work their way down to the first floor for dessert. We can hold anywhere

from 50 people to 500. It's not your typical meeting space," he adds.

With its choice of 150,000 hotel rooms and millions of sf of exhibit space, Las Vegas is well-equipped to accommodate any type of group. "Las Vegas is unique in that it has such diversity in what it offers," Thomas says. "I think any conference could find the size and type of meeting area to meet its needs perfectly." AC&F

Photo courtesy of M Resort Spa and Casino



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ROMELLO

Hilton Worldwide has announced the appointment of **Sherry Romello** as senior director, Hilton meetings and product management. She joined Hilton Worldwide from the National Association of Convenience Stores, where she held the position of vice president, meetings and conventions.

Visit Charlotte, the sales arm of the Charlotte (NC) Regional Visitors Authority has named **Ned Blair** as national sales manager. He formerly served as tourism development leader for meetings and conventions for the Delaware Tourism Office.

The Albuquerque (NM) Convention and Visitors Bureau has named **Tom Caradonio** as senior director of sales. Most recently, Caradonio spent 13 years as the president and CEO of the Northern Kentucky Convention & Visitors Bureau. **Serena Sullivan**



BLAIR



CARADONIO



BOHDE

was promoted to national sales manager for the Southeastern U.S. territory and SMERF market. She most recently served as the ACVB sales support manager.

The Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Bill Bohde** as senior vice president, sales and marketing. Bohde, who brings 39 years of hospitality sales and marketing experience to his new role, was most recently vice president, convention sales, at the Kansas City (MO) Convention & Visitors Association.

Positively Cleveland has named **Michael Burns** as senior vice president of convention sales and services. He previously spent 22 years with Conferon (now Experient) in a variety of account management and leadership roles. AC&F



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