

ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER
2012

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

Finding the Perfect Match

Connecting Attendees and Exhibitors for Maximum Engagement

PAGE 16



Photo courtesy of IMEX America



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THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

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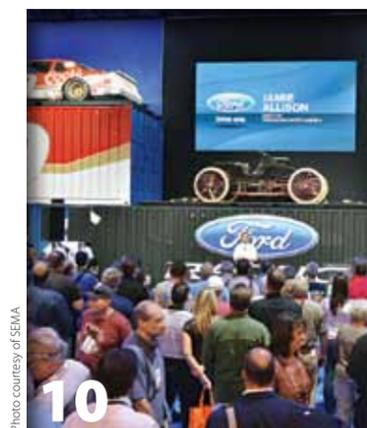


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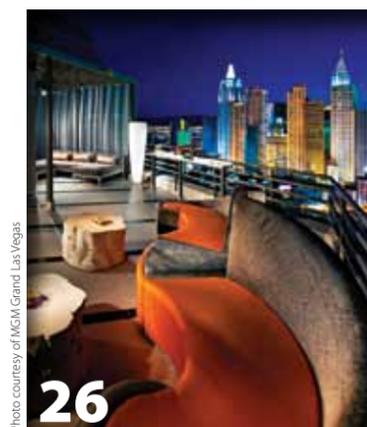


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On the Cover: The busy show floor at the second edition of IMEX America held October 9–11 in Las Vegas at Sands Expo. This year, 2,413 individual exhibitors showcased their destinations, venues, products and services at the trade show, which boasted 1,700 attendees.

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The Right Connections



Halls C and D at the Sands Expo were positively overflowing for the second edition of IMEX America in Las Vegas October 9-11. Our cover photo reflects the brisk business that took place, as 2,400 buyers from 43 global markets — 20 percent more than last year — and more than 2,400 exhibiting companies engaged and connected. The basis for any successful show, notes PCMA President and CEO Deborah Sexton in our story "A Good Marriage" on page 16, is matching the right attendees to the right exhibitors: "You just have to do the things you need to do to ensure that everyone who wants to connect can," she says. And for good reason: According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research's study "The Role and Value of Face-to-Face Interaction," 48 percent of attendees surveyed noted that face-to-face interactions experienced at exhibitions are "more valuable today than two years ago, and 43 percent anticipate this setting will be more valuable looking out to the next two years. No other face-to-face interaction alternative comes close to these results." IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom said that the number of exhibitor events at IMEX America doubled over last year, adding, "Many more of them have expanded in the way in which they're presenting themselves to the market. They're really enhancing their presence and communicating the flavor of their brands and destinations."

Half the battle for planners who work hard to cultivate attendee-exhibitor engagement is choosing engaging destinations, such as Las Vegas and Florida (see stories on pages 20 and 26). Indeed, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority says that attendance spikes 15 percent when shows rotate into Las Vegas. The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) is a case in point. The SEMA Show, which attracts 130,000 attendees to Las Vegas every year, just recently renewed its commitment to the city through 2017.

The other half of the battle is employing all the tools at your disposal to foster successful attendee-exhibitor connections and relationships once they arrive at the show, from pre-set appointments to speed networking to show-floor conversation and learning lounges to cutting-edge mobile applications to social media and more. Making mutually beneficial connections, after all, is everyone's goal. Vicki Hawarden, CMP, president and CEO of the International Association of Venue Managers tells us in her column on page 8, "It is our task as presenters to find ways to engage our audiences, harness their energy, and give them a voice to ensure the best experience for their investment of time and money."

Harvey Grotzky
Publisher

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WEBSITE

www.themeetingmagazines.com

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Harvey Grotzky
cccpublisher@att.net

GROUP PUBLISHER

Arthur Hyman
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Mitch D. Miller
cccrtdirector@att.net

MANAGING EDITORS

Susan W. Fell
ccceditor1@att.net

Susan S. Gregg
ccceditor2@att.net

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Karen Brost
John Buchanan
Stella Johnson
Derek Reveron
George Seli

PRESIDENT & CEO

Harvey Grotzky

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

David A. Middlebrook
cccoperations@att.net

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394
561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509

NORTHEAST

Jeffrey Posner
516-594-2820 • Fax: 516-594-2826
prjjeff@aol.com

FLORIDA/CARIBBEAN

Arthur Hyman
561-989-0600, ext. 108 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

MIDWEST/SOUTHWEST/SOUTHEAST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

LOUISIANA/TEXAS

Arthur Hyman
561-989-0600, ext. 108 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

WEST

Marshall Rubin
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907
mrubin@westworld.com

HAWAII

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
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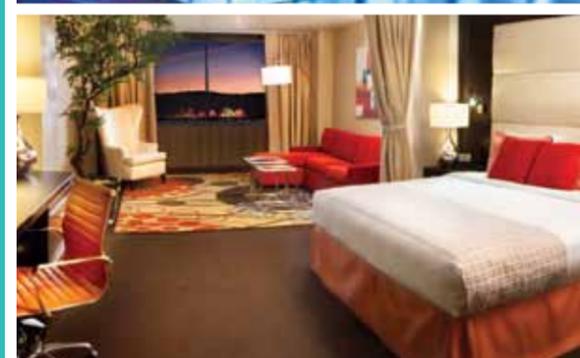
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The Westin New York Grand Central Debuts

NEW YORK, NY — The Westin New York Grand Central recently celebrated its grand opening. The former New York Helmsley Hotel features a complete re-design of the hotel's interior including 774 guest rooms. With more than 12,000 sf of renovated meeting space, including four new breakout rooms and an expanded 4,100-sf ballroom, the meeting space accommodates up to 450 guests.

"This is a great day for Westin Hotels and Starwood — some of the biggest names in our city's growing hospitality industry," said New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, who cut the ribbon to open The Westin New York Grand Central. "Even when New York City was struggling to recover from the last national recession, Starwood was very bullish about our future. Their investments here have turned out to be smart ones, because a record number of tourists are flocking to New York City, and now this renovation gives them one more reason to visit." www.westin.com



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg (center) cuts the ribbon for the grand opening of The Westin New York Grand Central with Brian Povinelli, global brand leader for Westin Hotels and the hotel's General Manager Ed Maynard.

Business Wire

KSL Resorts Highlights Association Meeting Trends

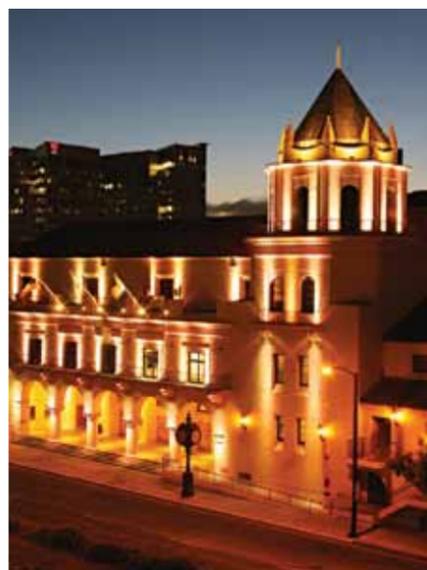
HOT SPRINGS, VA — KSL Resorts hosted an Association Customer Advisory Board meeting at The Homestead Resort & Spa in Hot Springs, VA (see photo 4 opposite). Michael Erickson, vice president of sales for KSL Resorts, said the goal of the meeting was to serve as a "strategic think tank for association planners." Key takeaways include: association markets are aiming to do more with less; organizations should offer customized solutions based on specific client needs; social media is a valuable marketing tool; personal and trusted relationships, as well as peer-to-peer references, are highly valued; national sales representatives who develop deep relationships with planners make a difference in the RFP process; transparency in all costs; and Internet is expected to be free in meeting and guest rooms. www.kslresorts.com

New Convention Center Hotel for Houston

HOUSTON, TX — Houston First Corporation has selected Rida Development Corporation to enter into exclusive negotiations to build a 1,000-room convention center hotel attached via a skybridge to the George R. Brown Convention Center. Houston First manages the George R. Brown Convention Center and owns the Hilton Americas-Houston. "This new convention center hotel will increase our convention business and bring new energy to the city's convention district," said Ric Campo, chairman of Houston First Corporation. "The hotel will bring significant sales resources for the convention market and will be a welcome addition to the Houston sales teams." The George R. Brown Convention Center ranks among the 10 largest facilities in the U.S. with nearly 1.2 million sf of exhibition, meeting and registration space. www.houstonfirst.com, www.houstonconventionctr.com

San Jose Civic Celebrates Grand Opening

SAN JOSE, CA — After four years under construction, the San Jose Civic, a city landmark and historic theater venue, officially re-opened October 5 with a ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony (see photo 5 opposite). "For more than 70 years, the Civic has hosted countless legendary performances that have contributed to the vibrancy of our downtown," said Mayor Chuck Reed. "Renovating this historic auditorium into a 21st century, state-of-the-art venue will help us attract world-class shows and concerts that draw thousands of people to Downtown San Jose." Renovations include new lighting and sound package, new exterior lighting, new concessions, addition of ADA-accessible elevator shared with the Montgomery Theater, new security system, new heating system and seismic upgrades. "The San Jose Civic is officially back to entertain the Bay Area" said Bill Sherry, CEO of Team San Jose, "We are grateful for the city's vision and the capital investment needed to deliver a concert venue that will put San Jose center stage for live music and special events." www.sanjosecivic.com



San Jose Civic



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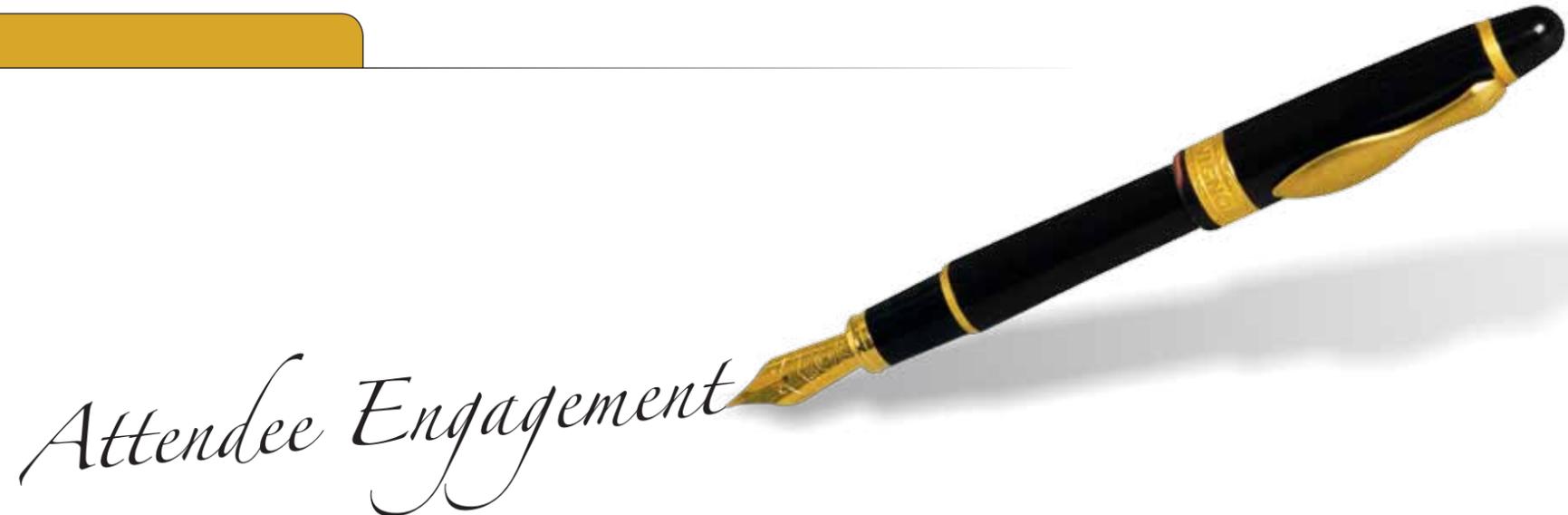
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Photo credits: 1 & 2: IMEX America; 3: Las Vegas CVA; 4: KSL Resorts; 5: Team San Jose; 6: The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre; 7: Visit Winston-Salem

1 Attendees await the opening of IMEX America 2012, which held a successful second edition at the Sands Expo, Las Vegas. 2 Attendees gather at the ICCA Member Networking Reception at IMEX America. 3 Sema and MAGIC extended their leases at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Pictured at the announcement are (l to r): Tom Collins, Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Association (LVCVA) chairman of the board; Chris Kersting, president and CEO, Sema; Chris Meyer, V.P. of sales, LVCVA; Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO, LVCVA; and Tony Calanca, E.V.P. of exhibitions, Advanstar (MAGIC). 4 The KSL Association Customer Advisory Board met for the first time at the Homestead, Hot Springs, VA, for a "strategic think tank." Pictured are: (front) Sheila Deringis, Cynthia McDowell, Yolanda DeLara, Esme Pitard, Carol Loughney, Cornelia Horner, Kathleen Cochran; (middle) Kristin Pumphrey, Jane Batson, Sarah Bolm, Michael Erickson, Michelle Malloy, Brooke Naylor; (back) David Kliman, Kevin Phenegar, Peter Faraone, Hunter Clemens and Mike Aylmer. 5 Pictured at the ribbon-cutting of San Jose Civic are (l to r): Debra Figone, Kim Walesh, Lee Wilcox, James Macgregor, Mayor Chuck Reed, Matt Mahood, Sam Liccardo, Bill Sherry, Nancy Pyle, Don Rocha, Alex Hodges, Russ Hancock and Michael Mulcahy. 6 The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre was voted "Best Convention & Exhibition Centre" in the 23rd Annual TTG Travel Awards 2012 by TTG magazine. Pictured (l to r): Martin Craig, CEO of PATA; Bill DiCarlo, deputy managing director of HML; and Michael Chow, publisher, TTG Travel Trade. 7 Winston-Salem hosted more than 350 delegates at the first joint conference of the North Carolina and Virginia Motorcoach Association. Pictured: Richard Geiger, president of Visit Winston-Salem (left) welcomes Linda Morris, director of the North Carolina/Virginia Motorcoach Association and Bob Swenson, Visit Winston-Salem Board of Directors.



Attendee Engagement

Vicki Hawarden



Finding New Ways to Spark Active Learning and Participation

As people around the world increase the virtual connections in their business and personal lives, it is natural to begin to incorporate this same connectivity into other areas that traditionally have been static, one-sided processes. We've seen this situation for decades in educational settings, conferences, meetings, and even in sporting events and performances. You talk, we'll listen. You play, we'll cheer. With the expansion of mobile users, social media and real-time communication, the barrier between presenter and passive participant is being dropped. Active learning and participation is expected and embraced by a new generation of mobile users. It is our task as presenters to find ways to engage our audiences, harness their energy, and give them a voice to ensure the best experience for their investment of time and money.

In July, the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) took a huge step into the interactive arena. More than 500 participants downloaded the VenueConnect 2012 conference app out of 680 full registrants as well as trade show personnel. In addition to the app, we incorporated other engagement opportunities. Attendees live-tweeted during sessions using #VC12, Twitter feeds were displayed on digital boards, and the association launched its first Tumblr page, IAVMLive, displaying real-time trending presentations, images and hot topics. IAVM also partnered with Freeman and Prism Technologies to deploy navigation kiosks with interactive 3-D maps, search engines, facility information and schedules. More than 5,600 impressions were recorded, including searches for trade show exhibitors and information requests.

Our social media maven, Kayla McKinley, said, "It was a great first step towards engaging our attendees and acclimat-

ing them to leaving the printed schedule in their room in favor of dynamic mobile devices." Using an app also allows us to modify information quickly and affords our organization a more sustainable and potentially less expensive alternative to printed communications. In the coming months IAVM's sector meetings will move away from printed materials — saving money, expanding attendee engagement and streamlining their experience.

So what else is on the attendee engagement horizon? Hybrid events are getting bigger buzz. IAVM hosted its first successful hybrid conference for stadium members in May. We brought together more than 90 venue managers and staff from Cowboys Stadium, the Georgia Dome, University of Phoenix Stadium, the Amway Center in Orlando, Reliant Stadium in Houston, Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis and Ford Field in Detroit. Hybrid events let members avoid lengthy absences from their venue and costly travel while still participating in a very dynamic conference. Yet research is showing that attendees may still prefer and get more out of in-person events, where they can feel the energy, network with colleagues, and interact without interruption from their usual work demands.

It's not just conferences engaging audiences. Our venues are adopting these strategies as well. Venues are bringing huge data lines into their infrastructures to allow audiences the opportunity to interact electronically without bandwidth issue or delays. In fact, AT&T Ballpark, home to the San Francisco Giants, recently announced that they will provide their data-hungry fans with 4G speed inside their stadium. The State Fair of Texas uses Big Tex, a 52-foot-tall cowboy

figure to welcome more than 2 million visitors with tweets throughout the 24-day event. The Ohio State Fair has a cow carved from 6,200 sticks of butter that will be tweeting to fairgoers. The band One Direction reads fan tweets from stage during concerts. Dynamic signage and high-resolution video boards are pushing out real-time conversations, stadium

tion experiences I realized something: We are all expert presenters in one way or another. We all have something to contribute and are smarter and more creative en masse than we are alone. As a collective we can solve problems, invent new tools, avoid missteps, and discover new perspectives. Our human interaction and mass-intelligence span our personal

It is our task as presenters to find ways to engage our audiences, harness their energy, and give them a voice to ensure the best experience for their investment of time and money.

apps are allowing fans to order food and beverages and engage on a more personal level with their teams.

For IAVM, as an organization dedicated to providing members with the latest tools to be more successful in their careers, it is our goal to create active learning and participation situations allowing members to develop their own curriculum to feed personal goals. The challenge is to find ways to create multi-dimensional concurrent curriculum. How does a presenter feed the minds of 40 or more individuals simultaneously with rich material tailored to their personal quest for knowledge? That truly is the million-dollar question. I hope someone can tweet the answer in 140 characters or less.

I had a bit of an epiphany sitting in an ASAE conference session on innovation. As the audience tweeted their innova-

gaps in understanding. Given how much the human species has accomplished thus far, I can't imagine what's in store for us now that we can collaborate, share and engage with one another practically anywhere, any time. The social revolution has just begun... stay tuned and feel free to tweet me your ideas at @VHawarden.

Vicki Hawarden, CMP, has been the president and CEO of the International Association of Venue Managers since August 2011. She has been leading the organization through a restructure, and this past July the association reached an all-time high of 3,800 members worldwide. Earning a degree in journalism from University of Oklahoma, she has more than 20 years in the association business. Prior to coming onboard with IAVM, Hawarden was the V.P. of Knowledge and Events with MPI. www.IAVM.org, 972-906-7441.

Citywide Success

Strong Partnerships Are the Key

By Karen Brost

Planning a meeting that can be contained within a single venue can be challenging enough. But when your event draws so many attendees that it requires a major convention facility and multiple hotels, it adds a level of complexity that takes some serious planning skills to handle. So we asked a few planners to share their best strategies for planning successful citywide meetings.

DECIDING ON A DESTINATION

Debbie Kaylor, executive director, convention and meetings for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), plans an annual convention and trade show that draws approximately 8,000 attendees. "For a convention our size, we should be booked a minimum of 10 years out," she explains. "And then one year out is when you really start hitting it hard."

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association held their 2012 meeting at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, where the association experienced a considerable boost in attendance. "Nashville always draws," says NCBA Executive Director of Conventions and Meetings Debbie Kaylor.



Photo courtesy of National Cattlemen's Beef Association

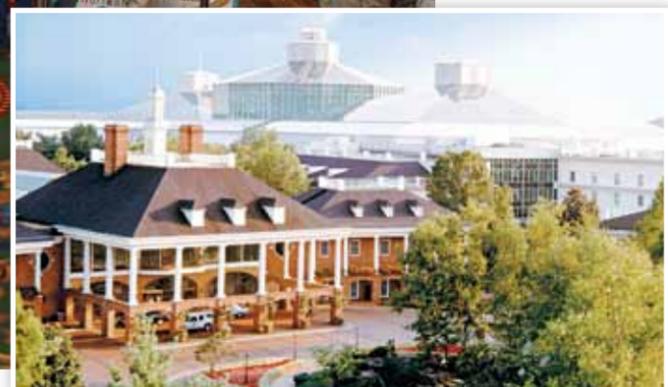


Photo courtesy of Gaylord Opryland

Spectators view hundreds of custom vehicles during last year's SEMA Show in Las Vegas. SEMA has been held in Las Vegas since 1977 and will continue its premiere automotive specialty product show in Las Vegas through 2017 as part of a recent contract extension. The show attracts 130,000 attendees.



Photo courtesy of SEMA



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas CVA

the events you wanted to attend. Now, we have one registration fee and it includes all of these events. It includes two lunches in the trade show. It includes our 'Best of Beef' breakfast. It includes a Thursday night 'Y'all come' party and a Friday night event with big name entertainment." For that event, NCBA bought out the Grand Ole Opry. "We worked with them in selecting some key entertainers that we knew our people would enjoy. We had Charlie Pride, the Oak Ridge Boys, Josh Turner and a couple of other acts.

She says that when choosing a destination, her organization stays away from labor cities and that climate is an important consideration because her group meets in February. "We want to meet in the sunbelt because it's the one time of year where our members can get off the ranch, so we want it to be somewhere warm, where they'll say, 'Yeah, I want to go!'"

"We're trying to make it more of a destination," she continues. "That, plus the culmination of what we try to do at the convention, with great speakers and great entertainment, all of that bundled together makes a great experience for our attendees."

Her group's 2012 meeting was held at the 2,881-room Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville. "It's just one of those cities that really has some character to it," she notes. "With it being the country music birthplace, our people really, really relate to Nashville and really like it." For overflow accommodations, NCBA used the Radisson Hotel at Opryland and Hyatt Place Nashville/Opryland.

Next year, NCBA will hold its annual meeting in Tampa and will benefit from recent improvements made to the city to prepare for the Republican National Convention last August. "Any time you follow a big event like that, whether it's a Super Bowl or anything like that, you obviously reap the rewards of that because the city gets all spruced up, from the airport all the way to the hotel and convention center," Kaylor notes. "We're a beneficiary of that, which is nice."

Kaylor says that her Nashville event experienced a considerable boost in attendance, and she explained why. "About three or four years ago, we kind of reinvented our convention where we put some fun back in it. We try to make sure we've got the major four elements of our convention: the business, the education, the networking and the fun. We try to make sure we've got each of those elements every day, and we're trying to live up to the expectation of making it a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We started that in 2010. I think some of that (explains the increase in attendance), plus the fact that Nashville always draws."

STAYING IN ONE PLACE

Sometimes, a single destination is all an association needs. The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), which draws 130,000 attendees, has been meeting in Las Vegas since 1977.

Kaylor describes another factor that made a difference. "We totally changed our registration structure. It used to be à la carte. You paid a registration fee and then you just paid for all of

"There was quite a bit of controversy (at the time) because Las Vegas was not known to be a convention city," notes Peter MacGillivray, vice president, events and communications for SEMA. "But the leadership that was in place at the time decided that it would be the best home for our show, and they stood their



Debbie Kaylor
Executive Director
Conventions and Meetings
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Centennial, CO

“We’re trying to make it more of a destination. That, plus the culmination of what we try to do at the convention, with great speakers and great entertainment...makes a great experience for our attendees.”

ground. Now, of course, we benefit from being there because it is an attraction. It is part of the value proposition when you have a show in Vegas, and we experience a benefit as a result of that.”

The SEMA show is held at the Las Vegas Convention Center, and the group utilizes more than two dozen hotels. “We use Travel Planners as our housing agent,” MacGillivray explains. “But certainly, we work with the convention authority and other stakeholders. We also have very good relationships with the hotels directly. We really take a holistic approach to the event. We view all of our partners as stakeholders. That’s been useful in the last several years when the economy has been what it was, because really, we leaned on all of our partners to help us create heightened value for the event and for our customers to keep it successful.”

He explained how important it is to get to know all of the stakeholders personally so that they really understand the event. “The SEMA show is the largest annual gathering of small business in America, but if you look at it from the surface, you could misunderstand our customers. While we represent some of the largest corporations in the world, the heart and soul of our organization are small businesses. As a result, their ability to invest a lot of money in something like a trade show is pretty limited. So it’s important for our vendors to understand the nature of our customers, of our exhibitors and our attendees. Once the suppliers, the hotels and the city understood who our core customers are, the better they were at making sure that the value was delivered to those customers. As a result, we all did better business at the end of the day.”

MacGillivray further elaborated on why it’s so important to communicate directly with stakeholders. “Once you start delegating too much, too many assumptions are made.” Otherwise, he notes, in the case of his show, stakeholders might have the tendency to think. “Wow, huge show, big dollars. Let’s take advantage of that.” “That’s not the case,” he says. “These are small mom and pops that are extremely price sensitive.”

To foster communications among stakeholders, SEMA hosts an exhibitors’ summit six to eight months before the convention.

“We invite all of the stakeholders in the city and even outside of the city to join us in this education for our exhibitors. It’s really about training these small companies in the best practices of a trade show, and there’s no better place to do that than in the venue that you have. Over the years, we’ve tried to do it different ways with webinars and different educational channels. Really, the best way has been to find a day or two on the calendar and bring in as many people as possible and get in front of them face-to-face and communicate that way. We have capacity for 200 exhibitors to attend it, and the first 200 that sign up get to come and spend that time with us. We wish we had the capacity for more. They pay for their airfare, and we put them up in hotels.”

OVERFLOW HOUSING

One factor that all citywides have in common is that they require multiple hotels to accommodate their large numbers of attendees. “It’s important for us to identify solutions for budget business travelers and to promote those pretty heavily,” MacGillivray notes. “The notion of the \$100 hotel room and our ability to promote it is really important.”

Susan McSorley is director of convention and meeting services for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS). Her organization’s 2012 annual meeting was held at the Moscone Center in San Francisco and attracted more than 32,000 attendees. To meet its housing demand, the group used 62 hotels.



Susan McSorley
Director of Convention
and Meeting Services
American Academy of
Orthopaedic Surgeons
Rosemont, IL

“We wanted everything we could possibly get close to the convention center since it’s a walking city. We also wanted all price points because...we have a lot of different folks coming.”

“We wanted everything we could possibly get close to the convention center since it’s a walking city,” she explains. “We also wanted all price points because we have orthopedic surgeons, we have internationals, we have residents and we have allied health (professionals). We have a lot of different folks coming.”

McSorley stresses the importance of having good hotel partners who are willing to provide room blocks at the price points needed to drive attendees to the destination. “We also take into consideration transportation — how many taxis there

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons chose San Francisco’s Moscone Center (inset) for their 2012 annual meeting, which attracted 32,000 attendees. AAOS Director of Convention and Meeting Services Susan McSorley notes, “We look at (the CVB) as our partner to help educate our attendees about the city. We want them to engage in the city, understand how things are laid out.”



Photo courtesy of AAOS

are in a city, flight availability and the distance to and from on the shuttle.”

That begs the question: How do you organize shuttles when you’re using 62 hotels? “We identify what is considered a walking hotel,” McSorley explains. “If we think it’s walkable, we wouldn’t put a shuttle on it. In San Francisco, for the hotels around the convention center, we wouldn’t put a shuttle, but anything up by Union Square and areas like that, we absolutely would.”

GUARDING AGAINST GATE CRASHERS

Kaylor has a strategy for keeping suppliers from benefiting from the show without investing in it. “We usually get an all-hold on the space at the headquarters because we have a lot of ‘ICWs,’ which are ‘in conjunction with.’ Any of our states or our exhibitors could have meetings at the convention. We keep really tight controls over that so we know who is meeting and when. They have to go through us when requesting a meeting, so (a non-exhibitor) can’t go directly to the hotel and arrange a room drop or a banner. What you try to avoid are companies that aren’t going to exhibit at your trade show, and they’re still trying to reach your attendees by having a party in their suite. We don’t allow anybody to reserve a suite unless we approve it.”

ADDRESSING ATTRITION

Kaylor also describes a few of the strategies her organization uses to offset attrition. “One, we publish a cutoff date that’s a week before the actual cutoff day. That way, if somebody’s going to drop a room on you, you have a week to resell it. The other thing that we do is we really promote the fact that if you cancel your room after the published cutoff, you lose your first night’s room and tax. There’s an incentive right there. If you’re going to have to cancel and you know in advance, cancel it and then we



Photo courtesy of San Francisco Travel

can resell the room. Anything that’s collected because of canceled reservations after the cutoff date helps go toward any attrition fees that we may owe.”

WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL ATTENDEES

One way that SEMA has increased its attendance figures is by welcoming attendees from other countries. “We are expanding our attendee base in international markets, and we’ve had to represent our venue as friendly to international business visitors,” MacGillivray states. “We’re trying to make it as attractive and as user-friendly as possible, so we do special outreach to international visitors so they feel like they’re not going to be just thrown into a big event and feel kind of helpless. We’re constantly promoting additional resources for international visitors, and as a result, we’ve enjoyed some nice growth in international participation on an attendee basis. Exhibitors love buyers regardless of where they’re from, and so that’s been helpful during challenging economic times to bring buyers in from places that aren’t going through the same kind of turmoil in their economy as we are.”

He shared an example. “Places like Brazil didn’t experience quite the downturn that the rest of us did, so it was helpful for

those Brazilian folks to attend the show. Our exhibitors benefited from that.”

MacGillivray describes some of the steps SEMA takes to make sure international visitors feel welcome. “It’s having business services that they can identify and feel comfortable using, if that means interpreters or just an international resource center with support staff that’s comfortable and fluent working with



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

“Once the suppliers, the hotels and the city understood who our core customers are, the better they were at making sure that the value was delivered to those customers.”

international travelers. It’s also making sure they get a good overview of different restaurants and different hotels. We’ve got some international travelers, for example, where they’ll take over and create their own host hotel, so they’ve got a bit of community that’s there with them. It’s common sense type stuff, but it’s really just giving them a comfort level in participating.”

GETTING THE WORD OUT

When you have thousands of attendees to worry about, communication is key, and technology can go a long way toward keeping everyone up-to-date on what’s going on. For AAOS, 2013 will mark the third year that the organization is using a mobile app for its annual meeting. “It’s just great,” McSorley states. “We’re making it more and more comprehensive every year. For the 2012 meeting, we added links to it so you can download handouts. You can get evaluations right off of the app. You also had links to our live streaming and on-demand video sessions, part of our virtual meeting component.

“You also have the scheduler on there,” she continues. “You have the mapping functions as to where exhibitors are located on the floor. You have all of the committee meetings and affiliate events listed on the app. You have the abstract on the app. People are just expecting it. You expect to have an app with everything at your fingertips. We also used quite a bit of QR codes to help direct folks to different areas.”

She mentioned additional points to consider when employing new technology. “For the Wi-Fi in these convention centers, we have to certainly supplement it in order to get the coverage we need for all of the downloads and app usage. Also, she notes,

“It is our understanding that BlackBerrys are very large in the international community. We have to make sure everything works on all these different devices.” She adds that another factor to remember is that not all attendees have smartphones.

PARTNERING WITH CVBS

The planners we interviewed agreed that CVBs are an important ally when planning citywide meetings. “We have always used the convention and visitors bureau housing (services),” Kaylor notes. “We have always had great service from them and great luck with them. We think it’s an advantage to use the CVB housing because they have established relationships with all the hotels. So if you ever need to adjust your off-peak nights on your front end or the back end, all they’ve got to do in order to sell out our peak night is call the group reservations manager and say ‘Can I get 20 more rooms on Tuesday night?’ To us, that’s kind of a win-win, because they have those relationships already established.”

McSorley also works closely with CVBs. “We look at them as our partner to help educate our attendees about the city. We want them to engage in the city, understand how things are laid out. Where’s the convention center? Where are restaurants? Where is entertainment? What about museums? We’re doing a mini-site on our annual meeting website that allows attendees to explore the destination prior to getting there.

“We also have a welcome program that we do for our attendees and we certainly ask the CVB to participate, as well. We do banners that welcome folks at the airport, we do signage in hotels, things like that.”

AVOIDING THE LAST-MINUTE RUSH

Kaylor is a big believer in getting her specs to the convention center early. “We submit them a minimum of 30 days out, and they are very, very detailed. It certainly lets your suppliers know what you’re planning, what your requirements are and what your expectations are. Then they’re not jumping through hoops by having a lot of last-minute stuff dropped on them and having to do that instead of the successful execution of your meeting. We also try to keep onsite changes to a very minimum.”

EXPERIENCE COUNTS

“A lot of meeting planning is on-the-job training,” Kaylor sums up. “You’re always tweaking things, doing things a little bit different and a little bit better. Knowing your audience really helps, knowing the demographics of your members and what they like and don’t like.”

As MacGillivray notes, some elements of citywide meetings need to be planned several years out. “It’s like steering an aircraft carrier,” he explains. “You can’t make any sudden moves. You’ve got to anticipate things years in advance.”

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Connect Attendees and Exhibitors for Maximum Engagement and Major Success

By John Buchanan

Making sure that attendees and exhibitors engage one another at a trade show has never been more important than it is today. And that consideration will become even more critical in the near future.

Nowadays exhibitors are looking for a more clearly demonstrable return on investment than ever before because post-re-

cession budgets are tight, and show participation is becoming more selective based on bottom-line results.

"It's no longer a matter of a company booking space at a show and sending a few salespeople," says Phelps Hope, vice president of meetings and expositions at association management firm Kellen Company in Atlanta. "There's more of a purchasing manager's kind of analysis of the show to make sure they'll get the return on investment they're after. That is a significant change in the show industry. And it's being driven by exhibiting companies, not

by show organizers. And if it hasn't touched your show yet, it's coming, so you'd better be prepared for it."

A critical aspect of that preparation, Hope says, is developing a precise and credible value proposition. "You now need to show who's attending your show and who you, as an exhibitor, might get an audience with that you wouldn't necessarily meet at another show in your industry."

Steven Hacker, president and CEO of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) in Dallas, agrees that comparative shopping has become more of a focus for exhibitors. "Overlying everything is a competitive environment that has never been more acute," he says. "You've got competition from different layers of the matrix now. One is that people are just overwhelmed now by messaging that is random and unrelenting — and unmanageable. And that means more and more people are just turning off to those messages."

The practical result: It's harder than ever before to reach attendees and influence their behavior.

But on the other hand, Hacker says, the demands of the current marketplace are crystal clear. "The key issues now are driving value, capitalizing on technology, and engaging in aggressive market research," he says. "Those are the three key issues right now."

However, he says, as someone who has spent his entire career in the association industry, he has concerns about the mentality that is too common in too many organizations. "Especially within the association community," he says, "one of the conclusions I have drawn is that there are too many association trade shows whose management seems to believe that they have some inherent right to survival, that they are legacy events that are bullet-proof to competition. And they could not be more wrong."

The bad news, Hacker says, is that associations that do not recognize the need to do a better job of engaging attendees with exhibitors will see their shows die a painful death. "To survive, associations will have to engage in more and more market research," he says. "They can't take anything for granted anymore."

And their research must become more sophisticated and granular in terms of both attendees and exhibitors if they are to identify new and effective ways to engage those two constituencies.

POPULATION CONTROL

One obvious fundamental issue that will help determine the success or failure of shows is the ratio of attendees to exhibitors, notes Tom Gattuso, trade shows director at the Diamond Bar, CA-based Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), whose mammoth annual Las Vegas exposition draws 130,000 attendees and 2,200 exhibitors each fall.

A lingering impact of the recession and steep downturn in the meeting industry three years ago has been a disproportionate ra-



Hosted buyers and exhibitors exchange information at the highly successful second edition of IMEX America at the Sands Expo, Las Vegas. IMEX America is slated to return to the Sands Expo in October every year through 2015.

tio of exhibitors to attendees at major shows because for many show organizers, attendance still lags behind pre-recession highs.

"And in that instance, exhibitors do not get the ROI they're looking for," Gattuso says, noting that in the current marketplace, generating maximum attendance by qualified buyers is an essential first step in creating a successful event.

"You really have to focus on the attendees that are coming," he says. "Making an assumption that just bringing people into the convention center and having them conduct business is just naturally going to happen is not a way to create consistent results, because if your attendance ever changes — unless it goes up every year — exhibitors are not going to get what they're looking for."

As a result, Gattuso says, proactive show organizers now understand that a foundational focus should be on the benefits that attendance at a particular show delivers. Although that consideration has always been important, he adds, it has been rendered more so by the lingering effects of the recession.

"And SEMA was no exception to that," he says. "As a result, we've consistently held strategic meetings to try to come up with ways that we can help both exhibitors and attendees get more out of our show. Our main emphasis has been making sure that people understand the opportunities that exist at our show and how they can benefit from them."

That narrow focus yielded an innovative idea three years ago during the depths of the economic downturn — an "exhibitor's summit" held in the spring, six months before the SEMA show.

"We came up with a way to bring interested exhibitors to Las Vegas and literally educate them on how they could have a successful event and show them some strategies they could use to accomplish that," says Gattuso, citing the participation of 200 exhibitors — about 10 percent — in this year's event. "It's really proven to be a very valuable asset," he says. "We have definitely been able to show



“Exhibitors buy time with important prospects by paying their expenses to come to the show. That way...you make sure to get the most important buyers at your show and ensure that key exhibitors have access to them.”

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

results from doing the summit. And one of the things we did this year was to put a focus on newer exhibitors. We did that partly because the size of the SEMA show, at first, can be somewhat overwhelming for an exhibitor that has never participated before. So we wanted to show them a road map on how to come and be successful. And that included things like navigating our exhibitor services menu and creating a budget for the show and determining the ROI they would get from the event.”

Such attention to new exhibitors is critical to the long-term prosperity of the long-running show, Gattuso says, because unless a new exhibitor enjoys a solid success in their first or second year, they are less likely to return than ever before because of prevailing economic conditions.

Kellen Company has conducted such orientation and educational events as a prelude to client shows for years, Hope says. “But now we’re doing it more than ever,” he says, adding that to make the process more cost-effective, Kellen generally does it by conference call rather than more expensive face-to-face participation. And such activity is definitely becoming a legitimate industry trend, he says. “That’s because it provides your exhibitors with a voice before they get to the show,” he says. “But you can’t treat it like an opinion fest. You have to structure it like you would a formal survey that has well-defined desired outcomes for participants.”

Related to the same basic notion is more extensive research on who is attending the show and who is exhibiting — and how those two creatures can be made to commingle more effectively.

As part of its registration process, SEMA gathers information about things such as attendee interest in particular product categories, then disseminates that data to exhibitors to facilitate pre-show matchmaking. In turn, cutting-edge mobile applications for iPhones, iPads and Android devices help attendees search for exhibitors with categories of products that most interest them. As of this year, SEMA has refined a way for attendees to import information and interact with their registration dashboard. Such connectivity will become a widespread best practice in the foreseeable future, Gattuso says, noting that it also will increasingly empower more productive post-show follow-up marketing by exhibitors.

To reach its full potential, however, he says that there will need to be more coordinated cooperation between technology providers

and show organizers. He expects that it will take two to five years for that to happen to the extent he imagines today.

ARRANGED MARRIAGES

Among the most powerful tools for enhancing the engagement of attendees and exhibitors are pre-set appointments and so-called hosted buyer programs, in which a collection of exhibitors shares the cost of picking up the travel expenses of major buyers to ensure their attendance in a show.

Kellen Company has been an innovator in and enthusiastic practitioner of pre-set appointments, Hope says. Formats fall into three basic categories.

“The first is a speed networking kind of quick pitch or meet-and-greet,” he says. “Next is the 10–15 minute appointment, which can then be followed up later in the show or afterward. And the third is a 30-minute full presentation that allows exhibitors serious access to buyers, based on their interests and needs. And you start to gather that information from the registration process in order to find out where the real pots of gold are in terms of the most important buyers at the show and the exhibitors you can appropriately match them up with, according to level of buying power and interest in particular kinds of products or services.”

In order to optimize such information gathering and analysis, Kellen uses technology from Connecticut-based eTouches that features 14 modules and includes functions such as matchmaking and appointment setting. “It’s a nimble platform that allows changes to be

“We wanted to show them a road map on how to come and be successful. And that included things like navigating our exhibitor services menu and creating a budget for the show and determining the ROI they would get from the event.”



Tom Gattuso
Trade Shows Director
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Diamond Bar, CA

made for individual clients and applications inexpensively,” Hope says.

As a result of such analytical capabilities, hosted buyer programs for major buyers are also becoming a bona fide trend, Hope says. “Exhibitors, in effect, buy time with important prospects by paying their expenses to come to the show,” he explains. “That way, you remove the obstacle of budget from the buyer and you make sure to get the most important buyers at your show and ensure that key exhibitors have access to them.”

The hosted buyer model has become popular — and successful

— at major travel and meeting industry shows such as those sponsored by IMEX, MPI, Site, AIBTM and EIBTM.

The key to success, Hope says, is careful and thorough qualification of buyers. Properly executed, that virtually guarantees happy exhibitors and satisfied attendees.

Although Hacker agrees that there is a trend toward pre-set appointments and full-fledged hosted buyer programs, he does not believe that either will ever become standard practice — despite their obvious appeal. “Not every event is suitable to an appointment scheme or a hosted buyer program,” he says. “They are both very specific resources that need to be applied appropriately.”

For example, Hacker says, for an event that draws 10,000 attendees, perhaps about 200 are viable candidates for a hosted buyer program. His concern is that a growing number of associations are beginning to perceive such opportunities as a panacea or something “that everyone is doing.” Therefore, he cautions that associations should do extensive research and careful analysis before deciding to pursue a hosted buyer program.

Deborah Sexton, president and CEO of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) in Chicago shares Hacker’s concern. “Hosted buyer programs are very, very expensive,” she says, “whereas doing matched appointments based on who’s already going to be there is a lot simpler than paying for, in effect, every attendee who is part of a hosted buyer program. So I think that as an industry, we have to be careful about how hosted buyer programs are being done.”

A more important factor is a simpler formula for making sure the right attendees are brought together with the right exhibitors to make sure that appropriate business gets done, Sexton says. “You just have to do the things you need to do to ensure that everyone who wants to connect can,” she says. “That’s the basis for a successful show. And you don’t necessarily need a hosted buyer program, or even pre-set appointments, to do that.”

ENLIGHTENMENT ON THE SHOW FLOOR

A hot-button issue for Sexton is the evolving look and feel of the trade show floor, with an eye toward making a presence there more appealing to attendees as a way of luring them closer to exhibitors and fostering natural interaction.

“Many show organizers are creating what I call ‘conversation’ or ‘educational’ areas on the show floor, where small groups can come together,” Sexton says. “And those things not only tend to bring people together, but they also tend to keep them on the show floor.”

Although PCMA does not have exhibitors at its annual meeting, it has fostered that concept with its Learning Lounge, an idea that many PCMA members with exhibitors are now adapting to their own needs, Sexton says. “They’re using it to help exhibitors inform or educate people about a product, or create an educational environment,” she says. “But they based it on our Learning Lounge concept. And their attendees and exhibitors have been thrilled by it.”

The Falls Church, VA-based American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) has been an innovator in show floor appeal, says Carol Tobin, its director of global meetings and expositions.

For example, she says, AIHA now stages so-called “poster sessions,” or visual displays of technical or scientific information, on the show floor as a way to attract attendees closer to exhibitors.

“And in recent years, we’ve built what we call our Expo Theater on the show floor,” she says. “And although as a general rule, we control the amount of purely commercial content that can be presented at our show, we allow it in the Expo Theater. Exhibitors can get as commercial as they want to. And it turns out that those presentations are also very popular with our attendees.”

Three years ago, AIHA created a mock methamphetamine

“The basic idea is to offer enlightenment in a hurry, because we live in a fast-paced world now. So we tried it, thinking that we’d get about 50 people for the first one. And the room was absolutely packed. It was a major success.”



Carol Tobin
Director of Global Meetings and Expositions
American Industrial Hygiene Association, Falls Church, VA

lab on its show floor because meth lab cleanup has become a common and important activity in its industry. “That has also been very popular, because it addresses a hot topic in our industry,” Tobin says.

As a result of such success, AIHA is now talking about building a house on the show floor that will educate attendees about the latest mold and Radon remediation techniques.

And that has led them to look at other innovative ways to foster interaction and communication between exhibitors and attendees. This year, for the first time, the annual convention featured so-called Ignite sessions, brief five-minute presentations that use 20 slides that auto-advance every 15 seconds.

“That creates a more casual and entertaining atmosphere that especially attracts younger people,” Tobin says. “The basic idea is to offer enlightenment in a hurry, because we live in a fast-paced world now. So you have to get to the point. So we tried it, thinking that we’d get about 50 people for the first one. And the room was absolutely packed. It was a major success. And some of our exhibitors also did Ignite sessions. And that’s just another good example of the newest ways that you can use technology to create engagement between exhibitors and attendees.”

Also see “Attendee Engagement” on page 8.

Florida

By Derek Reveron

What's Not to Like?

Florida serves up a destination buffet for meeting planners with choices galore. Still, many groups like their favorite Sunshine State destinations so much that they eagerly return to the same property again and again.

Case in point: The Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges (FAPSC) held its 2008, 2011 and 2012 annual conferences at the 408-room Turnberry Isle Miami, and they plan to return again in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Katie Allan, FAPSC's director of continuing education and meeting planner, says the association is returning to Turnberry Isle because the group was able to negotiate multiyear deals with good room rates. Allan was impressed by plans (now completed) to spend \$2 million to renovate guest rooms in the Orchid Building, one of four guest room towers. She also liked Turnberry's convenient location. "Many of our members are located in South Florida. The location makes it accessible for people who want to drive. The property also is convenient to two airports (Miami International Airport and Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport) so that people flying in, including exhibitors, have a better choice of flights," says Allan.

Meeting space also was a key factor in FAPSC's choice of Turnberry, a AAA Four Diamond resort, which is now part of Marriott's Autograph Collection of luxury and boutique properties. The resort features a 40,000-sf conference center. The convention included more than 35 breakout sessions. Allan says, "I like the layout of the meeting space. It makes it seem that everything is manageable and efficient. Things aren't spread out, and you don't have to spend too much time walking from one room to another. And it's a self-contained property that helps everyone stay focused on why they are attending without too many distractions."

Attendees enjoyed Turnberry's on-property activities. These include tennis lessons from top players via the resort's partnership with Canas Tennis, and two 18-hole championship golf courses. Following the FAPSC golf tournament, an awards luncheon was held to present awards for the best golf teams and accomplishments such as longest drive and hitting the ball closest to the pin.

In addition, the group held an outdoor poolside reception with musical entertainment provided by a band composed of convention attendees, which "gave folks an opportunity to relax and discuss what they learned during their sessions," says Allan.

Orlando

Perhaps no state offers so many top-shelf destinations with such a range of affordability levels, which is important for budget-conscious associations. And space is no object — the 7-million-sf Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) is the second largest convention facility in America. There is a total of 2.1 million sf of exhibition space, 479,190 sf of meeting space, 74 meeting rooms, 232 breakout rooms and a 62,000-sf ballroom.

No wonder visitor and occupancy rates are rising statewide. Orlando, for example, received a record-breaking 55.1 million visitors in 2011, which broke the old record of 51.46 million visitors in 2010, which was up 10.5 percent from 46.6 million in 2009. Meeting groups find Orlando's theme parks to be a big daytime attraction but falsely perceive that the city lacks enough nighttime dining and entertainment options, according to research by Visit Orlando, the city's convention and visitors bureau.

Based on survey results, Visit Orlando launched an "After Five" print and online marketing campaign that highlights the city's variety of upscale dining and entertainment options. A new microsite www.orlandodistricts.com showcases six newly identified dining and entertainment districts — Winter Park (Southern Chic), Restaurant Row (Prime Dining Destination), Convention Area (Entertaining Options), Downtown (Vibrant Nightlife), Universal/CityWalk (Adventurous and Energetic) and Disney/Lake Buena Vista (Signature Excitement).

There also are attractions within a short drive of Orlando, including the Kennedy Space Center, located 45 miles east of the city on Florida's Space Coast. The center is celebrating its 50th anniversary by offering new tours of its Vehicle Assembly Building, Launch Control Center and Launch Complex 39.

When it comes to theme parks, more is better. Walt Disney World Resort's Magic Kingdom theme park is undergoing an expansion, which will eventually double the size of its Fantasyland attraction. Fantasyland's Enchanted Forest is scheduled to open in December featuring "Under the Sea — Journey of the Little Mermaid" and Be Our Guest Restaurant. At Downtown Disney, the new Splitsville venue will open in late 2012 with new dining and entertainment options including nightlife, bowling and billiards.

Elsewhere at Disney, the 1,123-suite Art of Animation movie-themed resort recently opened its Little Mermaid accommodations. All of the rooms, including those reflecting the "Cars," "Finding Nemo," and "The Lion King" movies are now open. Another resort, the Four Seasons Orlando at Walt Disney, is scheduled to open in early 2014 with 444 rooms and more than 37,000 sf of meeting space.

Universal Parks & Resorts and Loews Hotels & Resorts plan to build the 900-room, 900-guest suite Cabana Bay Beach Resort next to Universal Islands of Adventure theme park. Completion is scheduled for 2014. At Universal CityWalk, the Blue Man Group continues to perform shows at Universal Orlando Resort's 1,000-seat Blue Man Group Theatre, which added a newly enhanced show and Bluephoria, a family-friendly VIP lounge.

Resorts popular among groups include the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel with 2,265 rooms and 329,000 sf of meeting space. The resort recently added a new beverage offering, legal moonshine, served in flavors such as apple pie shine.

Also in Orlando, the 1,334-room Rosen Centre Hotel, which is connected via skywalk to the OCCC, remodeled its 14 hospitality suites and one of its three 2,500-sf presidential suites. The new executive ballroom, which boasts 4,000 sf of prefunction space and 18,000 sf of state-of-the-art meeting space, brings the hotel's total meeting space to 124,000 sf. The newly branded The Spa at Rosen Centre was expanded to 6,100 sf and includes seven treatment rooms.

The Rosen Plaza Hotel is located next to the OCCC and offers 800 renovated guest rooms and 60,000 sf of meeting space. The pool deck at Rosen Plaza will become even more attractive to guests, whether as a setting for special events or simply for enjoying a few minutes of downtime between meetings. The hotel will enhance the pool deck with attractive new pavers and add a pergola and trellises blooming with colorful flowers to provide a picturesque backdrop for events. Similarly, the Rosen Plaza's 10 hospitality suites, six all-new junior executive suites and 10 executive king suites have been newly appointed with a crisp contemporary look. The layout of the suites was also redesigned to allow for more flexible seating, with sectional sofas and 42-inch dining tables.

Additionally, a mile from the OCCC, Rosen Shingle Creek provides 1,500 guest rooms, 445,000 sf of meeting space, the 18-hole Shingle Creek Golf Club and the Brad Brewer Golf Academy. A new Mexican restaurant Mi Casa Tequila Taqueria will open by the end of the year and be located in the hotel's dining/retail area joining other new additions Tobias Flats & Watering Hole and Banrai Sushi. All three restaurants surround the Headwaters Lounge and are near Smooth Java coffee, bringing the hotel's dining/lounging options to 15. Now open six years, Rosen Shingle Creek's guest rooms will be refreshed with new soft goods and new 40-inch flat screen televisions.

Each of the three Rosen hotels has received a Two Palm Green Lodge designation from the Florida Department of Environment Protection.

Three properties surrounding Bonnet Creek are ideal for meeting in Orlando. The newest is the 400-room Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort, Bonnet Creek, which opened in October 2011 and features 25,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space including the 8,000-sf Ponce de Leon Ballroom, the Grand Foyer and the 14th floor Horizon Boardroom; outdoor Bimini Court and Pool Deck. The property has five dining facilities, a zero-entry, lagoon-style pool; a lazy river; and the full-service Blue Harmony Spa.



The skyline of Miami — an international city where you'll hear languages from around the world and meet people from every corner of the earth.

Photo courtesy of Greater Miami CVB



Debby Beck
Principal
Diversified Business Events &
Services LLC
Sarasota, FL

“Thankfully, working with the hoteliers of Florida, who in my opinion are the best reps in the business, make the negotiating easy so there is always good give and take. By the time the contract is finalized, a great partnership has been established.”

The Waldorf Astoria, Bonnet Creek has 28,000 sf of event space sectioned into 15 meeting rooms, two executive boardrooms, and an 8,100-sf Grand Ballroom as well as a private 25,000-sf island. The Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek is a full-service resort with a lazy-river pool, award-winning restaurants and a Guerlain spa. The resort features 122,000 sf of meeting space and prefunction area in 51 meeting rooms, including the 36,000-sf Bonnet Creek Ballroom and 27,300-sf Floridian Ballroom. All three properties have access to the adjacent 18-hole Rees Jones-designed championship golf course — The Waldorf Astoria Golf Club, which features The Clubhouse Grille as the 19th hole. Each hotel also provides complimentary direct transportation to and from the Walt Disney World theme parks and Downtown Disney area.

Other Orlando properties include the 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate. The four-diamond resort will debut a new 55,000-sf conference center in 2013, increasing total meeting space to about 100,000 sf. The ChampionsGate also boasts a full-service Mokara Spa and two 18-hole championship golf courses.

Also, DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld offers 60,000 sf of indoor and outdoor venue options including the 12,000-sf Oceans Ballroom, the 10,000-sf Great Lakes Ballroom, prefunction space for convenient registration, coffee breaks, breakouts and displays, 25 meeting rooms and executive boardrooms as well as Tower Terrace, an outdoor option.

The Westin Imagine Orlando, which opened in 2008, has 315 guest rooms and 7,100 sf of meeting space, including wireless and wired high-speed Internet access (fee), videoconferencing capabilities, and a business center with free Internet.

Groups meeting at The Peabody Orlando will delight in the daily march of The Peabody Ducks. These “Famous Five” are escorted by their Duck Master every day at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. The award-winning 1,641-room hotel, which was renovated in 2010, has 300,000 sf of function space on three levels, including the pillar-free 55,000-sf Peabody Grand Ballroom for large meetings and 105 breakout rooms for smaller ones.

Jacksonville

The website of Visit Jacksonville, the city’s convention and visitors bureau, urges visitors and groups to “Immerse Yourself Here.” Groups will find ample meeting space, led by the Prime F. Osborne III Convention Center, with 78,500 sf of exhibition space and 160,000 sf of flexible meeting space.

The Jacksonville area also has its share of meeting and convention properties, including the Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort, which is implementing an \$85 million “re-imagining” including 155 additional oceanfront guest rooms and suites, as well as 30,000 sf of new meeting space, increasing the number of rooms to 404 and total meeting space to 80,000 sf. The resort also will have a new pool, floor-to-ceiling windows with ocean views and additional restaurants.

Among downtown properties, the Omni Jacksonville Hotel has completed a \$1.5 million renovation of 14,000 sf of meeting space, which includes new décor as well as lighting and sound system upgrades.

Dawn Slykhouse, president of Santa Clara, CA-based Face to Face Events Inc., planned a five-day conference at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront in January 2012. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) 802 LMSC Wireless Interim Session, one of three such conferences held each year to develop computer and technology standards, attracted more than 300 attendees from technology and government organizations.

More than 60 percent of the attendees hailed from other countries and required a variety of foods. The Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront food and beverage staff cheerfully delivered, says Slykhouse. “They came up with fresh ideas for the menus to accommodate everyone. There were gluten-free products, hummus, pita, vegetable platters with sauce on the side, non-dairy soups and tofu. They were willing to be creative with basic menus to serve what our attendees liked and provide what we could afford. Jacksonville is very reasonable when it comes to food and beverage. That’s one of the reasons we like going there. We sometimes look for a second-tier destination that’s not all that expensive,” says Slykhouse.

The group also worked closely with the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront and a third-party technology company to meet the association’s exacting high-tech needs. “We set up the whole conference to be wireless. We do everything wirelessly, from content and registration to providing an event portal online. So it’s absolutely mandatory for us to have no problems with the network or fear that it will go down. We all worked together to make sure that everything went smoothly,” Slykhouse says.

She also touts Jacksonville’s restaurants. The group held a reception at the River City Brewing Company, a restaurant with a marina along the St. Johns River and live entertainment. Slykhouse says she has brought groups to Jacksonville before this year and would return again to the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, primarily because of the service.

Just south of Jacksonville, the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is a AAA Five Diamond resort featuring 250 guest rooms and suites, and more than 30,000 sf of function space. Groups also can enjoy 36 holes of golf and 15 tennis courts. Another popular property, the 301-room Renaissance World Golf Village, has completed an expansion and renovation that added a total of 15,000 sf of outdoor function space, bringing the total meeting and event space to 101,000 sf.

Tampa/St. Petersburg

Fresh off the international spotlight provided by the recent Republican National Convention, the Tampa/St. Petersburg area continues to raise its profile for conventions and meetings. The Republican National Convention was held at the Tampa Bay Convention Center, a facility with a 200,000-sf exhibit hall, 36,000-sf ballroom and 36 meeting rooms.

The recently refreshed Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, one of the Republican delegate hotels, is booked for a two-day meeting of the Collaborative Family Law Council of Florida (CFLCF) in May 2013. The association expects to attract more than 300 judges, family law attorneys, psychologists, CPAs and other professionals for innovative workshops with general sessions.

Debby Beck, principal of Diversified Business Events & Services LLC, which is now located in Sarasota, FL, says value was a factor in selecting the 442-room Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay with its 20,000 sf of function space. Beck says, “We chose the property because the room rate was great, the concessions were good, and it matches the personality of the group. By that I mean it’s a great fit to meeting all the needs of such a diverse group of attendees. The Grand Hyatt is in a great location for those who fly in/out, easy access for those who drive in/out, and it’s close to all Tampa attractions. Its luxury accommodations and exceptional staff, the Hyatt team, make it a great venue for those used to “higher end” hotels. There’s nothing that says judges can’t go to luxury resorts, but we wanted a great hotel that doesn’t raise eyebrows,” says Beck.

The Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay has

been flexible in meeting the Collaborative Law Council’s needs.” Thankfully, working with the hoteliers of Florida, who in my opinion are the best reps in the business, make the negotiating easy so there is always good give and take. By the time the contract is finalized, a great partnership has been established. Although every group has their desired concessions, as a planner, you sometimes trade out concessions to meet the desired



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Lisette Mariner
Executive Director
Florida Independent Automotive
Dealers Association
Tallahassee, FL

“The Shores is easy to work with, especially the sales representatives. They worked with me on menus to make sure that we stayed within a budget. They were very accommodating when it came to meeting space and any last-minute things.”

include the Miami Seaquarium and Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, which reflects the Gilded Age of the early 19th century. The state-of-the-art Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts is home to the Miami City Ballet, the New World Symphony and the Florida Grand Opera. When it comes to outdoor activities, Miami-Dade County offers more than 260 parks, including two national parks, including many along the shore.

Designed by Morris Lapidus in 1954, the landmark Fontainebleau Miami Beach is a popular meetings destination. Following a \$1 billion reinvention in 2008, the 1,504-room Fontainebleau Miami Beach reopened. The 20-acre oceanfront hotel features an expansive poolscape, two chic nightlife venues, including LIV, the ultra-exclusive and high-energy nightclub, and the 40,000-sf Lapis spa. The hotel has 12 fine dining and casual restaurants, bars and lounges including Gotham Steak by Michelin-star chef Alfred Portale, chef-owner at New York’s Gotham Bar and Grill; Scarpetta by Scott Conant; and Hakkasan, the first U.S. outpost of the famed London restaurant. Fontainebleau Miami Beach boasts 107,000 sf of indoor meeting space including three ballrooms totaling 62,000 sf, the largest of which can accommodate up to 2,128 people theater-style. A 15,000-sf meeting center incorporates two permanent boardrooms. Seven conference suites offer the ultimate in privacy and comfort for small meetings. In addition, Fontainebleau Miami Beach has more than 20,000 sf of prefunction space and flexible outdoor event space.

Daytona Beach

Daytona Beach is a unique destination with 23 miles of beaches and world-class hotels. Meeting space is anchored by the seaside Ocean Center (OC) convention and entertainment complex in the heart of Daytona Beach’s resort area. The OC provides 164,000 sf of exhibit space, a 12,000-sf banquet hall and 32,000 sf of meeting space. Nearby hotels, including the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort and Wyndham Ocean Walk Resort, provide a total of 1,200 guest rooms and 300,000 sf of meeting space.

The Shores Resort & Spa, located a short drive from the OC, offers free round-trip transfers to the convention facility. The Shores features 212 guest rooms, 20,000 sf of function space and great views of the Atlantic or the Intracoastal Waterway. Amenities at the AAA Four Diamond resort include poolside cabanas, a spa and oceanside fire pits.

In January, the Florida Independent Automotive Dealers Association (FIADA) held a two-day board meeting for 25 members at The Shores. It was the board’s first meeting at the resort, although executive director Lisette Mariner had previously arranged meetings at the property for another association. “It’s a relaxing and self-contained facility, so we don’t ‘lose’ people. The Shores is easy to work with, especially the sales representatives. They were in the price range for what this group is used to as

concessions that most fit the personality of the group,” says Beck. This group’s two main concerns were a great room rate and complimentary Internet service.

Other top Tampa-area properties include the Saddlebrook Resort, which has upgraded its 800 guest rooms to include the IBahn ETVi IP-based HDTV platform. The resort offers 90,000 sf of function space, including 10 outdoor banquet facilities. There also are 45 tennis courts, two 18-hole golf courses and a five-acre teambuilding course.

Another top Tampa-area property is Innisbrook, a Salamander Golf & Spa Resort, located in Palm Harbor, a 25-minute drive from Tampa International Airport. In addition to four championship golf courses and golf academy, the 608-room resort offers 65,000 sf of meeting space and the Indaba Spa.

Miami

Thanks to a growth in international visitors, vacationers and meeting groups, Miami-Dade County attracted 13.4 million visitors in 2011, up 6.7 percent over 2010, according to the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB). According to the GMCVB, the increase was bolstered by record attendance in 2011 at major citywide conventions. Many of the associations gathered at the Miami Beach Convention Center, which has more than 500,000 sf of exhibit space, 100,000 sf of prefunction space and 70 meeting rooms encompassing 127,000 sf.

Part of Miami’s draw for groups is its more than 360 hotels and resorts, including one of Miami’s most venerable properties, the world-famous Doral Golf Resort & Spa. Now part of the Trump Hotel Collection, the Doral will remain open during a complete renovation project slated for completion in 2013. The 700-room resort has 86,000 sf of meeting space, a Pritikin spa, five golf courses including the legendary Blue Monster and the McLean Golf School.

There’s no shortage of entertainment in Miami, which features a dazzling nightlife that’s second to none. Miami also boasts a plethora of attractions that offer event space for groups. These

far as rooms are concerned. They worked with me on menus to make sure that we stayed within a budget. They were very accommodating when it came to meeting space and any last-minute things,” says Mariner.

The group took full advantage of The Shores’ amenities. “Some board members are health conscious so they used the fitness center. We used the restaurants on property and served breakfast and lunch for board members in the meeting room. We used a top-floor meeting space with a beautiful view. We closed the blinds to keep them focused. It was pretty much dinner on your own,” Mariner says. The group also participated in The Shore’s signature activity — making s’mores over the seaside fire pits.

Daytona Beach is loaded with attractions, including the world-famous Daytona International Speedway. The historic Daytona Beach Pier & Boardwalk reopened in May following more than \$5 million in repairs and renovations. Additions to the Pier include a Joe’s Crab Shack and a roller coaster.

Naples

Naples is part of the “Paradise Coast” in Southwest Florida that also includes Marco Island and the Everglades. The region is known for its upscale dining, shopping and resorts. Properties popular among large groups include the 317-room Naples Beach

Hotel & Golf Club, set along seven miles of beach on the Gulf of Mexico. The hotel offers 34,000 sf of meeting space and a renovated 18-hole championship golf course.

Other Naples-area properties include The Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort, Golf Club & Spa (664 rooms, 225,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space) and The Ritz-Carlton, Naples beachfront resort (450 rooms, 42,000 sf of meeting space). Groups visiting The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort Naples a few miles inland will find a new multiuse event pavilion, which doubles the property’s meeting and special event space. The 14,652-sf Grand Lawn Pavilion accommodates 900 seated guests for receptions and 1,400 people seated theater style. The golf resort has 295 guest rooms and 16,500 sf of meeting space.

Golf courses are everywhere on the Paradise Coast. The area has 90 golf courses and ranks among the top two destinations in golf holes per capita, according to the National Golf Foundation.

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Nevada

When You Can't Afford to Gamble on Attendance, Las Vegas and Reno Deliver

By Karen Brost

Las Vegas has done it again. For the 18th consecutive year, the city has been named the top trade show destination in the country by the Trade Show News Network (TSNN). To earn the top ranking, Las Vegas garnered the most spots (55) on TSNN's Top 250 Trade Show list. "Not only did Las Vegas attract the most shows, but several of the shows also saw impressive growth," notes Rachel Wimberly, TSNN's president and editor-in-chief.

According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), among trade shows surveyed, attendance increased an average of 15 percent when shows rotated into Las Vegas, and attendance decreased an average of six percent when they rotated out. In addition, the LVCVA dispels the myth that Las Vegas convention delegates "sneak away" from meeting sessions.



South Point Hotel & Spa offers 165,000 sf of meeting and event facilities including space for a 500-booth expo, plus a 4,600-seat arena.

Photo courtesy of South Point Hotel & Spa

Instead, the bureau has found that delegates spend an average of 11 hours on the trade show floor in Las Vegas as opposed to 5.9 to 9.5 hours in other cities.

LAS VEGAS APPEALS TO ATTENDEES

Cheryl Clark, director of events for the National Association for Surface Finishing (NASF) headquartered in Washington, DC, refers to the notion that people go to Las Vegas to play instead of going to the show, as "old thinking." Her organization had its annual conference, called SUR/FIN, at the South Point Hotel & Spa in June and set a record for registration. NASF reports that many attendees found it to be the best SUR/FIN they'd attended in some time.

According to Clark, it was the first time NASF held its meeting in a Western city in about 20 years. "I put on another major trade show (in Las Vegas) for a number of years, and I knew it would be a good draw," she adds. "They loved it. The show really was so successful that we intend to put it into our rotation probably every four years."

The 2,163-room South Point, which is located off The Strip but provides shuttle service, was large enough to accommodate her group of approximately 2,000 attendees and exhibitors. "We had the entire group at the hotel," she says. "Of course, we had some people that go to Vegas on their own, and they had their own favorite hotels, but for the most part, our people stayed at South Point." The trade show portion of the event had approximately 150 exhibitors and required 25,000 net sf of exhibit space.

She explained why South Point was a good choice for her group. "We thought if we were just off The Strip a little bit, we'd have a captive audience, and it works. Everything was self-contained.

There were a number of different eating options, from expensive to very inexpensive." She added that she wished that the meeting rooms were closer to the exhibit hall, but they made it work. "People got used to it and they were fine with it. I love the exhibit hall." South Point has 165,000 sf of exhibit, meeting and banquet space, which accommodates everything from a 500-booth expo to a 5,000-attendee banquet to a 10-person boardroom session. In addition, there is a 4,600-seat arena, 64-lane bowling center and Costa del Sur Spa.

OFF-STRIP SUCCESS

Last summer, the National Association for Court Management held its annual meeting at the Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, located in Summerlin, approximately 10 miles west of The Strip. The event drew approximately 600 attendees.

Valerie F. Gardner, conference services manager for the Williamsburg, VA-based organization, explains the choice of destination. "The previous time that they held their meeting in Las Vegas it was for their mid-year conference, which is the smaller of their conferences," she says. "It's typically held in February, and they had one of the largest turnouts for that conference."

She describes some of the advantages of meeting in Las Vegas. "It's easy to get in and out of," she notes, mentioning the availability of affordable direct and connecting flights. "That kind of flexibility is really good. The rates at the hotels, depending on the time of the year, are very competitive, and usually we can get government per diem, whereas in some cities we can't. So the rates are very attractive. The one other nice thing about Vegas is parking is free," she adds.

Gardner detailed some of the economic constraints her group faces. "A lot of the times, because we are a government association, our folks can't rent cars and go to fancy restaurants and things like that. Vegas really affords you the opportunity to walk around and have a lot of places to go to, and to get on shuttles and go places. You can get a buffet for \$5.99 or you can get a buffet for \$59.99. It just has the wide spectrum, so there's more than just the gambling going on there. I have to say that with our group, we host our meetings and they attend; they don't leave. So when they have their time away, they want the flexibility to be able to get out and see things and have things to choose from, and (Las Vegas) affords them that."



Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, situated 10 miles from The Strip in Summerlin, has 94,000 sf of meeting space including four ballrooms ranging in size from 5,000 sf to 20,000 sf. Other event spaces include the Sandbar Pool Backyard, which accommodates events with 3,000 attendees, and an amphitheater.

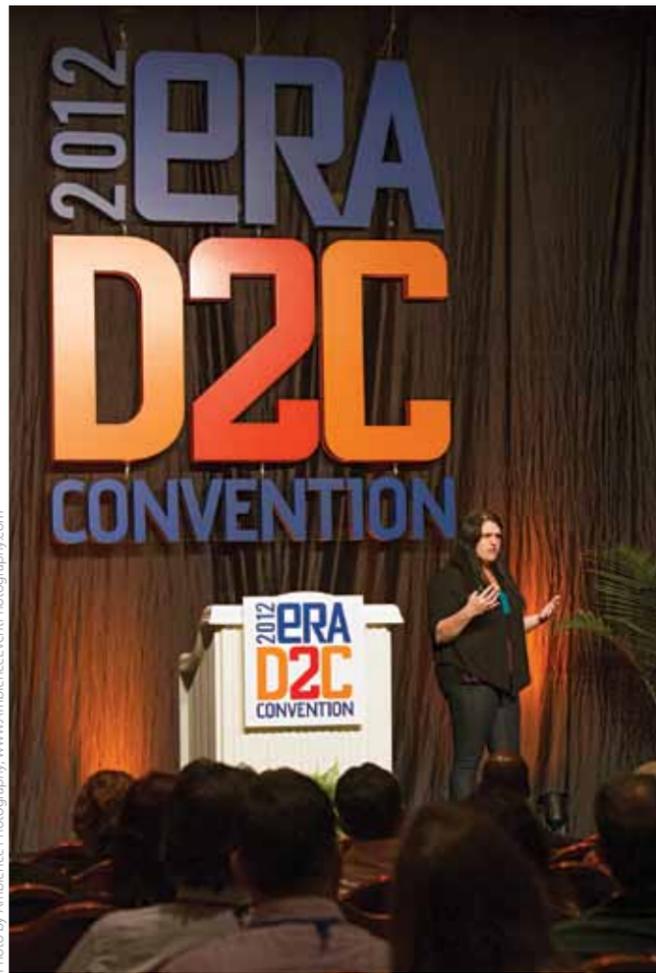


Photos courtesy of Statton Casinos

Gardner appreciated the layout of the Red Rock. "When you walk into a hotel on The Strip, for instance, you walk through the casino and then you get to registration. Or you have to walk through the casino after you do registration. What I, as a meeting planner, loved about Red Rock, is that there was the hotel part, and then the meeting, and then the casino and all the things you can do there. It was really nice that when I walked in there, I felt like I was at a hotel, and I didn't hear 'ding ding ding.' There's nothing wrong with that, but to me, what a change. And I wasn't putting bread crumbs down to figure out what tower I was in.

"Red Rock is massive, but it's condensed and it's nice," she continues. "Your meeting floor is all one floor, and it's just great. It just flows. And the staff there is wonderful. It has a bowling alley and movie theater. So if you were to bring your family, it's got that. It's got a huge pool, and they're doing all of these concerts and things. It's great. It's just a one-stop kind of shop."

She noted that some attendees were disappointed that the hotel was not located on The Strip. "We always combat that with, 'Well, you're not really coming to go to The Strip, you're coming to learn.' But they do offer a great shuttle service, and you can



get down there. We've used it many, many times." She added that it's about a 20-minute complimentary shuttle ride to The Strip and that the hotel also offers complimentary transportation from the airport.

"It is such a beautiful hotel," she concludes. "Every sleeping room there, you feel like you are in a suite, because they're just beautiful." Red Rock has 816 guest rooms, and a 94,000-sf meeting facility.

One of Red Rock's sister hotels, Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino, is set on 40 acres in Henderson, NV. The 495-room resort offers 79,000 sf of meeting space, including 37 meeting rooms and four ballrooms. The resort's pool area, called "The Backyard," can be transformed into an event venue that can accommodate up to 4,500 attendees.

THE WYNN IS A WINNER

For Julie Coons, president and CEO of the Electronic Retailing Association (ERA) headquartered in Washington, DC, returning to Las Vegas every year is the way to go. Her organization's 2011 ERA D2C convention was the second largest in the show's 21-year history, and the event has grown 50 percent since 2008. The 2012



Photo courtesy of Wynn Las Vegas

The Electronic Retailing Association's successful 2012 D2C Convention was held at Wynn Las Vegas. The show will return to Wynn in 2013.

meeting, which just concluded in September at Wynn Las Vegas, attracted more than 3,400 attendees.

"(The show) is traditionally in Las Vegas, and we have plans to continue to stay there," Coons explains. "It is destination-driven. We have a very large West Coast contingent. We also have a good East Coast contingent and a fair smattering in between. So it's a good travel destination from a time and accessibility perspective. It also offers a lot of variety. Our attendees like the ability to not only be in high-quality facilities, but to have the range of eating destinations and clubs and the amenities that Las Vegas has in abundance."

This is the third year that the group has met at Wynn Las Vegas. And Wynn has also won the 2013 show as well, scheduled for September 24-26. "We have a terrific partnership with the Wynn," she says. "We really appreciate their management style. We con-



Diving doyens amaze audiences during Le Rêve - the Dream, performed in a pool-centered circular theater at Wynn Las Vegas.

sider them to be a true working partner to the association, and they have demonstrated that time and again. We are, in fact, planning to stay with them over the next couple of years. Certainly the quality of the Wynn is exceptional, and it's the type of quality our attendees look for. I would say also that the Wynn has a facility that really is able to bring all of our attendees sort of 'under the tent.' It has a large-scale but common area that allows for amazing networking because our attendees can go from a meeting room to the show floor.

"We set up a bar on the balcony that overlooks the pool," Coons continues. "We call it the Circle Bar so our attendees can go out there and have a cup of coffee or a glass of wine and then they can flow back into the show floor. It really gives us lots of space to develop a variety of different meetings, activities, and education and networking, but all within this large 'tent.' So it really serves our members' needs well."

For housing, ERA uses the Wynn as well as its sister property, the Encore. Together, the properties offer a combined total of more than 4,700 guest rooms and 280,000 sf of meeting and event space. "Between the Wynn, and then, as needed, the Encore, we're really able to meet the needs of our attendees," she notes.

Coons described one of the key factors she appreciates about the Wynn. "One of the things about the Wynn is that they have really been partners to us, working with us onsite, working with us in advance, in a way that I have to say is unique relative to other properties. The effort that they've put into it, the level of customer care shown not only to us but to attendees, as well, really shows."

Wynn's onsite entertainment includes the long-running show *Le Rêve - The Dream*, performed in a circular theater with a pool in the center, which is designated a "splash zone": performers ascend from the water or drop down from the ceiling in a performance packed with special effects, music and dance. Group packages are available.

LAS VEGAS NEWS

The \$900 million expansion of the Las Vegas Convention Center, which was initially put on a back burner due to the downturn in the economy, is now back on the drawing board. Plans call for renovations to the 3.2-million-sf building as well as improvements to the surrounding neighborhood. LVCVA officials are meeting with

convention center customers to solicit input that will be used to set priorities for improving the building.

The hospitality, lifestyle and real estate development company sbe and the real estate development firm Stockbridge Capital Group LLC have secured \$300 million in funding to redevelop the former Sahara Hotel & Casino into the SLS Las Vegas. Collaborators for the new property include design icon Philippe Starck and James Beard award-winning chef José Andrés. Once complete, the new mixed-use resort and casino will include more than 1,600 guest rooms and suites along with sbe's restaurant and nightlife brands.

Groups meeting at or near Caesars Palace may well want to bring a hearty appetite. The hotel recently introduced the appropriately named Bacchanal Buffet, which overlooks the Garden of the Gods pool oasis. The buffet can seat 600 guests and offers more than 500 items, ranging from made-to-order omelets, seafood and roasted meats to regional comfort food such as red velvet pancakes, Chinese dim sum and roasted South Carolina Shrimp and grits. Late this year, acclaimed chef Gordon Ramsay is scheduled to open his second Las Vegas restaurant, the Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill at the hotel.

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Julie Coons
President and CEO
Electronic Retailing Association
Washington, DC

Across from Caesars Palace, Caesars Entertainment is developing The Linq, a 200,000-sf retail, dining, entertainment and hospitality district, which will debut in 2013. The Linq will feature the Las Vegas High Roller, one of the world's tallest observation wheels.

Caesars Entertainment also recently announced a new name for Imperial Palace: The Quad Resort & Casino. Interior and exterior renovations currently underway are scheduled to be completed in phases through late 2013.

Comprising one of the largest LEED-certified meetings complexes in the world, the 4,000-suite Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, the 3,000-suite Palazzo and the adjacent Sands Expo and Convention Center offer a combined 2.25 million sf of function space, including the 85,000-sf Venetian Ballroom. The Venetian has announced that husband-and-wife country stars Tim McGraw and Faith Hill will bring their "Soul2Soul" tour to the hotel for a limited series of weekend engagements that will run through April 2013. The hotel's Venetian Theater is being modified to accommodate the new show.

In other entertainment news, the ever popular Blue Man Group has just debuted a new production at the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino. The shows can be customized for groups.

MGM Grand announced the completion of its \$160 million room and suite remodel in the hotel's main tower, marking a major milestone in the resort's "Grand Renovation." The remodel, which began in October 2011, includes 3,570 grand king and queen guest rooms and 642 suites of varying types including the Skyline Terrace and Skyline Marquee Suites. The newly remod-

eled rooms and suites incorporate environmentally responsible elements including LED lighting; improved thermostats and solar shades to better manage temperature and guest comfort; upgraded faucets and showers; and bath amenities that are 100 percent biodegradable. MGM Grand also announced the Stay Well collection featuring 42 rooms and suites designed for guests looking to take their wellness lifestyle on the road when traveling. In spring 2013, MGM Grand will open Hakkasan Las Vegas Restaurant and Nightclub, an upscale dining experience combined with multiple nightlife components in the space where Studio 54 stood for 14 years.

Aria Resort & Casino, located in the CityCenter complex on the Las Vegas Strip, offers a Planner's Resource Center on its website, www.ariaslasvegas.com. It includes a Meeting Planner's Guide, a list of Aria policies and procedures, an Aria Meeting Facilities Guide, a Meeting & Conventions Brochure and property maps. The high-rise resort, which contains 4,004 guest rooms including 568 suites, offers 300,000 sf of high-tech conference space.

New York-New York, which has 2,024 guest rooms and more than 21,000 sf of meeting space, has launched a variety of initiatives that focus on environmental sustainability. In addition to becoming Green Key certified, the hotel has received the 2011 Business Leadership Recycling Award from the American Forest and Paper Association. The hotel's famous replicas of New York landmarks are lit with energy-efficient LED lighting, and a guest room recycling program is in place. Even room keys are made from biodegradable materials.

The Tropicana Las Vegas has announced that "Dancing with the Stars: Live in Las Vegas" will return to the hotel in March due to popular demand after its successful inaugural run. Inspired by the successful TV program, the new show will feature a "Vegas vibe." The Tropicana recently completed a \$180 million renovation including the resort's 1,375 guest rooms, casino and conference center, increasing the total meeting space to more than 100,000 sf.

The 390-room M Resort Spa Casino added the M Pavilion late last year with 40-foot ceilings and 25,000 sf of function space for 2,500 attendees, bringing the resort's total meeting and function



The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, the Palazzo and the adjacent Sands Expo and Convention Center offer a combined 2.25 million sf of function space.

Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands



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Lee Anne Short
Chief Operations Officer
Las Vegas Management

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Ms. Carla Alarcon
Director of Marketing
Open Systems, Inc.

Isuuzu would highly recommend the South Point for any meeting you may plan in Las Vegas. We used the new hotel in January of 2007 for a launch event that took over the hotel. Since that meeting, we have used South Point more than 15 times for various events, and meetings, from events that have taken over the hotel to just a small group, the staff at South Point will treat you the same. From the sales office to the staff working on the event, they're all about making sure that you're having the best event possible.

Brian Tabel
Retail Marketing Manager
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space up to 85,000 sf. The M Resort also recently added LUX, a 16th-floor restaurant featuring a 7,200-sf event space with expansive views of The Strip.

The Golden Gate Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas' original casino, opened its doors downtown at One Fremont Street in 1906. The landmark boutique property is celebrating the completion of its first major expansion in 50 years. Its new 35,000-sf addition boasts 14 hotel suites designed as a tribute to notable guests like Frank, Sammy and Dean; two vintage showgirl-inspired penthouses encompass the fifth floor; and an expanded casino floor features a new 1920s high-limit gaming room.

McCarran International Airport recently opened its state-of-the-art, \$2.4 billion Terminal 3. The new terminal will accommodate international flights as well as those offered by Virgin America, Alaska, Frontier, Sun Country and Jet Blue.

RENO

While Las Vegas, due to its long list of massive properties, naturally commands the lion's share of attention as a meeting destination in Nevada, it's certainly not the only one. As the folks at the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority like to say, Reno is set at a 4,400-foot elevation, so it comes with high expectations.

The city is accessible through Reno-Tahoe International Airport, which is served by six major air carriers. Reno offers a choice of multiple venues for events, including the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, the Reno Events Center, the National



Photo courtesy of Grand Sierra Resort & Casino

Reno's Grand Sierra Resort & Casino offers 1,900 guest rooms and more than 200,000 sf of meeting and event space.

Bowling Stadium, the Reno-Sparks Livestock Event Center and the Reno Ballroom.

The 1,900-room Grand Sierra Resort & Casino is under new ownership and undergoing a \$25 million renovation. The lobby has been upgraded, and guest rooms are being updated to reflect the style of the resort's Summit Suites. The renovation includes the Cantina, a new Mexican restaurant, and WET, a new country-western dance hall. Chef Charlie Palmer directs three restaurants, Charlie Palmer Steak, Brisciola and Fin Fish. Grand Sierra, which also features a 50-lane bowling center, has an 1,800-seat Grand Theater and more than 200,000 sf of meeting space, making it one of the largest convention center resorts in the country. The meeting space includes a 39,846-sf Grand Ballroom and the Nevada Conference & Exhibition Center with 44,115 sf of meeting space.

The 1,635-room Peppermill Resort Spa Casino took an ambitious step toward sustainability in 2011 when it replaced its natural gas boilers in favor of harnessing the power of the geothermal well located more than a mile beneath the resort. Geothermal energy is now used to heat the resort's buildings and water, including that used by Spa Toscana and two outdoor pools. The Peppermill claims to be the only resort in the U.S. with heating totally provided by geothermal energy produced on the property. Peppermill offers 106,000 sf of meeting space.

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AC&F

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The San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau, San Diego, CA, has named **Rick Outcalt** as senior vice president of citywide sales. **Jacqueline Scott** was named national sales director in the citywide sales division, responsible for Colorado, Ohio, Georgia and Florida along with all ConferenceDirect and HelmsBriscoe accounts. Outcalt formerly served as director of sales and marketing for the San Diego Marriott Marquis & Marina. Scott was most recently the director of citywides for the Starwood San Diego metro market.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel, Lake Buena Vista, FL,

has named **David Wahba** as director of sales. He formerly served as the complex director of sales and marketing for The Westin Beach Resort & Spa, Fort Lauderdale, FL and the Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel.

Patrick Roy was named director of sales and marketing for The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park. He previously was director of sales at The Waldorf Astoria New York in New York City.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. has appointed **Mary Casey** as senior vice president of sales, North America division. With more than 24 years of

experience with Starwood, Casey most recently was vice president, global corporate sales.

Amy Jacobsen was named sales manager for The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club with a focus on mid-Atlantic and West U.S. regions. She most recently served as national sales manager at the Loews Don CeSar Hotel, St. Pete Beach, FL.

The Peabody Orlando, Orlando, FL, has named **Karen A. Harvey** as national sales manager with a focus on group meetings and events. She most recently served as national accounts manager, citywide team, with Visit Orlando. AC&F

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