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Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Dan Meister, CMP, president of Meister Meetings & Travel Corporation, Boca Raton, FL, recently held two successful meetings at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando Resort (pictured).

Photo courtesy of Meister Meetings & Travel Corporation

Florida

**The Many Faces and Places
of the Sunshine State**

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Nevada

The Meetings Boom Is Back

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Meeting in Europe

PAGE 10

Jake Leinenkugel
President
Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Co.

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London's historic Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel, boasts 60,000 sf of meeting space, including a 20,000-sf Great Room.



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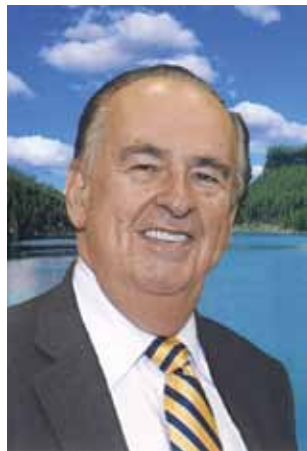
Entertainment for Symantec's users conference at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas included Roman gladiators and Cirque du Soleil performers.

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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

Welcome 2012

As we turn the page on another year, I pause a moment to reflect on our company's history. 2012 marks the beginning of our 37th year publishing business-to-business magazines. Yet, it feels like it was only yesterday that we began this journey. As many things have changed, so have many things stayed the same. I cherish the many solid business relationships I have fostered over these three decades. Nowadays, we may communicate by text or email but the friendships endure. This year, as in all the years before, I continued my tradition of sending holiday greeting cards via the U.S.P.S. And, of course, we continue to mail our magazines to our 40,000+ loyal subscribers every month, most of whom surprisingly tell me that they value the printed, hard copy of our magazines rather than a digital version. Sometimes, only the real thing will do.



As much as I recognize that we have certainly entered the digital age, I will always appreciate more a personal card or telephone greeting from a business associate, than a holiday jingle via email.

Be that as it may, the digital age is here to stay, and professional meeting planners are the beneficiaries of extraordinary technological advances, especially in the area of social media and mobile technology: Smart phones get smarter every year.

Another thing that has stayed the same over the last several years is the prominence of two premier meeting destinations — Florida and Nevada. No doubt, most planners have staged meetings and events in Florida and Nevada more than any other destination. After all, Orlando is the first U.S. destination to receive more than 50 million visitors in a year, and Las Vegas' occupancy is up to 85.2 percent to date, more than 20 points ahead of the national average, according to the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority. Both locales offer much to entice planners and engage attendees including easy accessibility, a variety of venues and attractions, built-in entertainment and much more. Dan Meister, CMP, president of FL-based Meister Meetings & Travel Corp., is a fan of meeting in Florida because he always finds something new to share with his clients. Meister, who graces our cover in this issue, says, "There is a lot to do, see and experience at these resorts... that one cannot do in just one visit."

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Four Seasons Hotel Breaks Ground at Walt Disney World

ORLANDO, FL — Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts recently broke ground on its new 444-room resort at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, FL. The Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World, slated to open in 2014, will include a rooftop restaurant with views of the Magic Kingdom, a 14,000-sf spa, three pools and a lazy river, and meeting and event space. The development will encompass the existing Tom Fazio-designed Osprey Ridge 18-hole championship golf course, which will be renovated and subsequently managed by Four Seasons. The project in the exclusive Golden Oak at Walt Disney World Resort also will include up to 40 Four Seasons Residence Club units and up to 90 Four Seasons Private Residences. www.fourseasons.com



Mickey Mouse and friends at the groundbreaking for the new Four Seasons Hotel include (left to right) Larry Silverstein, president and CEO of Silverstein Properties; Meg Crofton, president, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Operations, U.S. and France; and Kathleen Taylor, president and CEO of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts.

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Baum Named President & CEO of Reno-Sparks CVA



Chris Baum

RENO, NV — The Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (RSCVA) board of directors appointed Chris Baum as the organization's president and CEO. Previously, Baum served as the senior vice president of sales and marketing at the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau. At the time of his appointment, Baum said, "I'm thankful to the board for this opportunity, and I'm eager to start promoting the countless attributes of Reno-Tahoe. My family and I are already in love with the area." Dwight Dortch, chairman of the RSCVA board of directors, noted, "Chris is an exceptional communicator and has a 35-year record of success in the primary disciplines affecting this organization. His experience and vision will be beneficial to this destination for years to come." www.visitrenotahoe.com

Cancun Hosts Best of the Best Event

CANCUN, MEXICO — Cancun hosted more than 450 travel industry professionals November 30–December 2 for Travel Impressions' "Best of the Best" annual event. "Cancun takes great pride in being selected by Travel Impressions as the ideal destination to host Best of the Best. We give the warmest welcome to this group of industry experts who will have the opportunity to network while enjoying Cancun's varied activities and world-class facilities," said Jesus Almaguer, director of the Cancun Convention and Visitors Bureau. Best of the Best was held at Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach, a AAA Five Diamond Award property. "Cancun is such an important destination for Travel Impressions and the single largest destination in passengers from the United States. The warmth of the people and their wonderful properties made Cancun the perfect reward for this group of hard-working industry professionals," says John Hanratty, chief marketing officer and senior vice president of Travel Impressions, one of the largest leisure tour operators in the U.S. and a wholly owned subsidiary of American Express.

The St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort Debuts This Month

BAL HARBOUR, FL — St. Regis Hotels & Resorts, part of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc., announced the opening of The St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort. The resort is located in the Village of Bal Harbour, on the northern tip of Miami Beach. "The opening of The St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort represents a significant moment for St. Regis, as the brand continues to grow globally in destinations designed for the new generation of affluent travelers," says Paul James, global brand leader St. Regis and The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts. The St. Regis Bal Harbour will feature 214 elegant, oceanview rooms and suites and 307 residences in three all-glass 27-story towers. The resort will offer signature St. Regis Butler Service, a Remède Spa, a world-class dining experience at Jean-Georges' restaurant J&G Grill and interior design by Yabu Pushelberg. The resort spans nine acres on a 1,000-foot stretch of beach. www.stregis.com/balharbour, www.starwoodhotels.com



The St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort.

SeaWorld Orlando Announces New Attractions

ORLANDO, FL — SeaWorld Orlando announced new experiences that are scheduled to open in 2012: Turtle Trek at SeaWorld Orlando and Freshwater Oasis at Discovery Cove — a limited-admission, all-inclusive tropical resort across the street from SeaWorld Orlando. Turtle Trek takes guests on a sea turtle's amazing journey in a first-of-its-kind 3-D/360-degree dome theater, which allows a hyper-realistic 3-D movie to be shown all around and above participants. Freshwater Oasis is an all-new attraction featuring swimming and wading adventures, and face-to-face encounters with playful otters and curious marmosets. Also announced was SeaWorld Orlando's Antarctica - Empire of the Penguin, opening in spring 2013. It's a voyage to the bottom of the world, to the coldest and windiest continent, to a place of ice more than 9,000 feet thick — a journey to Antarctica and to the empire of the penguin. More details will be released in the near future. www.seaworldorlando.com

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By Jim Ruzsala

Foster a People-Centric Environment for Success in the New Year

The late Steve Jobs once said, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.” The economic downturn led mainstream business practices into severe cost-cutting mode in an effort to survive. Unfortunately, now that organizations are as lean as possible — doing more with less — they’ve reached a breaking point. No one can cut their way towards prosperity long-term. So, what’s next?

Innovation Is the Game Changer

If an organization wants to succeed, it must revolutionize the way it achieves success. Innovation will be the game changer. Yet, innovation doesn’t originate from a company, but rather its network of people — employees, channel partners and customers. Fostering a people-centric environment provides for a setting that better promotes, nurtures and harnesses the power of innovation. Innovation now requires an emphasis on engagement, and it doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It thrives where leaders, managers, partners and peers are given opportunities and encouraged to network and communicate with one another in meaningful ways.

Meetings, events and incentives (ME&I) help us innovate and create engagement through the exchange of information, ideas and insights. Meeting professionals need to ask themselves what distinguishes leaders from followers. As a leader, you must put people at the center of your ME&I strategy. People, and specifically, your meeting participants, are the key to innovation and the thread that binds the following trends.

Apply Human Science to ME&I

For years, business leaders have been relying on

the works of Maslow and Skinner to understand the inner workings of why humans behave the way they do, crafting business strategy accordingly. In today’s world, business leaders are taking their cues from the latest research in the human sciences and creating new ways of thinking about how to better engage their people and further understand what drives their behaviors and performance.

Meetings, events and incentives cannot be treated as one-off transactional activities. To evolve how stakeholders and attendees consider these strategies, planners need to help them better understand the essence of human nature. Paul Lawrence and Nitin Nohria, with Harvard Business School, fleshed out a theory on the drivers of human behavior. They theorized that nearly every individual on the planet is imbued with four biological “drives” — the drive to acquire, bond, create and defend. Taking it a step further, planners can apply the four-drive model to meeting design, allowing participants to:

- **Acquire:** Garner knowledge and information through meeting content.
- **Defend:** Reinforce what it is the organization stands for, its values and mission.
- **Bond:** Offer relationship-building and networking opportunities, in addition to celebrating performance achievements.
- **Create:** Participate and co-create through dialogues.

Be Open to New Meeting Designs

Radical thinking surfaced during the economic downturn in 2008. With that, the features and benefits of technologies such as virtual applications exploded onto the meeting and event scene. Meeting professionals were challenged and, at

times, required to take their meetings virtual — mind you at the same time being held at equal, if not improved, performance expectations.

While we learned that virtual programs alone can’t serve as a replacement but rather an enhancement for face-to-face engagement, we also began to better understand the essentials of building a better strategy. Not all meeting or attendee types are created equal. We needed a more integrated approach, where technologies weren’t just focused on driving operational efficiencies but also offered opportunities for enhancing attendee engagement.

In 2012, technology will become a tool for boosting engagement. The use of virtual, social and mobile technologies, for instance, by attendees and participants in their everyday lives has created significant shifts in how people manage, operate and interact with one another. To be successful, meeting planners need to keep in mind these three key points when using technology as an engagement tool: Be clear on your business objectives for the event; deploy technology solutions aligned to your business objectives and communication goals; and measure to ensure effectiveness and improvement.

Let Your Participants Steer ME&I Design

Companies must stop designing meeting, event and incentive programs in a vacuum. Meeting professionals must have a deeper understanding of the experiences their people want to have. What type of destination do they want? Do they want to bring a guest or the entire family? Are they interested in community involvement or free time? Content? Do they prefer small breakout sessions or keynotes from industry experts? These are the types of questions planners need to answer before they begin designing the program.

The answers lie in giving participants a voice in their experience. Pre- and post-event surveys and predictive modeling studies can help companies design the right meeting, event or incentive program that drives the most effective outcome for the business.

It’s an exciting time in the industry as people take a front row seat in driving performance and innovation. Companies who put their people first can achieve far better business performance outcomes as a result. In turn, these companies will become industry leaders. **C&IT**

“If an organization wants to succeed, it must **revolutionize the way** it achieves success.”



Jim Ruzsala

is the director of marketing, Maritz Travel Company, St. Louis, MO. Ruzsala leads the company’s development of new and innovative strategies to help organizations achieve better business value through their incentive travel efforts. A recognized thought leader, advocate and voice for the incentive industry, Ruzsala has presented at many industry events, moderated cross-industry panels and supports incentive association groups. jim.ruszala@maritz.com



Photo courtesy of Mandarin Oriental

Europe

Good Values, Great Destinations

By Karen Brost

When planning meetings and incentive programs in Europe, it sure helps to know the territory. "About 90 percent of what we do is in Europe," says Kevin Devanney, president and founder of Incentive Travel Solutions in Charlotte, NC, "so we're pretty familiar with the market."

Devanney explains how the current financial situation in Europe is impacting meetings and incentives. "The dollar has strengthened in 2011 just slightly, and it's helped a little bit with business to Europe," he says. "That's certainly a posi-

The impressive view from the Mandarin Oriental, Prague, a former monastery, includes the historic Prague Castle.

tive for us and for Europeans in the incentive travel business. I think Europeans like a strong euro, however it really helps them when the dollar strengthens because they certainly see an uptick in business. The hotels and DMCs all survive primarily off the U.S. business.

"Spain, Italy, England and France are the big four incentive destinations in Europe," he continues. "Meetings-wise, you can throw Germany into the mix, because there's so much commerce and business taking place there. If you're including meetings, Germany raises the bar a little bit. We do a little more in Germany for that fact."

Spain

Devanney says that Barcelona was a popular destination for a lot of American

companies in 2011. He explains why: "No 1, they have great restaurants over there. The influence of Gaudi on the city of Barcelona (also) has a big impact. You see that through the entire city." Antoni Gaudi was a celebrated Spanish architect in the late 1800s and early 1900s whose innovative designs continue to capture the interest and imagination of visitors to the city today.

A few of Gaudi's most famous works can be found near the 98-room Mandarin Oriental, Barcelona, which opened in late 2009. The hotel is located on the city's prestigious Passeig de Gràcia in an area filled with fashionable boutiques and restaurants.

One of the Barcelona hotels Devanney likes is El Palace, a 125-room luxury property set in the heart of the city. "It's a five-star property that has some meeting space and is in a fantastic location. It was recently renovated, and it's a great location for incentives," he says. The building was constructed in 1919 at the height of the city's cultural renaissance, and the hotel continues to reflect an air of Old World elegance.

England

"London is very strong right now," Devanney comments, citing Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee upcoming in June as well as the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. "In 2012 we've got some interest from our clients for all of those reasons," he says. "It's not necessarily for the Jubilee or for the Olympics, but because the city will be really decked out and highly decorated through the year in anticipation (of these events). It's really a great location."

"They're doing a lot of building," he continues, "but some of the old hotels like the Grosvenor House and Claridge's are still fantastic hotels. There's a brand new InterContinental and Four Seasons. All of the hotels along Hyde Park have recently renovated, like the

Hilton and the Sheraton. That location is great for both meetings and incentives."

The 420-room Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel, has been hosting royalty, celebrities and business leaders since 1929. "It has a 19th century ice rink that was incorporated into the hotel," Devanny says. The ice rink was converted into what is now known as the Great Room, billed by Marriott as the "largest hotel banqueting space in Europe" with nearly 20,000 sf of space. In total, the hotel offers more than 60,000 sf of meeting space including 31 meeting rooms.

Claridge's, which has a heritage dating back to the 1850s, is one of London's most iconic hotels. Of its 203 guest rooms, 67 are suites. Half of the hotel's accommodations are decorated in an art deco style, and the rest are Victorian. As proof of just how chic this historic hotel is, it features a series of rooms and suites designed by Diane Von Furstenberg.

The Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane opened in early 2011. Located in the heart of the city's prestigious Mayfair area, it features 147 guest rooms, 46 suites, and more than 8,500 sf of meeting space, including the



Enthusiastic attendees arrive at the Barcelona airport on a recent incentive trip arranged by Incentive Travel Solutions.

mountain range in the Swiss Alps, is being developed into a year-round destination. The expansion project calls for the construction of six four- to five-star hotels, including The Chedi Andermatt, a 50-room, five-star property expected to open in time for the 2013 winter season.

Czech Republic

"Prague continues to be a fabulous surprise for people who wouldn't have gotten there on their own," Tichenor

explains. "For incentive operators to take a group there has been very popular, because they solve all the problems that people think they're going to have. As it turns out, it's quite simple to go there. And it's a good value."

He described the city's appeal. "In its time it was the capital of Bohemia. It was the art and music center that was equivalent to Vienna and Budapest, and it's still that way. Toddlers (there) learn to tie their shoes and brush their teeth and play the violin. Doesn't everybody?" he laughs.

"The first vision of it, just to look at the pictures, is very spiky and gothic. It's hard to pick up all of the brilliant reflective light that characterizes the real nature of the town and its spirit when you're just looking at the online pictures," he continues. "Being that far north it feels like it's off the beaten track, yet Lufthansa flies in there as a connection with United, so it's no problem at all (to get there)."

Kellie Jettie, special events specialist for the craft supplies direct sales company Stampin' Up!, planned a three-night, four-day sales incentive trip for 30 attendees at the Mandarin Oriental, Prague earlier this year. "Our group was from all over Europe, and Prague had something to offer for everyone," she says. "Our group loved being able to wander around the streets and shop. We loved the quiet location of the hotel and the fact that it was a former monastery."

Heritage Travel Group based in Angels Camp, CA. His company is currently in the process of planning several European sales incentive trips, one of which will be held in St. Moritz. "Sometimes people play down Switzerland as being too predictable, and they're usually mistaken," he says. "This is going to be a fun mix of the summertime in the Alps and the heritage of the Olympic Games there." One of the group's stops will be to see the historic bobsled tracks that have been used for Olympic events.

Tichenor noted that Switzerland also has a heritage of group travel. "It began with Thomas Cook taking groups to St. Moritz,"



Kevin Devanney, Founder and President Incentive Travel Solutions, Charlotte, NC

"For companies that really want to raise the bar and continue to raise the bar for their top performers, they understand that Europe is a destination that is worth the increasing cost."

Hamilton Room with 180-degree views of Park Lane and Hyde Park.

The new 258-room InterContinental London Westminster is scheduled to open in early 2012. It is being built in a former Treasury building within walking distance of Buckingham Palace.

Switzerland

"Europe is still the top request," explains John Tichenor, president of World

he explains. "Their promotion was that 'it's the sunniest winter in the world.'"

In other news from Switzerland, InterContinental plans to open the five-star Hotel Stilli Park in Davos in late 2013. It will have 216 guest rooms and suites, a conference center, spa, bars and restaurants, all housed in a dramatic, oval-shaped building.

Andermatt, a winter sports haven located at the base of the Gotthard Massif

The 99-room Mandarin Oriental, Prague is a five-star hotel located in the city's picturesque Mala Strana district. The former monastery in which the hotel is housed has roots dating back to the 14th century. The hotel offers views of historic Prague Castle, which towers over the city.

"The overall experience in Prague was charming," Jettie continues. "A special moment for our group was our final night event where we were able to have dinner at the Archbishop's Palace. Not a lot of groups are able to do this. The setting was gorgeous, and right outside the window was the view of the city and the Prague Castle."

Jettie summed up the experience. "Our group gave Prague high marks. We loved the shopping, the food and the overall feel of Prague. It was simply charming. It has been one of our favorite destinations."

Monaco

The principality of Monaco, home of the legendary gaming and auto racing destination of Monte Carlo, is located just 25 minutes from the Nice Cote D'Azur Airport, and boasts more than 300 days of sunshine and more than 2,000 guest rooms in four- and five-star hotels. It also features the Grimaldi Forum, which offers more than 376,000 sf of space, including more than 107,000 sf of exhibition space, three auditoriums and 22 meeting rooms.

Tichenor reflected on Monte Carlo's fairy-tale image. "It's one of those places that has that reputation because it deserves it. Those who like it, like it because it's fabulous. It's still got that wild combination of the elegance of Princess Grace and the grit of the Grand Prix." Held in May, the Grand Prix of Monaco is considered to be the most difficult race in the World Formula 1 Championship.

He described other key features of Monte Carlo. "You can walk so much of the town, get easily over to the palace and quickly appreciate how valuable it was as a defensible port in the pirate days when it was really established."

The city's panoramic views of the Mediterranean coast that are so prized by visitors today are what made it possible for the city to spot approaching pirates and defend the "friendly" ships in its harbors against them.

"Monte Carlo is again popular because it's on the Mediterranean and it has a sense that it's always going to be the most expensive place on earth, but actually, it's a good value," he continues. "At the peak (of the market), everything was high priced, but everybody is getting realistic about coming in and making it affordable now."

The 280-room Hotel Hermitage in Monte Carlo completed a total hotel renovation earlier



Kellie Jettie, Special Events Specialist
Stampin' Up!, Riverton, UT

this year that was designed by award-winning interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon. The hotel, which overlooks the Mediterranean, has one of the largest wine cellars in the world and offers vintage wines by the glass in its Crystal Bar. The hotel recently added a new meeting room with a translation booth, and it offers satellite check-in and a separate entrance just for groups. The hotel also offers special group rates guaranteed in U.S. dollars.

Guests staying at the Hotel Hermitage receive the Cercle Monte-Carlo card, which gives them free admission to the Casino de Monte Carlo and complimentary shuttle transfers within the resort.

The Monaco Convention Bureau is offering a free meeting planning guide, which can be downloaded at www.monacomeetings.com. It contains travel information, value added services, a map, a list of destination management companies and other helpful resources.

Scotland

The Fairmont St. Andrews, a five-star resort located in the legendary destination of St. Andrews, Scotland, was named Golf Hotel of the Year at the Golf Tourism Scotland Gold Standard Awards ceremony for 2011. Located on 520 acres of coastline overlooking the North Sea, the 209-room cliff-top resort is also known for its world-class accommodations and service.

France

The new 138-room Mandarin Oriental, Paris opened in September on Rue Saint-Honoré, one of the city's most fashionable streets. The hotel features a large inner courtyard offering a

"A special moment for our group was our final night event where we were able to have dinner at the Archbishop's Palace. ...The setting was gorgeous, and right outside the window was the view of the city and the Prague Castle."

choice of restaurants where guests can enjoy al fresco dining.

In a highly unusual move, the French government is allowing a private hotel operator, Belgium's Ivy International SA, to convert part of the historic Palace of Versailles into a 23-room boutique luxury hotel. The new hotel is being created in a building originally constructed in the 1680s to serve as the offices and home of the king's treasurer. Expected to open in early 2012, it will be named Hotel de l'Orangerie after the greenhouse where Louis XIV stored his 1,700 orange and palm trees throughout the winter months.

Germany

The German National Tourist Board and the German Convention Bureau (GCB) will be working together throughout 2012 to promote Germany as a meeting destination. The overall goal of the initiative is to increase meeting and incentive business from the U.S., China, Brazil and Japan.



The elegant Fairmont St. Andrews overlooks the North Sea in the Home of Golf, St. Andrews, Scotland. The Fairmont, which won the IAGTO 2012 European Golf Resort of the Year, features two golf courses, 209 guest rooms and 15,000 sf of meeting space.

The GCB maintains a comprehensive website www.germany-meetings.com to assist planners with finding the right venues and other resources. The site also includes a list of certificates and best practices for hotels and convention centers that stage green meetings.

The 563-room Scandic Berlin Potsdamer Platz hotel, located in the German capital, only uses energy from renewable sources. It is the first hotel in Germany to be awarded the EU Ecolabel and silver medal for sustainable building.

Deutsche Bahn, Germany's national railway, has created the "Umwelt-Plus" event ticket, which offers attendees carbon-free transportation to large events for a fixed price. The railway's green campaign, called the "DB Eco Program," includes more than 20 activities that focus on climate protection.

An organization called the European Spatial Planning Observation Network has determined that Germany is the most accessible country in Europe due to its 40 airports and extensive network of roads and railways. The organization also determined that the metropolitan area around the financial hub of Frankfurt is the most accessible region in continental Europe.

Berlin just became the newest European member of the Best Cities Global Alliance, a group of 10 convention bureaus from cities around the world that participate in joint marketing campaigns in global markets. The group also focuses on developing new markets. Two other European cities Copenhagen and Edinburgh are already members of the group.

Italy

In early 2012, Meliá Hotels International will open the Gran Meliá Rome as part of the company's mission to expand its brand throughout Europe. To create what it calls a "luxury urban resort," the company converted an abandoned orphanage, which dates back to 1835. The new 116-room property is located on Via del Gianicolo facing the walls of the Vatican. It will offer views of St. Peter's Basilica, the Castel Sant'Angelo and the Tiber River.

Turkey

Dedeman Hotels & Resorts, Turkey's largest hotel chain, recently celebrated its 45th year in business. The 206-room Dedeman Konya Hotel & Convention Center, located in central Turkey, has been awarded with a Green Star Certificate by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Located in a chic neighborhood, the hotel is within walking distance of Konya's city center.

The Hotel Dedeman Istanbul, located in northwest Turkey, recently renovated its Roof Bar, which offers spectacular views of Istanbul and the Bosphorus strait. The five-star hotel contains 325 guest rooms and 17 conference rooms.

Hotel Brand Expansions

Marriott recently announced that it has developed a new European design model for its Courtyard by Marriott brand as part of the company's plans to significantly grow the brand across Europe. The new room design features clean lines, natural light and a Mediterranean color palette and a "spa-like" bathroom. Like Courtyard properties in the U.S., the lob-

by will have a contemporary design, a 24-hour market and an interactive "GoBoard" screen where travelers can check the latest news, weather and local information. The first two hotels with the new design are scheduled to open in Aberdeen, Scotland and Cologne, Germany in 2013.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has also announced plans to expand its presence throughout Europe with the addition of 15 properties to be operated under franchise agreements. Four of the new hotels will be in the UK, and the others will be located in the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Turkey and Russia. One of the new properties, the 172-room Hotel Indigo - Victoria Station, is scheduled to open in Manchester, England in spring 2012.

Europe Is a Top Choice

The German Convention Bureau reports that Europe is the most important foreign destination for U.S. planners, and that approximately 50 percent of all foreign events staged by U.S. planners take place in Europe.

For Devanney's company, the percentage is much higher. "We will probably have about 90 percent of our incentive business going to Europe this year," he notes. "I think it's great. I think the dollar has strengthened and at the same time, people are recognizing that it's not fluctuating that much. It's just something that we live with now. For companies that really want to raise the bar and continue to raise the bar for their top performers, they understand that Europe is a destination that is worth the increasing cost to keep their top performers motivated and coming back for next year."

C&IT

Turn Jeers Into Cheers

How to Convert Costly Speakers Into Priceless Investments

By George Seli

With the reduced meeting budgets of recent years, speaker coaches may in some cases have seen more corporate business than professional speakers. Many companies focused on utilizing their own executives to deliver that motivating keynote, as well as other employees throughout the meeting in speaking roles. And when those employees aren't entirely comfortable speaking to a group or need help preparing, a speaker coach is a sensible investment.

"They're good at what they do, and we want our internal speakers to do well and to have those skills moving forward,"

teams, but do so from a different perspective than office culture, can be just what's needed to revitalize productivity.

The Importance of Teamwork

"The size of teams has been reduced substantially for some companies that we work with," says Kathryn Jurgensen, president/CEO of Premier Meetings, located in Raleigh, NC. "They lost some employees or had cutbacks, and those who remain have had to pick up the slack. One chink in the armor kind of demoralizes

ers or to present to specific departments that could benefit from their wisdom.

Effective teamwork depends on effective leadership, and the latter topic is also in high demand, notes Charlotte Raybourn, account executive/public relations director with Overland Park, KS-based Five Star Speakers & Trainers. "Many companies are trying to instill more leadership within their department heads. They want to keep their employees engaged, and the department heads are primarily the ones who have to keep the employees engaged all the time." Other popular speakers include futurists, economists, and experts in corporate concerns such as change management and social responsibility.

ROI is always a major focus, and speakers are often being asked to deliver a little more value for their fee. An enthralling speech is obviously the main thing, but those who are willing to be available beyond that are typically preferred. Some "big name" speakers can be expected to leave after their keynote, or at most to stay for Q&A, photos, handshakes and the like.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who stay in touch with the company throughout the year to provide advice informally, perhaps in the hope of being rehired. And there are those who are available to serve in various roles at the meeting. One option is to hire an emcee for this purpose. For example, Santa Clara, CA-based Align Technology, a client of SpotOn Events, partners with corporate entertainer Richard Laible, who has a background with Chicago's famous Second City comedy troupe, to keep the speakers and the meeting on schedule, add humor and facilitate educational games for the company's sales force,

"Oftentimes it boils down to theme, whether their background syncs into the points we're trying to get across to our people."

ROBIN REUBEN, CMP, Senior Meeting Planner
McKesson Corporation, San Francisco, CA

says Robin Reuben, CMP, senior meeting planner with San Francisco-based McKesson Corporation. While the bulk of the speakers at McKesson's sales conferences remains internal, the company is starting to integrate outside motivational speakers again. After all, the recession's impact on corporate America hasn't been especially motivating, and teams and departments have in many cases been disrupted by layoffs. An outside speaker who cannot only address the cohesiveness of

the entire team. So we're trying to hire speakers that can speak to the importance and critical nature of teamwork in getting any job done, but also the importance of teamwork and group think as far as 'Do we feel motivated as a group or not?'" Tellingly, Jurgensen adds that the last five or six speakers she's hired have been astronauts or pilots, those who face situations where teamwork can be a life-or-death matter. These speakers are sometimes even rehired to serve as train-



notes Stephanie Franco, CMP, principal at San Francisco-based SpotOn Events.

Selecting Memorable, Motivational Speakers

While an emcee can become a fixture at a company's meetings, new speakers must be regularly sought to keep attendees engaged with fresh approaches to motivation, teamwork and other key areas. "I think oftentimes clients get concerned about picking the right speaker or get a little nervous about it. They're apprehensive when they find out they need to do that," says Teri Abram, president of Dallas-based EventLink International

Inc. "But it becomes an easy process when you identify the goals and what the executives are looking for." Indeed, the best way to ensure that a speaker will work out is to determine if he or she can address the company's challenges and fit the theme of the program. "Oftentimes it boils down to theme, whether their background syncs into the points we're trying to get across to our people," Reuben comments. For example, there is a natural tie-in with rising to the top of the sales chart and mountain climbing, and McKesson once hired Erik Weißenmayer, the blind climber who scaled Mount Everest, to do a motivational speech for a sales confer-

ence. Other memorable speakers, Reuben relates, include Keith Harrell, the basketball player and IBM sales pro who passed away from cancer last year, and political consultants James Carville Jr. and Mary Matalin, hired for the company's senior management strategy forums.

A big part of Reuben's process of narrowing down to her top three speakers is to get referrals from other planners, two per speaker. Importantly, one should seek referrals from planners who have actually seen, not merely hired, the speaker. A highly recommended speaker who can support the corporate message is a fairly safe bet, regardless of whether he or she has decades of experience. For Jurgensen, "Experience level is not as important as their message, and whether they can customize it to the group; and their resumé, particularly the sizes of groups they've spoken to." And typically, if a speaker is sourced through a bureau, he or she is not going to be a newbie to the speaking world.

"If anybody's just starting out, we don't typically work with them unless they've got some unique background that would be useful to some of our clients," Raybourn says. "Otherwise we encourage them to do a lot of local events first and really get their feet wet for a good five years before we'll put them out there in the

"Experience level is not as important as their message, and whether they can customize it to the group; and their resumé, particularly the sizes of groups they've spoken to."

KATHRYN JURGENSEN, President/CEO
Premier Meetings, Raleigh, NC

circuit.” The bureau also provides speaker videos and what it terms “discovery calls” with prospective speakers, which help the parties determine if there is a match.

Speakers on those calls have already met the client’s basic criteria, including price range. And working through a bureau can sometimes result in savings. “If a client is on a really strict budget and a speaker’s fee is slightly over, oftentimes they will come down a little on their fee for us because we have built a relationship with them,” says Franco. Predictably, the top-tier speakers — whose high fees reflect their high demand — will tend to be less given to negotiating. “Those whose fees are upward of \$100,000, it’s pretty cut and dried,” Franco observed. “Those who are perhaps under \$50,000 are going to be more flexible.”

One welcome trend some planners have noticed in recent years is that speakers are less demanding in their “riders” (special requests in travel, lodging and amenities) in view of the economic challenges faced by their corporate clients. “I’ve had speakers that are quite well known who deserve the



“We encourage them to do a lot of local events first and really get their feet wet for a good five years before we’ll put them out there in the circuit.”

CHARLOTTE RAYBOURN, Account Executive
Five Star Speakers & Trainers, Overland Park, KS

contract for multiple engagements at a slightly reduced fee. Another is to offer more opportunity for the speaker to promote his or her products. “What can we do to add value for them and really make it a win-win situation? Without actually selling their products on the stage, perhaps we make the products accessible between sessions or include them in our agenda booklet — sort of an ad but not really an ad, more of a feature along with

how exactly they expect the speech to be customized. The speaker may just be putting the company name at the top of the presentation.” Abram works with clients to make these communications fairly specific. “We might tell them we’ve had layoffs across the board or within certain departments, or changes in teams without layoffs. And some of that has been through acquisition: Previously competing teams now become one team, so we have had speakers customize to that.”

“Our company has gone through many transitions. If we’ve had layoffs or cuts or difficulty in a certain area, we’ll make the speaker aware of that so they can focus on it and make their speech a little more meaningful,” says Terry Connor, who retired in September from his position as project/quality manager with Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare Corporation, and who now acts as a consultant for the company. Connor and Tenet’s planning committee regularly selected outside speakers for the company’s training sessions. “Or if there’s a national program that we haven’t been able yet to participate in, we would want them to know that in case they were going to spend a lot of time on that subject matter. It’s just making the information as useful to attendees as possible. Because one of the worst comments is: ‘That idea was great but we can’t afford to do that’ or ‘I have no way of taking that information back and using it.’”

Having senior management meet or conference call with the speaker beforehand is also a good measure, for the same reasons. “We always have the CEO

of our client talk with the speaker so he or she will have a very clear understanding of what’s expected and what’s needed,” Jurgensen comments. It also helps that the speakers learn the names of key executives, along with (perhaps) something about their personality, golf skills and the like. Abram says, “You can bring some humor into that, anecdotes about things that have happened through the years with executives. That depends on the executive, some are more dynamic and willing to do that.”

The speakers sometimes learn what *not* to include in their presentation, once they understand the audience demographics. “I have to be very careful with our international groups that we don’t have the speaker toss out a comment about some political view that may not be appropriate,” says Jurgensen. “For example, I don’t want them to talk about terrorism or make faith-based comments. We had one speaker who did really well and then at the end discussed why we should move forward on stem-cell research. And the audience was mostly Catholic.”

Many professional speakers will send their clients questionnaires to get a sense of the audience demographics and current corporate issues. After all, they clearly want to deliver a tailored speech as much as the client does. But one thing a speaker can’t be expected to customize to any great degree is his or her style of delivery and tone. Some are experts in particular fields though not necessarily that charismatic or entertaining. Some base their talk on moving and instructive per-

sonal experiences, while others are livelier, more humorous and get interactive with the audience. Speakers do have to stay within these “comfort zones” if they are to be at their best, and planners must keep that in mind when fitting them into the program. For example, one may want to open with a serious keynote and close with a speaker who is on the lighter side. “We would reach out to such a person to be our closing speaker,” says Connor. Tenet’s 2½-day training meetings “tend to be pretty heavy” with breakout sessions, and

someone on our committee that heard her speak at a very large conference,” Connor explains. “She did a wonderful job and is probably one of our highest-rated speakers, kind of tying everything together.”

Even for outstanding speakers, Connor usually did not rebook them for at least three years, to keep the program new and spark interest. For example, last year the company hired Tim Porter-O’Grady, DM, EdD, ScD(h), FAAN, an international consultant and mediation specialist. “He’s a wonderful, well-received speaker with



“I think it’s very important to get in writing just what the company is trying to accomplish and how exactly they expect the speech to be customized.”

TERI ABRAM, President
EventLink International Inc., Dallas, TX

participants hear from many speakers. Ending on an upbeat note is thus appreciated by attendees. So for instance, Tenet brought in Helen Haskell, president of Mothers Against Medical Error, who had lost her 15-year-old son due to a medical error in a hospital, as an opening speaker. But as a closing speaker, they selected executive career/life coach Connie Podesta. “She came highly recommended; we had

a very charismatic style,” says Connor. O’Grady had presented to the Tenet group five years ago, “so there’s enough time for his material to be fresh and current, and then it’s not as if people will feel, ‘Oh, I’ve heard him before.’”

Despite lingering frugality on meeting budgets, now is arguably a time to stretch budgets (if needed) for powerful speakers such as O’Grady, Podesta and Weihenmayer. It may mean trimming F&B, lodging or other cost centers, but the positive impact that a great speaker can have on a company’s sales force and the efficiency of other departments is justification — especially for companies trying to get back on track after layoffs and other challenges.

Evidence for that impact can come from post-meeting surveys on the speaker’s performance. But it can also be gleaned informally: If a speaker gets a standing ovation and attendees are still using his or her catchphrases around the water cooler for months afterwards, it’s likely the speaker’s “fee” was transformed into a prudent “investment.” **C&IT**



“Those whose fees are upward of \$100,000, it’s pretty cut and dried. Those who are perhaps under \$50,000 are going to be more flexible (in negotiating).”

STEPHANIE FRANCO, CMP, Principal
SpotOn Events, San Francisco, CA

best and who will insist on traveling coach,” says Jurgensen. “They feel like it’s their responsibility to understand what clients are going through. I had one CEO who spoke to all 400 employees of the company, and he drove eight hours to get there.”

Negotiation Strategies

While one can’t always count on a speaker’s flexibility with fees or riders, there are common strategies to obtain leverage in negotiation. One is to try to

contact information,” Abram explains. “We might also give them access to the executives for a breakfast.”

On the other hand, there is the issue of increasing ROI for the company, by ensuring the presentation and its message are fine-tuned to corporate concerns. “That’s always a good question to ask right upfront: How much can we customize the speech?” says Abram. “I think it’s very important to get in writing just what the company is trying to accomplish and



“Our company has gone through many transitions. If we’ve had layoffs or cuts or difficulty in a certain area, we’ll make the speaker aware of that so they can focus on it and make their speech a little more meaningful.”

TERRY CONNOR, Consultant
Tenet Healthcare Corporation, Dallas, TX



Put Your Finger on the Pulse of the Web

How to Get the Most Out of Social Media

Building pre-meeting buzz, engaging attendees and obtaining feedback are essential parts of the meeting planning process. Nowadays, it takes more than email and meeting-specific websites to engage attendees. That's why more planners are flocking to social media and learning how to harness the power of these extraordinary tools to promote communication, elevate the meeting experience, engage attendees and enhance the bottom line.

Fred Diniz, managing director

By Derek Reveron

of Nanuet, NY-based Global Events Consultants (GEC), routinely uses social media for meetings. For example, Diniz used social media to communicate with approximately 250 executives, managers and clients of a large media company prior to their four-day meeting in Chicago. The event included education, strategy and training sessions as well as speakers from major technology companies. "About five weeks out, we created

a Facebook page that provided information about everything that would happen and updated the agenda. An important speaker couldn't attend due to a conflict, and we explained it on Facebook. We also used LinkedIn because not everybody uses Facebook," says Diniz.

He also used Twitter to solicit questions and comments from attendees during speaker presentations. Attendees used mobile devices to send tweets that appeared on large onstage screens during speaker presentations. Offsite at-

tendees, who participated through webcasts, could also tweet.

The feedback from attendees was positive as was the meeting's ROI. "We had a conversation with the company a few weeks after the event. They said it was absolutely worth it and are planning to do the same thing again this year," says Diniz.

The "Big Three" of social media — Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn — are gradually becoming indispensable tools for meeting planners. Planners use Facebook and LinkedIn to communicate information and meeting content such as videos, photos, blogs, apps, updates, event schedules and attendee surveys. Furthermore, many planners also use Twitter to encourage attendees to provide feedback via their mobile devices during meetings, seminars, training sessions and presentations.

Fred Diniz
Managing Director
Global Events
Consultants
Nanuet, NY



"Because social media is so new...we never know who is using what. We can't afford to not do one and do the other...so we go broad spectrum."

Create Buzz and Foster Engagement

Social media can add more value and enhance attendee experiences for all kinds of corporate meetings. According to Cameron Toth, a Valhalla, NY-based social media consultant and owner of Toth Communications, social media is a great tool to create buzz for contests and scavenger hunts and to foster engagement for educational events. Disseminating information in advance

for training sessions "so that people are more prepared and have more knowledge" is vital, Toth says. "Sometimes companies spend money on training and don't get anywhere because people aren't engaged. You can change that if you create a buzz through social media.

"It can also be used to get people comfortable with new product information, and for motivation and incentives to push people toward a goal."

Social media experts advise planners to determine which social media — and which functions of each media — best fit a meeting's goals and content. Because social media is an emerging technology that people use in different ways, experts advise planners to use more than one form of social media if possible. That's the approach Diniz takes. "Because social media is so new to everybody, we never know who is using what, and it's constantly changing. We can't afford to not do one and do the other, and we don't yet know the impact of that, so we go broad spectrum," he says.

Try It, You'll Like It

Since social media constantly evolves, and many planners are novices at using it, they sometimes take an experimental approach, according to experts. Many planners take a "try it all" approach, says Lindy Dreyer, chief social media marketer at SocialFish, a social media consulting firm based in Washington, DC. "Sometimes we don't know what works, and the simplest way to do the research is to try it. That necessitates some experimentation. This stuff moves so fast that it's very tempting to go with whatever the newest, greatest thing is," she says.

Dreyer adds, "It all goes back to being clear about your objectives and on ways to use social media to achieve them. When you take that approach, you realize which platforms make sense."

Planners experienced with using social media for meetings often say



Lindy Dreyer
Chief Social Media
Marketer
SocialFish
Washington, DC

"It all goes back to being clear about your objectives and on ways to use social media to achieve them. When you take that approach, you realize which platforms make sense."

that a targeted approach tends to work best, according to Marla Watson-Werst, president, the Peapod Group, LLC, a Colleyville, TX, firm that plans corporate events, meetings and incentives. "You can take a broad approach. I also think you don't look like you're experienced if you take that to your clients. I like to sit down with clients and figure out how much they use social media, which ones they use, is it a part of their corporate culture, and how we can use it for meetings," she relates.

Often, Watson-Werst uses social media such as Facebook and Twitter for corporate meetings and events, especially those that include teambuilding. For instance, her company staged a three-day, 100-attendee meeting for a watercraft company at a Dallas hotel that included a general session, educational seminars and a teambuilding event — assembling 30 kids bikes. Watson-Werst explains, "When we set the teams up, we made one person in each group in charge of tweeting what the team is doing. It went up on a screen along with tweets in real time of what participants think of the teambuilding exercise along with pictures of the attendees with captions."

Watson-Werst also posted meeting content and updates to a watercraft company Facebook page accessible only to employees. Prior to the meeting, she

notified attendees via email that meeting information would be available on the Facebook page. "I wanted to make sure they were signed up for the company's private Facebook page so they could go there for the information instead of expecting to receive it through email," says Watson-Werst.

of meeting activities. "A videographer photographed breakout sessions, edited it at the end of the day and posted it to Facebook so people could see themselves. We recorded the keynote speaker, uploaded it to Facebook and tweeted the link to attendees," says Watson-Werst.

She also used Twitter to facilitate attendee participation during speaker

presentations. "They were able to tweet in their questions or comments to a moderator, who filtered them and sent them to the speaker and posted them on a screen so they could be addressed on the spot," she notes.

Know When to Ask for Help

While in-house corporate planners

often have the advantage of using their company's tech support, some independent meeting planners either don't know how to use social media in conjunction with meetings or lack the time and resources to learn, implement and stay abreast of the technology.

Social media used appropriately and comprehensively can be time-consuming. That's why, depending on the meeting and budget, some planners hire social media consultants.

How do meeting planners know when it's time to hire a social media consultant? "If the limit on what you're doing is creating a social media site and posting billboard material on it, then you may not need an expert," says Toth. "Once you get beyond just wanting to make people aware of a meeting, and want to do things like create buzz, have a scavenger hunt, and provide Android and iPhone compatible apps, you may need technical expertise."

Depending on the type of project, Diniz either performs social media in-house or hires an independent contractor. "This year we have a meeting of 5,000 people, and we don't have the time and resources to do it ourselves. Depending on the meeting and our budget, we will bring somebody in from the outside," he says.

Dreyer advises planners to follow Diniz's approach. "Sometimes it's good to hire someone. If it's a skill set you don't have in your organization, and you know it's a priority, there are options either to hire a contractor to set things up or hire somebody onto your team who brings social media expertise," he says.

Measure the Impact

Whether meeting planners take a do-it-yourself approach or hire a consultant, it's important to gauge the impact of social media, according to Dreyer. "ROI is about proving that social media has helped you make more money or saved you money. To do that, you have to know your objectives and what you spent in the past to work toward similar goals," says Dreyer. "Then you have to figure

out how to measure it. Measuring social media is easy, but the problem is that some people skip the part about goals. Very few people sit down and say they will use it as a tool for specific goals and figure out how to measure it," he adds.

There are several ways to measure the results of social media. These run the gamut from tracking the number of tweets on Twitter as well as hits on Facebook



Cameron Toth
President
Toth Communications
Valhalla, NY

"You want to tie social media ROI back to dollars as much as possible. You can track how much is spent on training and whether it is done more effectively."

and LinkedIn pages and the amount of clicks on various links on the pages. "You want to tie social media ROI back to dollars as much as possible. If you're doing training and education meetings, you can track how much is spent on training and whether it is done more effectively," says Toth. He recommends asking this key question: "Are more people getting more information more quickly because you've helped them process information through social media?"

Get the Most Out of the Medium

Social media used correctly can be a meeting planner's best friend. Consultants and meeting planners who frequently use social media offer these suggestions for getting the most out of the medium.

- **Define the prospective attendee audience and determine whether**

it's social-media savvy. Don't try to push attendees to use social media. Instead, use surveys to find out which social media attendees use and reach out to them through these mediums.

- **Social media beginners shouldn't dive in head first, using several forms for several purposes.**

Instead, novices should focus on a few things and do them well. Focus first on using social media that encourages networking among attendees and creates a buzz.

- **Request a copy of a corporation's social media policy.** Some companies, including many in industries such as pharmaceuticals and finance, have policies that may limit how meeting planners can use social media. Toth says, "Some corporate social media policies don't allow the open use of social media for meetings, but some have closed social media for employees that planners can use. Find out what the social media policy is and how you can use social media with meetings."

- **Post content that encourages people to create conversations before, during and after the meeting.** In this manner, buzz created by the content may reach people who don't use social media. How? Somebody who saw the content could mention it via email or a face-to-face conversation with someone else.

- **Conduct research.** "Talk to other planners who use social media. Talk to your client to make sure it's a fit for the meeting. You can use it as little or as much as you like. Have fun because social media is supposed to be fun as well as educational," says Watson-Werst.

- **Use staff expertise.** Some independent meeting planners may have employees who routinely use Facebook and are quite knowledgeable about it. Seek their input.

- **Be patient.** Don't expect impressive results right away. It will take some time, work and experimentation to make social media yield measurable results. **C&IT**

Report Offers Social Media Insights

Corporate travel professionals, who often work hand-in-hand with meeting planners, increasingly use social media to manage business travel, according to a research report by American Express Travel's eXpert insights research practice. The report "Social Media in Business Travel Management" reveals that 50 percent of all business travel programs use at least some social media to help manage travel while 59 percent of mid-size firms use the technology.

Christa Degnan Manning
Director
eXpert insights
American Express Business
Travel
New York, NY



"Corporate meeting planners can certainly learn from their travel management peers in terms of how the medium is being used to support their programs."

Although the survey didn't specifically target meeting planners, they may find the conclusions useful, according to Christa Degnan Manning, director, eXpert insights, American Express Business Travel. "Corporate meeting planners can certainly learn from their travel management peers in terms of how the medium is being used to support their programs. Overall, travel management is a more mature discipline than meetings management so it's a place that meeting managers who are trying to become more strategic in how they oversee the meetings category can learn from," says Manning.

Manning says some travel professionals are increasingly using social media for meeting planning

purposes as well. "We are seeing a major trend in that travel professionals are increasingly asked to oversee meetings as well."

The most popular uses of social media among corporate travel professionals include:

- 44 percent use social media to obtain the latest travel information.
- 43 percent use it to reduce business travel costs as well as learn and share best practices.
- 42 percent search for preferred vendors and services.
- 34 percent analyze travel patterns to help improve vendor rates and services.
- 26 percent use social media to encourage networking among travelers.

The research reveals that 63 percent of companies use internal social media sites for travel management — an approach that provides a level of privacy and information protection for businesses that want candid feedback but do not want to broadcast in a totally open forum. This finding is significant for planners because they must consider a corporation's overall social media policy before using the medium to help plan a meeting.

On the other hand, some companies don't want to use open-forum social media for any purpose, including planning meetings and incentives. For instance, 46 percent of those surveyed cite their main reason as concern with privacy and who can see the information they may post. Not seeing direct benefits, a lack of time and uncertainty surrounding the technologies also rose near the top of the list of primary reasons for not using social media.

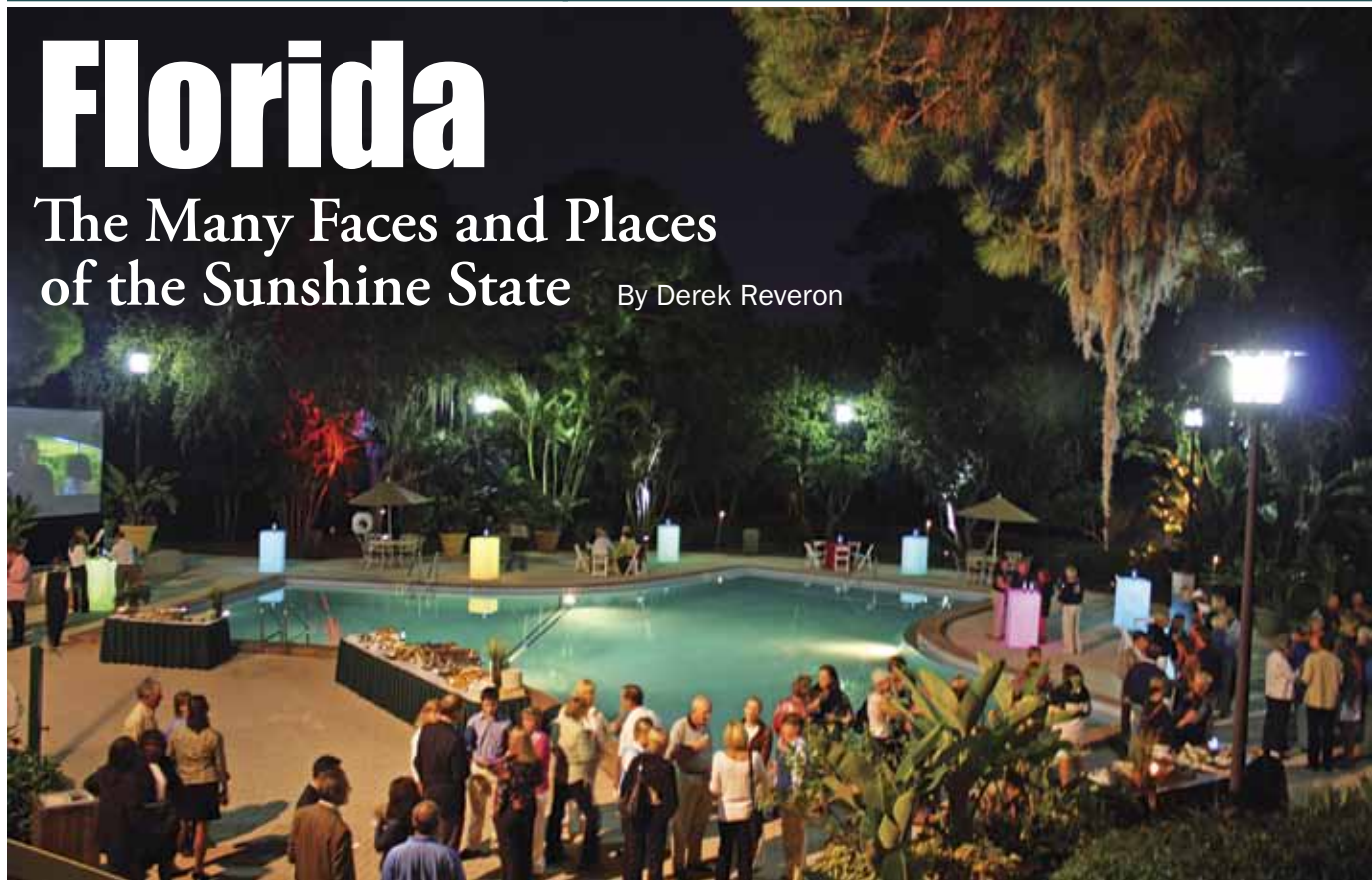
Some companies are hesitant to use social media for these reasons: Twenty percent of respondents say that the business case for using social media in travel management is unclear; 15 percent cite a lack of social media strategy, understanding of the medium and insufficient support from upper management. Just 5 percent of corporate travel professionals say there are no organizational barriers to social media adoption, which could be an indication that companies have a long way to go before there is widespread acceptance of social media, according to the report. **— DR**

DESTINATION

Florida

The Many Faces and Places of the Sunshine State

By Derek Reveron



An island pool event at Innisbrook, a Salamander Golf Resort & Spa, which is just 25 minutes from Tampa International Airport.

Ever drive through Florida? Vacationing families, kids on spring break, meeting-goers all say the same thing: Florida is a huge state. Sometimes, you think you will never get there. Along with the size comes a considerable variety of attractions, cultures, topography and climate. Some refer to Florida as many states in one because of the fascinating regional differences. Thus, planners can stage meeting after meeting, time after time in Florida and never worry about the same old thing. In short, corporate meeting planners can have it all in the Sunshine State.

Orlando

Orlando offers everything corporate groups want in a destination. That's one reason Orlando is the first U.S. destination to receive more than 50 million visitors in a year. In 2010, Orlando attracted 51.4 million people, compared to 46.6 million in 2009. Groups are attracted by Orlando's supply of more than 115,000 guest rooms available at a wide range of top-notch hotels and resorts, including the properties owned by independent hotelier Harris Rosen.

Rosen's meeting properties have a tradition of offering good value and impeccable service to meetings large and small. Rosen Hotels & Resorts provides approximately 6,300 rooms

among seven area properties including the four convention hotels: Rosen Shingle Creek, Rosen Centre Hotel, Rosen Plaza Hotel and Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando.

Looking to improve the guest experience even more, the Rosen Plaza has been renovating its 800 guest rooms, hospitality suites and hallways. Guest rooms have new furnishings, carpeting and crown molding, 32-inch flat-screen TVs and safes. Conveniently located along International Drive, Rosen Plaza is next to the 2.1-million-sf Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) and minutes away from the Shingle Creek Golf Club. The Rosen Plaza offers more than 60,000 sf of meeting space, including the 26,000-sf Grand Ballroom. The property also features 22 meeting rooms and 16 hospitality suites. Catering is available for events of up to 2,740 people.

Corporate groups seeking a classy and professional meeting environment will find it at the award-winning Rosen Centre Hotel, located minutes from Walt Disney World and other premiere attractions. The Rosen Centre Hotel recently renovated its 1,334 guest rooms, Grande Lobby, hospitality suites and one of three Presidential Suites. The covered 316-foot Rosen Centre Skywalk allows corporate meeting-goers to walk rain- and traffic-free from the hotel to the OCCC West Building within a few minutes. Corporate groups of

10 to 4,000 attendees can be accommodated in the hotel's 106,000 sf of meeting space, which includes 33 meeting rooms and two ballrooms — a 35,000-sf main ballroom and a 14,375-sf junior ballroom.

One of Central Florida's largest full-service convention hotels, Rosen Shingle Creek is a AAA Four Diamond premier meeting destination hotel located about one mile from the OCCC. The 1,500-room property offers 445,000 sf of up-scale meeting and event space and 99 meeting rooms. More than 100,000 sf of prefunction space is available along with 55,000 sf of breakout meeting rooms. There are also three ballrooms, the largest of which is the 95,000-sf Gatlin Grand Ballroom. Guests tee off at the on-property Shingle Creek Golf Club, which offers an 18-hole, championship course designed by David Harman. The club is also home to the Brad Brewer Golf Academy.

Rosen properties also include the recently renovated and rebranded Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando. The property offers 1,020 renovated guest rooms, providing much-needed additional rooms for Orlando. "After investing \$10 million into renovations, the hotel is primed and ready for business. This versatile property can fill the needs of all our guests, whether they are visiting Orlando for business or pleasure," says Harris Rosen, president and COO of Rosen Hotels & Resorts.

Dan Meister, CMP, president of Boca Raton-FL based Meister Meetings & Travel Corporation, is a true fan of Florida for meetings and events. In December, his company arranged highly successful back-to-back meetings at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando, one of three Universal Orlando Resort onsite properties.

A loyal repeat customer, Meister has held previous successful meetings at the onsite hotels at Universal Orlando Resort "because the resorts, theme parks and entertainment districts are all self-contained and very accessible to each other, making for a convenient and fantastic attendee experience." Meister also values his excellent relationship with Universal Orlando Resort's sales team as well as the conference management team at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel. He says, "I trust that our groups will get the attention, care and service they deserve."

Meister appreciates the numerous hotel options in Orlando, many of which his company uses for group clients, and says, "The onsite hotels at Universal Orlando stand out as they are all uniquely themed hotels within a resort complex featuring




"There is a lot to do, see and experience at these resorts and Universal Orlando that one cannot do in just one visit."

Dan Meister, CMP, President
Meister Meetings & Travel Corp., Boca Raon, FL

two theme parks and an entertainment complex. Groups and attendees have many attractive options for entertainment on their own or group functions at the various hotels, theme parks, restaurants and night clubs." Meister also appreciates the "seamless integrated service, transportation and billing."


Other benefits for groups staying at a Universal Resort property, according to Meister, include the early admission to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, the free Universal Express, which allows guests to skip the regular lines in the Universal theme parks, and complimentary transportation via water taxi or shuttle bus.

Meister staged a reception for one group at the hotel and also hosted a parade party at Universal Studios for the other group. However, he says the nightly opera performance on the balcony overlooking the Harbor Piazza at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel was the top crowd-pleaser. His groups



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also enjoyed the Macy's Universal Parade and Mannheim Steamroller concert at Universal Studios.

Always on the lookout for unique environments and experiences, Meister was impressed with the hotel's Italian theme that is carried out throughout the resort and includes a small bay and boats — an exact replica of Portofino, Italy. "The resort was also beautifully decorated for the holidays along with a strolling Santa and Mrs. Claus and Universal Orlando characters," notes Meister. "I learn, see and experience something new every time as there are many unique venues, themes, rides, attractions, entertainment and promotions to tie in with your events." He advises fellow planners to "spend a little extra time on your site inspection to try to see as much as possible." Also, he suggests working closely with resort management and sharing meeting objectives so "they can help you meet them with all the creative resources at their disposal."

Meister, who will return again soon to Universal Orlando Resort, says, "As long as your meeting physically fits within one or more of their hotels, the service, facilities and food and beverage are excellent and on par with the best hotels in the country, so no worries about performance. I have also found them to be very flexible over the years, which is very important. There are some excellent resorts in the Orlando market but just a few that can tie in to two theme parks and an entertainment complex all within walking distance of your hotel."



The refreshed DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld is conveniently located adjacent to SeaWorld and Aquatica.

In other Orlando news, a new Four Seasons resort is scheduled to open at Walt Disney World Resort in 2014. The luxury property will offer 444 rooms and more than 37,000 sf of meeting space.

The Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek has opened inside of Walt Disney World Resort. The Mediterranean-style property includes 400 guest rooms and suites and 25,000 sf of meeting space.

After a \$450 million expansion, The Peabody Orlando offers 1,641 guest rooms and 300,000 sf of modern, flexible meeting space. The 75,000-sf Peabody Grand Ballroom is the largest of the hotel's three ballrooms and two junior ballrooms. There is also a 22,000-sf spa.

The Omni Orlando at ChampionsGate plans to open a new exhibition center by January 2013, which will include a 30,000-sf exhibit hall and eight meeting rooms. In addition, the resort recently named Robert Ash as the new executive chef. A 17-year hospitality veteran, Ash's diverse background includes training at L'Ecole Du Grand Chocolat in France and the International School of Confectionary Art in Maryland.

After a \$35 million makeover, the new DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld (formerly the DoubleTree Resort Orlando – International Drive) is an official onsite SeaWorld partner hotel. Conveniently located adjacent to SeaWorld and its water park Aquatica, the property is minutes away from the OCCC and Orlando's theme parks.

DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld boasts 60,000 sf of flexible space featuring a variety of indoor and outdoor venue options such as the 12,000-sf Oceans Ballroom, the 10,000-

sf Great Lakes Ballroom, spacious prefunction space, 25 meeting rooms and executive boardrooms.

The Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld has completed a \$35 million renovation program started in 2006. The resort renovated its 65 suites and refurbished 23 meeting rooms. The pool area was expanded to include an interactive water play area for kids. A new 8,000-sf function lawn is next to the pool. The property also added the Atlantis Kitchen, an area that offers dinner, cooking demonstrations and classes for groups of up to 200 for receptions. The 781-room Renaissance Orlando offers 185,000 sf of flexible meeting space.

Orlando's resorts and theme parks — including Walt Disney World Resort, SeaWorld Orlando and Universal Orlando Resort — offer a seemingly endless supply of entertainment and special venues. Other types of unique venues include Orlando Repertory Theatre, operated in partnership with the University of Central Florida. The facility features three theaters available for rent. The two largest spaces are 602 sf and 418 sf. The well-appointed Citrus Club sits on the 18th floor of the BB&T building in downtown Orlando and offers great views of the city. The club features seven meeting rooms, including a 4,000-sf space and a fitness center.

Miami

Florida's wide variety of distinct destinations and properties lure groups to the state again and again. Diane Davis, president of TulNet Inc., an independent meeting planning firm based in Broken Arrow, OK, says Florida is an attractive destination for her meeting clients, especially in the greater Miami area. Earlier this year, Davis staged a three-day meeting at the Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne for 36 executives and managers of a retail franchise corporation who were honored for achieving specific sales milestones. Upon arrival, the group was treated to spa services followed by a regal dinner in an ocean-front banquet room as a violinist played soothing music. They dined by candlelight at a beautiful table outfitted with fine linens, china and crystal, and accented with roses. The highest producers sat closest to the CEO, and the captain of the tuxedoed wait staff offered a champagne toast to the attendees.

Davis also chose the Ritz-Carlton,

Key Biscayne for a 2010 incentive for 600 executives and salespeople for a surgical products company. The group cruised on Biscayne Bay in a chartered yacht and played golf at local courses. Opening night dinner at the hotel featured several food stations that included Cuban cuisine, ceviche, and fruits and vegetables. There was also a tequila-tasting station featuring thirteen different varieties. The final-night banquet was held at Vizcaya, an Italian Renaissance-style villa and gardens built in 1916 as a home for business mogul James Deering.

Davis plans a return visit to the Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne

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with an incentive group from an automotive supply company. The hotel's in-house event planner Barton G is one reason Davis returns to the hotel. "We didn't have to use them, but Barton G and the hotel worked hand in hand to provide all the small touches. And it was clear that they were very well connected in the area. As we talked to them about what we were trying to accomplish, they made recommendations like Vizcaya and the harbor cruise," says Davis. She also likes Key Biscayne because it is in the Miami area. "We like to schedule trips to South Beach," she notes.

The Miami area features more than 43,000 hotel rooms, and the number grows steadily. The 340-room Gansevoort Miami Beach has completed several upgrades. Improvements include reupholstered lobby furniture, new wallpaper and décor and a newly tiled shark tank. The hotel's mezzanine level also received new paint, carpeting and art decorations.

The 41-floor JW Marriott Marquis reopened following

"We strategically placed the outgoing attendees with those who are a little more reserved so they could build relationships and camaraderie. That worked out well."

Abby Kirchhofer, Senior Administrative Assistant
PharMerica, Louisville, KY



a development project that included retail outlets, condos and offices. The 313-room property provides more than 80,000 sf of meeting space and a 50,000-sf entertainment and sports facility.

The Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel & Executive Meeting Center reopened with 405 rooms and 20,000 sf of meeting space. A former Wyndham hotel, the Sheraton offers a 17,000-sf executive meeting center certified by the International Association of Conference Centers (IACC). The Center's PURE Technology removes allergens from the air. The 200-room Shelborne South Beach reopened following a multimillion-dollar renovation. The property provides 10,000 sf of meeting space.

The 392-room Turnberry Isle Miami is a Mediterranean-style hotel with a 40,000-sf conference center with flexible meeting space, private valet entrance and wireless Internet access. Also, spectacular outdoor venues provide picturesque backdrops for group functions and special events. In addition to two 18-hole Raymond Floyd-redesigned championship golf courses, guests will enjoy the private beach club on the Atlantic Ocean, an award-winning spa and fitness center, four clay tennis courts and three pools. Turnberry Isle Miami, located just minutes from North Miami Beach and South Beach, is a member of Leading Hotels of the World.

Miami's meeting and convention facilities are some of the best in the nation. More than 1 million sf of meeting and exhibit space is available at the Miami Beach Convention Center

(MBCC). A short walk from the MBCC, the Jackie Gleason Theater offers a 2,704-seat auditorium. In downtown Miami, the Miami Convention Center includes the 5,000-seat James L. Knight auditorium and more than 30 meeting rooms.

Unique venues include the exclusive Bankers Club, located on the 14th floor of One Biscayne Tower with a view of Biscayne Bay. The facility offers eight event spaces, with the largest being 2,400 sf. Located downtown, the elegant Alfred I. Dupont Building is a prime spot for private corporate functions. The building features a 6,500-sf meeting room and two smaller event spaces. Signature Gardens customizes and caters a variety of events. Planners can choose from 10 event spaces, the largest of which is 3,388 sf.

Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater

The Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater area on Florida's West Coast supplies more than 20,000 guest rooms at a variety of meeting resorts and hotels.

Abby Kirchhofer, senior administrative assistant to the president of Louisville, KY-based PharMerica's hospital division, is keen on the area and the Sandpearl Resort in Clearwater. Kirchhofer, who plans up to 15 meetings a year for groups of 10 to more than 100 people, staged a three-day meeting for 100 attendees, including pharmacy directors and executives at the Sandpearl

in September 2011. The resort, which features 253 rooms and 25,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, was a perfect fit for the education and training sessions as well as business meetings.

As a matter of fact, Kirchhofer has held the meeting for the last three years at the Sandpearl because of the location and size of the property. "The hotel is centrally located, and we can entertain without hiring transportation to take them anywhere. We don't do anything offsite. I've taken this group to larger destinations, and we couldn't keep up with them. Also, there is shopping within walking distance, and the hotel goes out of its way to do little things for us," says Kirchhofer.

Two themed events proved to be the highlight of the meeting. One night, the group attended a Harry Potter-themed dinner held under a large tent on the beach. Attendees, dressed as characters from the movie, entered a tent featuring a long feasting table, owls, potions, old books and banners. Prizes were awarded for the best costumes.

Attendees participated in a soccer game on the sand while "riding" broomsticks. The game was part of the meeting's teambuilding strategy, as were the seating assignments. "We had some directors that were quieter than others and some who were more outgoing and athletic. We strategically placed the outgoing attendees with those who are a little more reserved so they could build relationships and camaraderie. That worked out well," says Kirchhofer.

The group also enjoyed a themed dinner based on the



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A Harry Potter-themed night, one of the highlights of the PharMerica meeting held recently at the Sandpearl Resort in Clearwater, included prizes for the costumed attendees.

Photo by Todd Maze/courtesy of PharMerica

original 1960 “Ocean’s Eleven” movie starring the rat pack — Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. “Attendees dressed as members of the rat pack. We had roulette, poker, music from the era and posters of the rat pack on the tent walls,” adds Kirchhofer.

The hotel’s audio-visual service department was a key to the meeting’s success, according to Kirchhofer. “We had to do a video conference between attendees and a doctor in Las Vegas about an anemia treatment using pharmacy protocol.

“Nothing beats the beaches on the Gulf side of Florida. ...Nothing can rival it.”



Laura Brelsford, Program Manager
Sutton & Associates, Montgomery, AL

The hotel’s director of audio-visual services helped us pull it off without a hitch. He coordinated with the information management person in Las Vegas to make sure there wouldn’t be any issues. He did test runs of the presentations on his own,” says Kirchhofer.

The meeting was a big success. Kirchhofer does post-meeting surveys that rank various components of the meeting, including hotel service, meals and themed events. Surveys routinely show that attendees connect the most with the themed events, which frequently received high scores.

Following an extensive renovation, Innisbrook, a Salamander Golf Resort & Spa, is once again a favorite among conference, event and incentive planners. Situated on 900 acres just 25 minutes from Tampa International Airport, the 608-room Innisbrook features 72 holes of championship golf,

the Innisbrook Golf Institute, 11 tennis courts and six heated swimming pools. The resort also features a new full-service Indaba Spa with 12 treatment rooms and state-of-the-art Fitness Center.

The property features 100,000 sf of meeting space — 65,000 sf of indoor space including two mid-sized ballrooms with breakout rooms. Innisbrook is now part of Salamander’s Grand Golf Resorts of Florida, which also includes Reunion Resort in Orlando and Hammock Beach Resort in Palm Coast. The Salamander Collection (www.grandgolfresorts.com) offers 162 holes of golf designed by Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Tom Watson and Larry Packard. Grand

Golf Resorts of Florida also features the world’s only resort-based Annika Academy, an innovative teaching facility designed and developed by famed women’s professional golfer Annika Sorenstam.

The Tampa Convention Center (TCC), which sits on the downtown waterfront, provides 36 breakout rooms, a 36,000-sf ballroom and 200,000 sf of exhibit space. Among Tampa’s unique venues, the A La Carte Event Pavilion provides 18,000 sf of flexible meeting space. In-house services include gourmet catering, audio-visual services and décor. Founded in 1902, the Centro Asturiano de Tampa offers a 1,000-seat theater and a ballroom that holds 450 guests.

Emerald Coast

Located in Northwest Florida, the Emerald Coast includes Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island. The Emerald Coast boasts beaches with sugar-white sand, world-class sport fishing and a variety of top golf courses. The Emerald Coast Convention Center (ECCC), located on Okaloosa Island, features a 21,000-sf ballroom and 12 meeting rooms. Seating capacity is 1,400 guests for banquets and 2,350 people for a theater configuration.

No wonder TripAdvisor included the Emerald Coast in its Top 25 Destinations in the United States. The region features more than 16,000 hotel rooms. One of the area’s premier meeting properties, the 598-room Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa features 32,000 sf of meeting space. The Hilton Sandestin recently wrapped up a \$6.5 million renovation program that included 17,000 sf of additional outdoor deck areas featuring water views. While the hotel attracts groups from around the nation, it is also a magnet for meetings held by corporations based in nearby Southern states.

In May 2011, a Southeast U.S.-based company in the restaurant industry held a three-day incentive for 200 people at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. The incentive,

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one of several the company has held in the Emerald Coast region, was arranged by Laura Brelsford, program manager for Montgomery, AL-based Sutton & Associates, a meeting and incentive planning firm. “It’s close to the company. The cost brings good value, and it’s close enough for some people to drive. It’s difficult to rival considering all the area has to offer. That makes it very appealing for companies in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi,” Brelsford says. The highlight of the incentive was an Italian carnival-themed dinner. The dining room featured Venetian décor, local actors dressed in carnival costumes, and the attendees wore authentic carnival masks. Other activities included golf, boating, tours, shelling, dolphin watching and parasailing.



Photo courtesy of Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

Group instruction is available at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, located in Ponte Vedra Beach, just 20 miles southeast of Jacksonville.

Jacksonville

Jacksonville is one of Florida’s most historical destinations and serves up a bit of Southern flavor. Meeting planners will find much to like about Jacksonville, including more than 16,000 hotel rooms. Properties include the 354-room Omni Jacksonville Hotel, which offers more than 14,000 sf feet of meeting space. The Omni is located near the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, which provides more than 22 meeting rooms and 265,000 sf of meeting space. More than 28,000 sf of meeting space is available at the nearby Morocco Shrine Center & Auditorium.

Located along the St. Johns River, the Florida Theatre showcases nearly 200 entertainment and cultural events annually. The facility accommodates 1,900 guests for receptions. The prestigious River Club, also located along the St. Johns River, hosts groups of up to 500 people for private dining, meetings and receptions. The Queen’s Harbour Yacht & Country Club, located next to the Intracoastal Waterway, offers four elegant meeting rooms.

Meeting attendees will find plenty of entertainment and activities in Jacksonville. Golfers can choose from more than

70 courses and venues in the area, including the Tournament Players Club with its impressive 77,000-sf clubhouse.

Ponte Vedra Beach, located 20 miles southeast of Jacksonville, is the site of two superlative meeting and incentive properties. The 250-suite, AAA Five Diamond Ponte Vedra Inn & Club has been a Florida landmark since 1928. It offers more than 25,000 sf of flexible meeting space, a full-service spa, 36 holes of golf, 15 tennis courts and four heated pools in a beachfront setting. Groups seeking a more intimate experience may want to check out the Lodge & Club at Ponte Vedra Beach, just 1½ miles away. It offers 66 oceanfront rooms and 13,000 sf of meeting space.

Palm Beach County

More than 30 professional meeting planners gathered at the PGA National Resort and Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, in December for three days of intensive education sessions intermingled with entertaining diversions such as the “Amazing Iron Chef Race” at the Palm Beach Marriott Singer Island Resort & Spa — a sampling of what the Sunshine State delivers for group meeting attendees.

The balmy, mostly sunny weather cooperated, and a good time was had by all. The meeting planner training camp agenda, facilitated by the Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Tom Pasha, president of Orlando-based Contact Planning and a 25-year veteran of the hotel and meeting planning industries, prepared attendees with powerful information and negotiation tactics to help them create win-win contracts and offered helpful, behind-the-scenes knowledge. Special attention was given to golf tournament planning, which can be a great income stream, teambuilding event and crowd-pleaser. The planners, many of whom had staged meetings in Florida previously, were impressed by the area’s meeting facilities and venues.

Palm Beach is widely known for its golf, glamour, sophisticated nightlife, and ritzy resorts and hotels. Planners have a choice of more than 200 hotels with a few more under construction: a long-awaited 400-room Hilton next to the Palm Beach County Convention Center (PBCC) is on the drawing board for 2015. Palm Beach County’s second Hyatt Place hotel, which is under construction in Delray Beach, is scheduled to open in 2012.

The PBCC, Palm Beach County’s primary meeting and convention facility, offers more than 1 million sf of meeting space. The PBCC is located near CityPlace, a popular shopping, dining and entertainment complex. The PBCC offers 23,000 sf of flexible meeting space, 100,000 sf of exhibit space and a 25,000-sf ballroom.

Come Back Soon

Dan Meister, a very enthusiastic fan of meeting in Florida — especially in Orlando — says his groups “are looking forward to returning as soon as they can, as there is a lot to do, see and experience at these resorts and Universal Orlando that one cannot do in just one visit.” His parting advice: “As P.T. Barnum said: ‘Always leave them wanting more.’”

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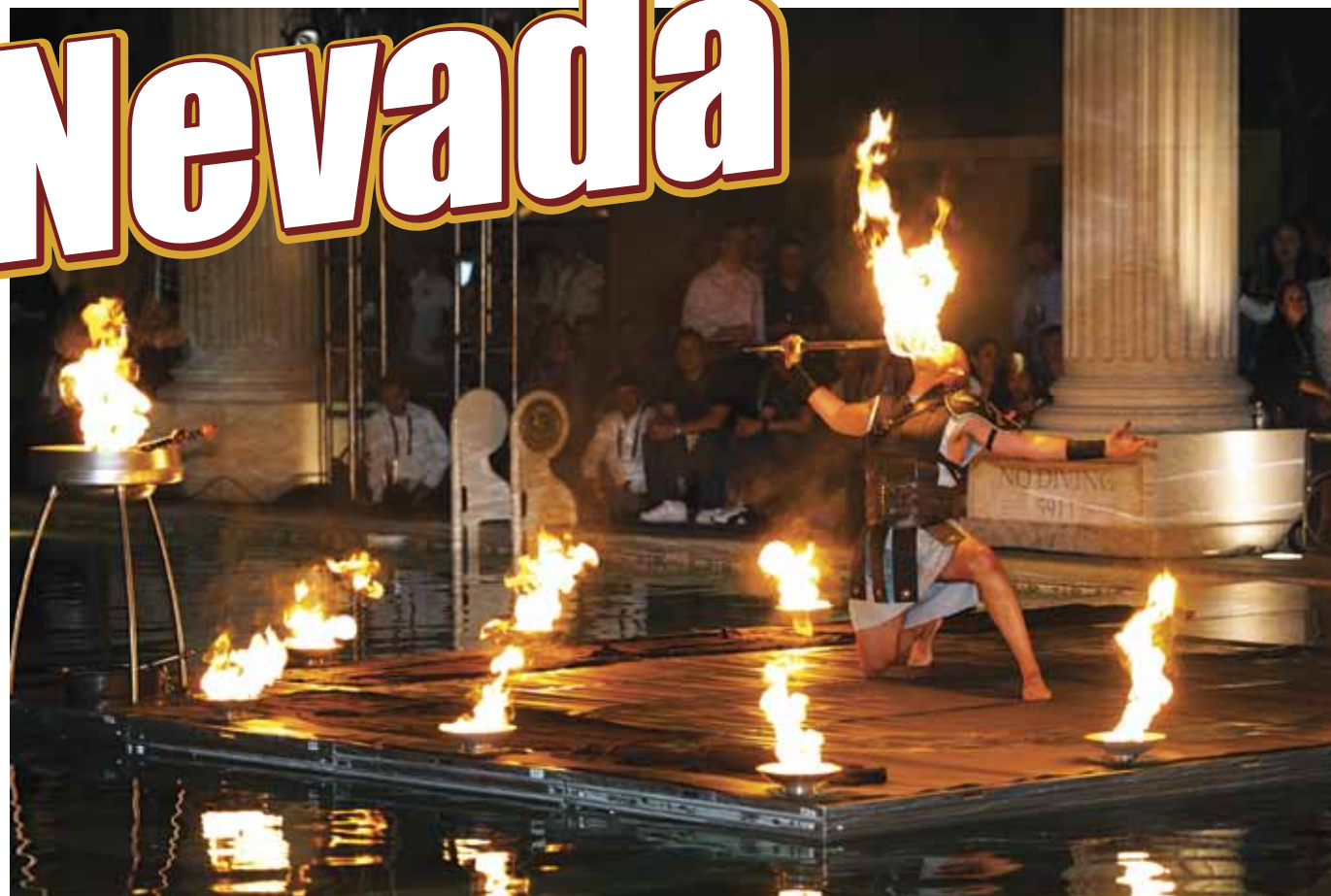


Photo courtesy of Daniel Gaines Photography

Symantec hosted a users conference for 2,200 attendees at Caesars Palace, where a Roman-themed event took place on an acrylic stage built over one of the pools, "and we brought in performers such as Roman gladiators and Le Cirque acrobats," says Director of Corporate Events Karen Zunkowski.

The Meetings Boom Is Back

By GEORGE SELI

It was apparent this past fall that 2012 was going to be an even more remarkable "comeback year" for Las Vegas meetings. Suffice it to say that for a number of the city's hotels, "if you tried to get space, you wouldn't be able to find it in the first quarter," Chris Meyer, CEM, CMP, vice president of sales for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, reported in November. "It was already starting to pick up for us in '10, '11 has been wonderful, and '12 is looking even better." Occupancy is up 4 points to 85.2 percent, more than 20 points ahead of the national average, according to the LVCVA.

Demand in Las Vegas Is Up

Indeed, when it comes to planning a corporate meeting in Sin City these days, it appears that

one "sin" is waiting too long to book. Another is not being aware of the schedule for major conventions, because citywides are drawing more delegates and thus reducing the space available for corporate groups. "We have many shows that have been coming here year after year; their numbers are increasing," says Meyer. "In fact, we just finished with the gigantic Automotive Aftermarket Industry Week, and that was up about 20 percent in attendance," he adds.

Overall, the LVCVA reports a 9.9 percent rise in convention attendance, up through the third quarter of 2011. A barometer of corporate meeting activity in particular is DMC business, which again shows a very promising 2012. At least that's the perspective of Molly Vincent, vice president of A Vegas Expression: "We are completely



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Photo courtesy of Daniel Gaines Photography

The décor is built in at Caesars Palace where Symantec hosted this outdoor event for a users conference last May.

in October.” The “Las Vegas Health and Wellness Destination Guide” is one sign of the city’s rising prominence in the medical sector, which was supported by developments such as the opening of the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in 2009.

Pharmaceutical meetings are serious, content-intensive affairs, and no city that is a major draw for those events can be considered a mere “playground.” Las Vegas’ outstanding meeting facilities and convention services are in fact only complemented by its entertainment offerings, which

needn’t create a temptation during attendees’ meeting hours. “We do an annual survey on buyer behavior, especially on our show floors, and people actually stay longer on the exhibit floors in Las Vegas than in any other destination,” Meyer claims. “And the same type of behavior is transferred over to the meetings, because at the end of the day we don’t close. Attendees don’t have to worry about running out to a theme park because it closes.”

Taking Care of Business

Nor do attendees necessarily want to miss business sessions for extra time at the casinos. “In this day and age when professionals’ travel is being scrutinized, most are pretty smart about showing up to the events their boss sent them to,” remarks Karen Zunkowski, director of corporate events for Mountain View, CA-based Symantec. The company hosted a conference in May at Caesars Palace for about 2,200 end-users. “We try to emphasize the reason they’re there and provide content that hopefully is relevant to them and an event they want to participate in,” Zunkowski adds. Additionally, Symantec held its worldwide sales and marketing conference in July, bringing about 4,300 representatives to Caesars with overflow at Bellagio. For that internal meeting, “we want to keep people on property as much as possible. But we try to find the right balance (of free time and business time), so we don’t ‘book’ them every single night to allow time for networking and keeping up with their ‘day job.’”

The users conference took advantage of Caesars’ Colosseum, where comedian Brian Regan closed the program, as well as the pool area for a custom-

busy the rest of this year, and 2012 is going to be our first strong year in a long time.”

Planners can “still negotiate” with the city’s venues, Vincent says, “but corporations are spending money again on their group travel, and it is driving prices back up,” coupled with the general resurgence in tourism. According to the LVCVA, the city’s average daily room rate is up 10.7 percent through the third quarter of 2011, following 19 consecutive months of growth. The organization is capitalizing on that momentum with a three-year business plan, introduced in November, that seeks to bolster international business travel (particularly from Brazil and China), which represents “the largest potential growth market for Las Vegas,” according to the LVCVA. Apart from marketing initiatives, the strategy also includes short-term renovations to the Las Vegas Convention Center totaling \$5 million. In addition, the planned \$890 million expansion for the Las Vegas Convention Center that was put on hold in 2008 during the recession may soon be back on track.

Medical Meetings

Meyer points to another potential growth market that is already being fulfilled: medical meetings. “We have been doing very well in the medical sector, moving up to No. 4 in the number of medical meetings held among U.S. cities,” he says. “The medical groups have discovered — or rediscovered — the value proposition of Las Vegas. I think the word is spreading that this is a place that the doctors and nurses want to come to. That’s been a driver for us, and consequently we became the first destination in the U.S. to create a medical tourism guide, which we launched



Chris Meyer, CEM, CMP
Vice President of Sales
Las Vegas Convention and
Visitors Authority

“It was already starting to pick up for us in ’10, ’11 has been wonderful, and ’12 is looking even better.”

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er appreciation party. Naturally, “we went with a very Roman theme,” Zunkowski related. An acrylic stage was built over one of the pools “and we brought in performers such as Roman gladiators and Le Cirque acrobats. We really didn’t have to do much décor because the ambience was already there at the pool; we just needed a little additional lighting.” And while the sales conference was basically “all business,” employees were treated to a performance by a “junk rock” group called Recycled Percussion at the Colosseum.

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The 3,348-room Caesars Palace offers a total of more than 300,000 sf of meeting space. Caesars’ new 668-room Octavius Tower opened January 2, 2012. The opening of the Octavius Tower marks the completion of the \$860 million Caesars Palace expansion.

New at Caesars

But it’s not all about large groups like Symantec’s at Caesars Palace, which is debuting the 180-room Nobu Hotel in the summer of 2012. Las Vegas’ first-ever Nobu hotel will include the 11,200-sf Nobu restaurant and lounge. In addition, two primary meeting spaces at Bally’s Las Vegas have been remodeled. The center-Strip property offers more than 3,000 hotel rooms and suites and 175,000 sf of meeting and event space. Yet these developments are not all that Caesars Entertainment has in store for Las Vegas.

The Linq, a \$550 million retail, dining, entertainment and hospitality district located at the heart of the Las Vegas Strip, is scheduled to open in 2013. Owned and operated by Caesars Entertainment Corporation, The Linq will span more than 200,000 sf directly facing Caesars Palace. The focal point will be The Las Vegas High Roller, which will be the tallest observation wheel in the world at 550 feet. Its 28 cabins will be designed as transparent spheres, each of which will accommodate up to 40 people and will be available for group experiences.

On The Linq’s north side, a walking path will lead from the Carnival Court outdoor plaza at the 2,500-room Harrah’s Las Vegas resort (25,000 sf of meeting space) to The Linq. A pedestrian connection also will be built from The Linq into the 3,550-room Flamingo Las Vegas (73,000 sf of meeting space) on the south. In October, the Flamingo debuted Margaritaville Casino, and the hotel will transform 2,307 hotel rooms into stylish and contemporary accommodations throughout 2012.

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Networking on the show floor at EFI's Connect 2011, held last spring at Wynn Las Vegas.

terms of their expenses." Foster City, CA-based EFI, which manufactures and develops hardware and software for the digital print industry, has held its users conference at the 2,108-room Wynn over the last five years, and will do so again in 2012. According to Tueckmantel, the property's meeting space (200,000 sf) is ideal for the program's numerous breakouts. "We hold classes for customers that have the same interests, and we were very fortunate that right from the beginning the Wynn was able to accommodate us."

The meeting space "also offers daylight, which is an advantage that should not be underestimated." Neither should the hotel's service factor be underestimated. "I never in all those years had any issue that my participants had to worry about the hotel, the F&B, the exhibit space and so on," says Tueckmantel. "The hotel takes care of my guests, and that allows me to focus 100 percent on the content of our event. And that's just a wonderful situation to be in."

with just one point of contact and one contract. The eight properties — Caesars Palace, Paris Las Vegas, Planet Hollywood, Bally's, Imperial Palace, Harrah's, Rio and Flamingo — provide a total of 1 million sf of meeting space and 25,000 guest rooms.

A Wynn-ing Conference

Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, which already offer more than 100,000 sf of luxury retail space, will add renowned fashion brands such as Chloé and Loro Piana in the spring. And in the fall of 2012, Wynn & Co will become a timepiece shopping destination including such high-end brands as Patek Philippe, Omega and Breguet. In addition, the Encore Esplanade will undergo a fashionable renovation throughout 2012. The 2,064-room Encore Las Vegas offers 60,000 sf of meeting space.

While Wynn is a luxury property, the approximately 1,000 customers who attend Electronics for Imaging Inc.'s (EFI) users conference at the resort have lodging options in many price ranges. "Over the years we figured out that Las Vegas is the destination of choice simply because of the wide variety of accommodations that people can book even if they choose not to stay at the Wynn," says Frank Tueckmantel, vice president of corporate marketing for EFI. "For example, a small portion of our customers are small-business owners and have to be careful in



Lisa Shafer Workentine
Business Development
Manager, Salon Centric
Stores
Matrix & Logics
Divisions of L'Oreal
Fresno, CA

"They make an effort to build relationships, which I appreciate. And they know how to give you the extras that allow you to then sell (the venue partnership) to your executives."

A Grand Meeting

Matrix & Logics, Divisions of L'Oreal, are hair-care and color companies that have also held users' conferences in Las Vegas, which is "the only true venue that can hold 6,000 people at one facility: the MGM Grand," relates Lisa Shafer Workentine, business development manager, salon centric stores and formerly senior director of corporate events and shows with Matrix & Logics. "The hotel properties truly understand the revenue that can be generated through meetings and events, and as such they've completely developed their infrastructure to support that. So it's not only the matter of capacity and building the structures, but putting in key depart-



MGM Grand is in the process of renovating all guest rooms and suites in the main tower. The first set of rooms was unveiled in November, with all rooms scheduled to be updated by September 2012.

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Monte Carlo will feature Blue Man Group in 2012.

Photo courtesy of Monte Carlo

ments that understand the business and make it flow without a hitch. They recognize that what they're doing with us is not a one-and-done thing. They make an effort to build relationships, which I appreciate. And they know how to give you the extras that allow you to then sell (the venue partnership) to your executives."

The 5,044-room MGM Grand offers 600,000 sf of meeting space, including the freestanding 92,000-sf Marquee Ballroom and the 16,800-seat Grand Garden Arena. The top two floors of MGM Grand offer 51 two-story Skylofts. The non-smoking, non-gaming Signature at MGM Grand is comprised of three towers, each with 576 suites.



Photo courtesy of Hyde Bellagio

The new event venue Hyde Bellagio opened on New Year's Eve. The focal point of the indoor/outdoor space is the spectacular Fountains of Bellagio.

In October MGM Grand began a \$160 million renovation of all 3,570 guest rooms and 642 suites in the main tower. The first set of redesigned rooms opened in November. The redesign of all rooms should be completed by September 2012. The Mansion is an upscale, exclusive hotel within the MGM Grand, and located adjacent to the main resort is The Signature at MGM Grand, a luxury all-suite, non-gaming hotel.

More MGM News

MGM Resorts International is becoming even more group-friendly with the recent launch of Passkey's GroupMAX booking technology across its 11 Las Vegas hotels. The system's booking website allows guests to make their reservations from any Web browser or mobile device, while meeting planners can access critical event data

Aria Resort & Casino guests are greeted by the Lumia fountain in front of the hotel's porte-cochère.

from live dashboards. Reservations made via GroupMAX's booking websites directly transfer to MGM Resorts' internal reservation system. Properties in MGM Mirage's collection include the 3,309-room Mandalay Bay (1.6 million sf of meeting space), the 3,044-room Mirage (90,000-sf Events Center), the 2,024-room New York-New York Hotel & Casino (21,000 sf); the 3,933-room Bellagio (200,000 sf); and the 2,900-room Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino (more than 30,000 sf).

On December 31, Bellagio debuted Hyde Bellagio, a new 12,000-sf indoor/outdoor space with floor-to-ceiling windows and an expansive terrace that showcases Las Vegas' Fountains of Bellagio. Each space within the venue can be utilized as a place for discussion, brainstorming or socializing.

The 1,200-seat Monte Carlo Theater, will become home to the popular Blue Man Group show beginning in fall 2012. Monte Carlo also offers an exclusive boutique hotel-within-the-hotel experience at Hotel32 on the resort's top floor, delivering the ultimate in privacy via a VIP entrance. Among the Monte Carlo's numerous dining and lounge and bar options is Minus5 Ice Bar, the largest ice bar in North America.

At MGM Resorts International's latest major offering, CityCenter, located on 67 acres between Bellagio and Monte Carlo, planners can avail themselves of the 61-story, 4,004-room Aria Resort & Casino, featuring approximately



Photo courtesy of MGM Resorts International



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Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands

300,000 sf of function space, and the 1,495-suite Vdara, featuring 10,000 sf of conference space in a non-gaming setting. The AAA Five Diamond Aria's meeting space is situated on three levels,

The 4,000-suite Venetian Resort Hotel Casino boasts the expansive 85,000-sf Venetian Ballroom.

with a total of four ballrooms — the largest at 51,000 sf — and 38 meeting rooms. Three of the ballrooms feature fully functioning theatrical stages. Aria has distinguished itself both environmentally and technologically: It is one of the largest buildings in the U.S. to receive LEED

Las Vegas Sands is catering to groups keen on sustainable events with its new Sands Eco 360° Meetings program, whose four pillars are green building and construction, environmentally responsible operational practices, sustainable purchasing policies and employee engagement in the program. The first pillar includes the largest LEED-certified building in the world, the combined Venetian, Sands Expo and Palazzo Las Vegas, offering a total of 2.25 million sf of function space, including the 85,000-sf Venetian Ballroom.

The Venetian Shines

For years Simon G. Jewelry has staged its annual customer appreciation event at The



Photo courtesy of Simon G. Jewelry

Simon G. Jewelry staged a customer appreciation event at the pool area of The Venetian/Palazzo, which lent the kind of VIP atmosphere the company was looking for to match its brand image.

Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council; and all meeting rooms feature built-in audio-visual systems with high-definition video projectors. Steps away is great dining and shopping at Crystals, which showcases luxury-brand retailers.

Venetian, in conjunction with one of the world's biggest jewelry trade shows JCK Las Vegas, held most recently at the Mandalay Convention Center. "We started holding our customer appreciation event at The Venetian when the convention was also held there. And when it moved, we



Photo courtesy of M Resort Spa and Casino

A rendering of the M Pavilion, which just opened on New Year's Eve, adding another 25,000 sf of event space to the M Resort.



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Frank Tueckmantel
Vice President
Corporate Marketing
Electronics for Imaging
Foster City, CA

“The hotel takes care of my guests, and that allows me to focus 100 percent on the content of our event. And that’s just a wonderful situation to be in.”

were extremely happy with the Venetian so we continue to partner with them,” explains Zaven “Zee” Ghanimian G.G., A.J.P, marketing director for Simon G. The event draws upwards of 600 attendees, including many of Simon G.’s top retailers, who convene in the hotel’s pool area. Simon G. recently launched a new collection with fashion designer Mike Bauer that was on display at the most recent customer appreciation event. “We built a runway over the pool where all the models displayed his new collection, as well as ours,” Ghanimian relates. “We used a ballroom at the beginning, about four years ago, but then as our relationship grew with The Venetian, we realized that there were many more options. So we did a few scoutings and decided that for us and our clients the best fit was the pool and the pool area. It has a great view of The Strip, and it is kind of secluded, giving our guests a very VIP feeling.” The Venetian is “just a great tie with our brand. We sell at very high-end stores across the nation and the world, and we want to make sure that our customers have the same experience that they have with our brand at the location we hold the party.”

New and Updated

Another property that may support a corporate group’s upscale brand is the 2,995-room Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Its 150,000 sf of event space, including seven ballrooms, are complemented by a staff of “expert meeting curators,” available to work with clients in advance to customize all aspects of each event based on the objective. There is even a direct room-to-conference elevator in the resort’s West Tower. The Cosmopolitan is a relative newcomer to the city, opening in December 2010.

Other properties are “old and improved,” such as the 1,375-room Tropicana Las Vegas, which has undergone a \$180 million renova-



Photo courtesy of Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa

A few blocks off The Strip is the 826-room Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa, which offers a relaxing haven for smaller meetings.

tion that includes its 1,375 guest rooms, casino and conference center, which now offers more than 60,000 sf of meeting space. Larger groups may look to The Riviera Hotel Casino Las Vegas, which houses 2,047 guest rooms (also recently upgraded) and 160,000 sf of meeting space including 35 breakout rooms and two ballrooms of approximately 45,000 sf.

Off the Strip

On the south Las Vegas Strip the 390-room M Resort Spa and Casino is fast expanding its meeting space. Following the December opening of the 25,000-sf M Pavilion, the resort has announced that it is expanding its banquet and meeting space to include Veloce Cibo, the 16th floor fine dining restaurant atop the four-star resort. Due to the high demand for versatile function space, the restaurant will close immediately to allow for renovations to begin. With expansive views of the Las Vegas Strip and the mountains, the 16th floor function space will offer 7,200 sf for special events including an outdoor terrace with fireplace. The project

South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa offers 2,163 guest rooms and 170,000 sf of space for meetings — plus a 64-lane bowling center and movie complex.



Photo courtesy of South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa



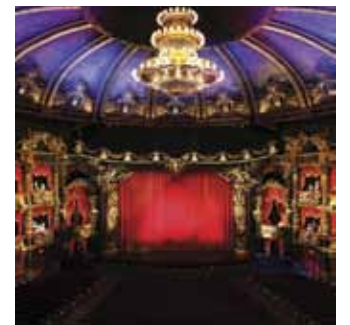
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Peppermill Resort Spa Casino in Reno has 1,630 guest rooms and 106,000 sf of meeting space.

1971, features 1,000 all new guest rooms housed in two towers, 25,000 sf of meeting space, an 80,000-sf casino, bar and restaurants, and entertainment venues. Much of the fixtures and furniture were purchased from the Fontainebleau, which ceased construction in 2009.

Another off-the-Strip property The Las Vegas Hilton announced in December that it would lose its eight-year Hilton franchise effective January 3, 2012. The 2,950-room hotel, which is located next to the Las Vegas Convention Center, has been renamed LVH-Las Vegas Hotel & Casino.

Lake Las Vegas

Thirty minutes outside the city, situated on 21 acres of lakefront property, groups can convene at the 493-room Loews Lake Las Vegas, offering 45,000 sf of meeting space. Last February, Dolce Hotels unveiled the 349-room Ravella at Lake Las Vegas, located 17 miles from The Strip on the site of the former Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas. The hotel offers 39,000 sf of meeting space. Meanwhile, Aston Hotels & Resorts has taken over the 347-room, all-suite Montelago Village at Lake Las Vegas, with 10,000 sf of meeting space.

Reno-Tahoe

Las Vegas and its environs are surely the centerpiece of Nevada, but planners shouldn't discount "The Biggest Little City in the World," Reno. The Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority operates numerous meeting facilities including the Reno-Sparks Convention Center (more than 500,000 sf of meeting space), the Reno Events Center (56,000 sf of exhibit space), the National Bowling Stadium, the Reno-Sparks Livestock Events Center and Wildcreek Golf Course. The Freight House District, adjacent to Aces Stadium, offers year-round dining and entertainment.

Additionally, the Reno-Tahoe area offers a variety of resorts that cater to meeting groups. Among the most outstanding is The Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, which has recently earned the AAA Four Diamond rating for hospitality industry excellence. The 1,630-room hotel includes the 600 Tuscany Tower, 106,000 sf of meeting space, 10 restaurants and the 43,000-sf Spa & Salon Toscana. New at the Peppermill is online check-in for guests and a \$9.7 million geothermal energy system that heats both space and domestic water throughout the resort.

should be completed in February. With the addition of the M Pavilion and the new 16th floor catering space the total meeting and conference space will amount to more than 92,000 sf. The Villaggio Del Sole outdoor events plaza has a built-in stage and 100,000 sf of event space for up to 4,000 attendees. Planners can buy out all six of the resort's restaurants.

A few blocks off The Strip is The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa, a smaller property but only by Las Vegas standards, with 826 guest rooms and 25,000 sf of meeting space. Planners like the fact that attendees don't get lost in the shuffle among larger groups and don't have to walk through the casino to get to the meeting spaces. The Hibiscus Spa is currently undergoing a top-to-bottom facelift, and the pool area also was redone. There's an on-site Starbucks and an onsite Enterprise Rent-A-Car as well as excellent American cuisine in the Suede Restaurant.

South Point, which can host meetings with as few as 10 to as many as 4,500 attendees, has 2,163 guest rooms and 170,000 sf of space for meetings, including an 80,000-sf exhibit hall, 22 breakout rooms and a 22,000-sf ballroom with permanent stage. A new 400-seat showroom features headliner entertainment. Planners will find great value on weekends, in particular, when groups can reserve every room in the hotel. South Point is family owned, not corporate, and prides itself on a personal touch for planners and attendees. The hotel's under-one-roof perks include a 64-lane bowling center, fitness center, 16 movie theaters and the Spa Costa del Sur. Among the eight dining options is the Four Diamond Michael's Restaurant, consistently named one of the top five restaurants in the city.

Following a year-long, \$35 million renovation, The Plaza Hotel & Casino, in the heart of downtown Las Vegas at the west end of the Fremont Street Experience, reopened in September 2011. The refurbished hotel, which originally opened in



Zaven "Zee" Ghanimian
Marketing Director
Simon G. Jewelry
Glendale, CA

"We sell at very high-end stores across the nation and the world, and we want to make sure that our customers have the same experience that they have with our brand at the location we hold the party."

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Atlantis Casino Resort Spa is the only hotel in Reno that is connected to the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, with a glass-enclosed skybridge (inset and above).

Photos courtesy of Atlantis Casino Resort Spa

The Atlantis Casino Resort Spa has completed a \$100 million expansion adding new resort rooms that include custom furniture and a multimedia launch pad directly connecting electronic devices to a 42-inch HDTV. The 800-room Atlantis offers 50,000 sf of convention facilities, including a Grand Ballroom with the capacity to host more than 1,200 attendees, as well as the 30,000-sf Spa Atlantis.

Another major property in the area is John Ascuaga's Nugget, with 1,500 rooms and 110,000 sf of meeting space. Attendees can dine at the Basque eatery Restaurante Orozko, which is now officially Restaurante Orozko and Tapas Bar.

Other options include:

Eldorado Hotel Casino. With 815 rooms and more than 12,000 sf of meeting space, the Eldorado offers the newly renovated BuBinga Lounge and new high-speed Wi-Fi.

Silver Legacy Casino. With 1,711 rooms and 50,000 sf of convention space, the Silver Legacy is connected by skywalks to the Eldorado Hotel Casino and Circus Circus Hotel and Casino. On property are six restaurants, boutique shopping, a health spa and the world's largest composite dome and mining rig.

Harrah's Reno. With 928 rooms and 22,000 sf of meeting space, Harrah's is just steps away from the city's River Walk and offers skyline suites with Jacuzzis.

The Grand Sierra Resort and Casino. With 1,993 rooms and 200,000 sf of meeting and convention space, The Grand Sierra offers fine dining, a cinema, a 50-lane championship bowling center, a driving range, casino and more.

While both Las Vegas and Reno are well-stocked with facilities, entertainment venues and convention services to please most any meeting group, there is always room for improvement. Says Meyer, "We are doing something very unique to us: business innovation labs. This specialized, research-based program allows our customers, those who are really big fans, but also those who are interested and have maybe never come to Las Vegas, to really kind of shape the future of our destination. It will allow us to communicate some trends we're seeing in the convention space."

And there are always new trends. "One of the things about us as a destination is that we are always reinventing ourselves, never allowing ourselves to get stale. Our Las Vegas BET (Business Education Travel) program is designed for people who haven't been here in the last three to five years because it changes so quickly."

One thing that remains constant, however, is Las Vegas' appeal. "In our post-event surveys, we always ask our customers if they like Las Vegas as a conference destination, and usually over 80 percent of them say yes," Zunkowski affirms. **C&IT**

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ON THE MOVE



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Glenwood Hot Springs, Glenwood Springs, CO, has named **Jeremy Gilley** as director of sales and revenue. He formerly served as director of revenue at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs, CO.

Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau, King of Prussia, PA, has named **Mark Zimmerman** as senior vice president of sales and marketing. With more than 30 years of hospitality industry experience, he most recently served as a transportation consultant to the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau in Syracuse, PA.

Mary Ahlstrom was named opening director of sales at Hilton Carlsbad Oceanfront Resort, Carlsbad, CA, scheduled to open in the summer of 2012. She most recently served as director of sales at the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe in San Diego, CA.

Team San Jose has named **Wendy Frank** as national sales manager, West Coast corporate market. She previously served as a national sales manager at Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas, Scottsdale, AZ.

Lakeway Resort and Spa, Austin, TX, has named **Audrey E. Baker** as Dallas/Ft. Worth sales manager. Most recently, Baker was senior sales executive at Horseshoe Bay Resort, Horseshoe Bay, TX.

The Westin Westminster, Westminster, CO, has named **Ana Lucero** as small meetings specialist. Her most recent position was working in membership development and sales at the Metro North Chamber of Commerce in the Denver area.

Marline M. Avelar was named director of group sales for CordeValle, a Rosewood Resort, San Martin, CA. Before joining CordeValle, Avelar most recently served as sales manager at Monterey Plaza Hotel, Monterey, CA.

JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa, Tucson, AZ, has named **Kimberly Dunnegan** as a remote senior sales executive responsible

for the Chicago/Midwest area as well as all Central states. She formerly served as senior sales manager for the Marriott Western Southwest Sales Office in Irvine, CA.

The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau has named **Neil J. Mullanaphy**, CHME, as senior vice president of sales based out of the Washington, DC, office. Mullanaphy, who has more than 26 years of sales and marketing experience, most recently served as executive director of sales and marketing for the Hawaii Convention Center/SMG, Oahu, HI. **C&IT**

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