

Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

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World of Meeting
Planning**

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There is a reason Mardi Gras is called the "Greatest Free Show on Earth." Carnival in New Orleans includes dozens of parades, King Cake parties, masked balls and fun for all.

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business with an icon*



Uluru is such a breathtaking destination. I was proud to be able to offer our most valuable team members this once in a lifetime experience. Our group went from one inspiring experience to another. From guided walks at sunrise and learning more about Aboriginal culture by creating our own dot paintings, to dining under the stars – this was an event none of us will forget. And memories weren't the only things our team brought home with them. Their new found motivation, ideas and energy lasted long after our return.

Cathy, Managing Director.

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Photo courtesy of New Orleans CVB

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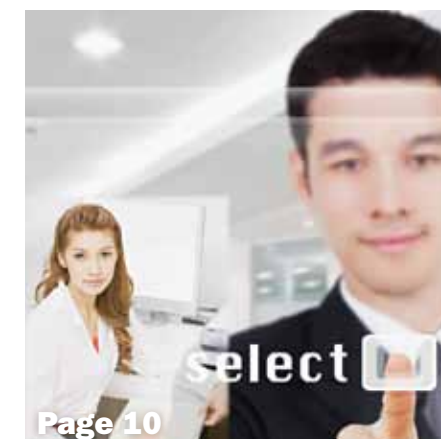
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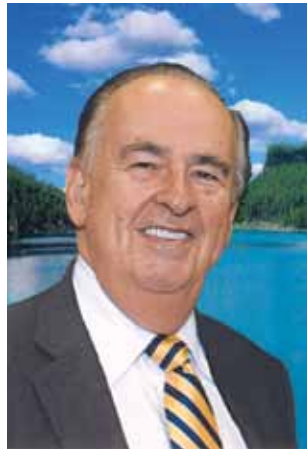
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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

New Orleans — the Comeback Kid

A newly released survey commissioned by the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau (NOCVB) demonstrates that New Orleans is back and better than ever. The survey conducted this spring by KRC Research indicates that 73 percent of travelers younger than 35 years old and 68 percent of travelers ages 35 and older say that New Orleans has become more appealing during the past 5–10 years. Furthermore, 70 percent of all respondents said their perception of the city has changed in the six years since Hurricane Katrina, with many citing successful recovery and rebuilding efforts.



New Orleans is booming. The city has more restaurants than before Katrina and expects to welcome roughly 900 meetings and conventions from January 2012 to February 2013. In that same time span, the city hosted or will host the 2012 BCS National Championship, the 2012 NCAA Men's Final Four and the 2012 SEC Men's Basketball Tournament, the 2013 NCAA Women's Final Four and Super Bowl XLVII. Last year, the city broke all-time records in visitor spending and logged in 8.75 million visitors — on par with the top pre-Katrina years.

Credit is due to the superb efforts and incredible perseverance of the leadership and staff of the NOCVB headed by President and CEO Stephen Perry who recently stated, "Tourism, especially after a catastrophic hurricane that made headlines globally, doesn't just happen. It's the result of aggressive sales and marketing strategies executed with patience, conviction and passion."

Meeting planners and attendees love visiting New Orleans because of its uniqueness, its variety and quality of local cuisine and local culture, and its excellent nightlife, so it's no surprise that the survey respondents gave those categories a big thumbs up as well.

As Jill DiMarco, partner and director of accounts at Signature Destination Management, says in our cover story on New Orleans on page 26: "The trend is that they are back to doing more New Orleans-themed meetings and events. For a while, the meetings that were being done here looked like meetings that could be done anywhere else in the world. But now, everybody really wants to take advantage of the things that really make New Orleans unique."

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher



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NEWS&NOTES

Anaheim Convention Center's Grand Plaza Breaks Ground

ANAHEIM, CA — The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau and the City of Anaheim hosted a ceremony May 15 to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Anaheim Convention Center's Grand Plaza. The Grand Plaza will be a 100,000-sf outdoor and special event space located outside of the convention center's front entrance off of Convention Way. The Grand Plaza will seamlessly create a pedestrian esplanade that will span from the entrance to the Anaheim Convention Center and flow between the Hilton Anaheim and the Anaheim Marriott hotels. The multi-use space can be utilized year-round for a wide variety of events. The development of the Grand Plaza is slated to be complete by the end of 2012. www.anaheimconventioncenter.com, www.anaheimoc.org



Hernandez and Palacios Open GlobauxSource

DESTIN, FL and PLANO, TX — Jorge Hernandez, CHME, CAM, and Patricia Palacios announced the opening of GlobauxSource, their new meetings resource company, located in Destin, FL, and Plano, TX. Hernandez, president and COO of GlobauxSource, most recently was regional director of sales for Posadas, the parent company of Fiesta Americana Hotels & Resorts. Palacios, the president and CEO of GlobauxSource, had a long and award-winning career with HelmsBriscoe, where she has served as a vice president since 2002. The principals have more than 60 plus years of combined industry experience behind them. GlobauxSource associates have worked with every major hotel chain in the world and bring that experience and expertise to their new company. www.globauxsource.com

MEETING VALUES



Peppermill Reno, Reno, NV. Planners who book meetings with 500 room nights in 2012 Q3, Q4 or Q1 of 2013 will be automatically entered into that quarter's drawing for the Meeting Madness Giveaway — a \$25,000 meeting credit. Plus, planners will be eligible for the Meeting Planner Suite Retreat Luxury Getaway drawing in May 2013: round-trip airfare to the Reno-Tahoe International Airport; three-night stay in a super suite themed room; \$500 per day resort credit to be used for all resort services and amenities; round-trip limo transfer to and from the Reno-Tahoe International Airport; daily amenity delivered to room; golf or ski package. Total value: \$17,600. Contact Lisa Anderson, 775-689-7308, landerson@peppermillreno.com, www.peppermillreno.com

■ **Las Vegas Marriott, Las Vegas, NV.** Groups that spend \$5,000 for meetings booked by December 30, 2012 may choose three perks: 50 percent allowable attrition; 10 percent F&B discount; 15 percent off AV; complimentary high-speed Internet access in all guest rooms; complimentary high-speed Internet access in one meeting room; triple Marriott Rewards points; one-year upgrade for one to Marriott Platinum Elite Status; 1/30 comp room; two comp guest-room certificates with a two-night maximum per certificate. 866-878-3926, www.lasvegasmarriott.com

■ **Lakeway Resort and Spa, Austin, TX.** "The Best Meeting Value in Texas" includes: a 3 percent master account rebate on guest rooms, banquet food and meeting packages; 10 percent off AV; 1/30 comp room; 10 percent off all San Saba Spa services; and choice of one of the following: certificate for a complimentary weekend for two; one-hour beer and wine reception; teambuilding event; "S'mores and More" at a reception or dinner event. Meeting (minimum 36 room nights) must be booked by July 31, 2012 and actualized by February 28, 2013. 512-261-7314, www.lakewayresortandspa.com



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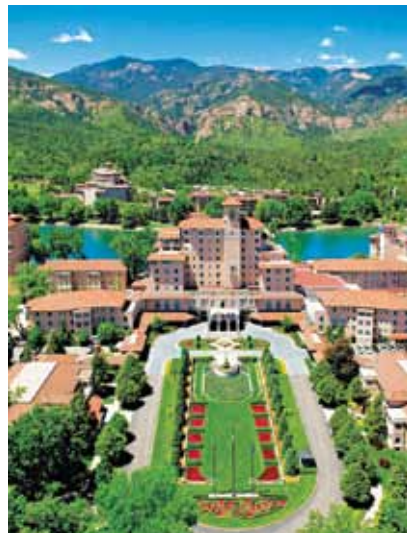
The Broadmoor Embarks on Extensive Updates

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO — The Broadmoor announced a \$60 million multiphase renovation to include the expansion and redesign of guest rooms and suites as well as extensive updates to food and beverage outlets, and meetings, events and activity facilities. “After many months of planning, we are extremely pleased to embark on this multifaceted renovation,” said Steve Bartolin, president, The Broadmoor. “The designs perfectly complement The Broadmoor’s classic ambience, refinement and original grandeur.” In May 2012, the Southlake building guest rooms and suites and a new look for Cheyenne Lodge were unveiled, the first part of the renovation program. The Southlake building now has a new exterior and landscaping, new entry vestibules, 16 new patios and 21 newly renovated rooms, of which eight are suites. Projects to be completed by April 2013 include a rebuilding of



BARTOLIN

The Tavern’s Garden Room to give it a European conservatory feel; a doubling in size of The Golden Bee restaurant; and a new activity center in Broadmoor West, which will feature bowling lanes, billiards, board games, F&B and more. The West Lobby Bar will be redesigned and expanded to include a living room with a fireplace and an expansive outdoor terrace; a new Italian restaurant will open; and the expansion of rooms, baths and lobbies and redesign of the Broadmoor West building exterior will be completed by April 2014. www.broadmoor.com



An aerial view of The Broadmoor.



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1 Fifty senior-level women from the hospitality and meetings industries, including meeting planners and hotel executives, met recently at the Associated Luxury Hotels International 7th Annual “Executive Women In Leadership Conference” hosted by The Langham Huntington in Pasadena, CA, and Delta Air Lines. **2** (L to r) Jorge Pesquera, president and CEO of the Palm Beach County CVB; Amanda Rushing, CMP director, conferences and meeting services, American Society of Civil Engineers; Donna Del Gallo, associate V.P. of convention sales of the Palm Beach County CVB; and Roger Amidon, executive director of the Tourist Development Council, Palm Beach County, at the PCMA Education Foundation Partnership Summit at PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, FL. **3** (L to r) Phillip Jones, president and CEO, Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau, Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings and Darren Temple, senior V.P. of sales and services, Dallas CVB, at the Friday night reception of the Dallas CVB’s “Dallas Double Take,” where more than 300 local and national meeting planners joined the North Texas hospitality community and civic leaders to learn about Dallas’ more than \$15 billion in urban development, including the largest urban arts district in the nation. **4** Bob Johnson, president and general manager of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center at the topping out ceremony for the center’s \$50 million expansion. **5** Celebrating 10 years of IMEX in Frankfurt, Germany, well-wishers join (l to r) IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom and Bruce MacMillan, MPI president and CEO. **6** Flanked by Tamara Kennedy-Hill, the executive director of the Green Meeting Industry Council, and Ray Bloom, Svenja Buesching accepts the IMEX 2012 Green Supplier Silver Award on behalf of winner Caesars Entertainment.

The Big Picture



How Will You Adapt to the Brave New World of Meeting Planning?

By John Buchanan

Like any number of other industries that have been overwhelmed by profound change, such as books, music CDs and information technology, the meetings industry is now being upended and transformed, experts around the world agree. And one obvious question is how those changes will impact the traditional role of meeting planners.

“Conventional meetings are dead,” says Peter Fisk, the founder and CEO of forward-thinking, London-based con-

sultancy GeniusWorks, which counsels clients on the entire spectrum of change. “The idea of taking a week of your life to go to a conference or convention and just listen to speakers and have great dinners and go on sightseeing tours in the evenings cannot continue. Those kinds of meetings cost too much and take up too much time.”

Rohit Talwar, CEO of Fast Future, another London-based firm that has done cutting-edge research on the future of

meetings, is less willing to make such a bold, negative assessment.

“There’s no single view of what the future of meetings will be,” says Talwar, project director of the Convention 2020 initiative and IMEX “Power of 10” studies (see page 12). “The industry will be even more diverse than it is today in the kinds of events it delivers. But a key point is that much of the industry has been sleepwalking into the future, hoping against all the evidence that a global economic meltdown will not affect them.”

Jeffrey Cufade, president and CEO of progressive consultancy Idea Architects in Indianapolis, zeroes in on the central issue: “What the current scrutiny of meetings has caused us to do is stop and say, ‘Are we delivering the ROI that is possible given the resources that are being appropriated for the different kinds of meetings that we’re doing?’ And, ‘Are there other ways of achieving some of these same objectives that either would involve a different meeting format or not meeting at all — or doing something very different?’ Those questions are causing a lot of internal introspection in the industry,” he says.

Even more than that, however, notes Fisk, the pace of cultural change driven by technology is constantly accelerating. “So the future of meetings is based on the future of everything else,” he says. “By 2020, the majority of consumers of all things will make digital decisions and acquire information by mobile devices as they need it.” And in that context, he predicts, what has been known as meetings will become fast-paced “changing points” within organizations and industries. “And that will also mean there are changing points for individual participants and what they are able to do as a result of the people they meet and the decisions they make. And those will be the driving factors in how meetings are defined.”

The Planner’s Role

Although the experts don’t agree

unanimously on what the future role of meeting planners will be — or even whether the long-accepted notion of the tactical planner whose primary responsibilities are booking airlines, hotels and speakers will survive the coming wave of transformation — they do agree that the



Peter Fisk, Founder and CEO
GeniusWorks, London, England

role of planner will change significantly. And at the same time, most agree that far too many planners are simply resistant to such change, mistakenly believing it will not actually happen.

“That is a huge issue, especially as a result of strategic meetings management,” says Terri Breining, CMP, CMM, principal of California-based The Breining Group, who counsels and trains meeting hosts and planners. “And the problem is that a lot of planners think that having a meeting that is fun and one that really shows a return on investment (ROI) are mutually exclusive. And they’re not. You can have both. And that’s the point that needs to be made to get planners on board with this whole process. They have to understand that focusing on content and ROI doesn’t kill their creativity or mean that you can’t play golf or network at the meeting. That understanding among planners has to be the next major shift.”

As for how planners should be prepared for future changes, Talwar says, “Anticipate how their organizations and stakeholders are likely to respond to forthcoming economic shocks, scan widely for ideas on how to innovate and control costs on events, stay abreast of technology developments

coming through and place a clear emphasis on measuring the hard and soft value of events.”

Furthermore, Talwar predicts, “There will be a much stronger focus on experience design, content, delivering against the event objectives and maximizing

“Conventional meetings are dead. The idea of taking a week of your life to go to a conference...and just listen to speakers and have great dinners and go on sightseeing tours...cannot continue. Those kinds of meetings cost too much and take up too much time.”

learning and knowledge transfer — areas where planners will need to build up their expertise even if they are not delivering these elements themselves.”

Based on his experience working directly with planners, Cufade believes that by and large, they are incredibly dedicated to the success of their meetings and good at what they do. But, he notes, most veteran meeting planners work from a checklist of tactical components. “The problem is that what’s on their checklist is no longer sufficient,” he says. “But I also believe that if organi-



Terri Breining CMP, CMM
Principal
The Breining Group
Encinitas, CA

zations can get the kind of intentionality and design principles I talk about, in terms of meeting objectives and the learning process, onto the checklists of their planners, they will indeed methodically and with great attention to detail

“A lot of planners think that having a meeting that is fun and one that really shows ROI are mutually exclusive. You can have both.”

The Keys to Future Success

Collective agility, strategic innovation and foresight are keys to future success in the meetings industry, according to the IMEX "Power of 10" study released at IMEX in Frankfurt, Germany, in May. "The Power of 10" study, commissioned from Fast Future Research by IMEX to mark IMEX in Frankfurt's 10th anniversary this year, explores the internal mechanics of the meetings industry and the full range of business sectors it serves. The study, which gathered feedback from 765 respondents in 68 countries on six continents, looks 10 years into the future and looks back over the last decade to trace and define key lessons learned from past experiences.

Three Dominant Themes

"The Power of 10" study identifies three main themes that appear to dominate the decade ahead:

- An uncertain global economic outlook and the challenges presented by hard-to-predict macro-economic shifts;
- The rapid availability and penetration of new technologies, whose quality, cost and diversity are touching every aspect of our lives;
- The reality of shorter and faster business cycles.

More than 90 percent of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that "To reduce its vulnerability to economic cycles, the business events industry must demonstrate a tangible return on investment for event owners, delegates, sponsors, exhibitors and other key stakeholders."

There are five main sections to the final research:

- The Delegate Experience and Event Design.
- The Learning and Knowledge Transfer Imperative.
- Sector Analysis and the Future of the Value Chain.
- 10 Grand Challenges
- Future Scenarios

A free download of the IMEX Power of 10 Executive Summary is available at <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/powerof10.html>.

make sure those things are in place and then check them off their lists."

The key issue — and practical challenge — he says is "are they going to be able to generate all of the things that will go on those checklists? Probably

not. And the most important things on expanded checklists are going to be content and community."

Another inconvenient truth that planners are currently grappling with says Maarten Vanneste, CMM, president and CEO of Belgian-based Abbit Meeting Support, is that too many of them fail to accept the essential premise that the content and actual learning experience at a meeting, as they relate to organizational objectives, are much more important to the success of the meeting than the

destination or hotel or dinner entrée. Vanneste is the author of the groundbreaking book, *Meeting Architecture: A*

Manifesto (Meeting Support Institute, 2008), and principal of the global non-profit educational and training organization Project Meeting Architecture.

Breining agrees that the big shift and ongoing change in the meetings industry is a constantly increasing focus on content as a critical component of successful events. "There are some companies that have done content really well for a long time," she says. "But in general, those companies are in the minority, just as they are with a real focus on ROI. And together, those are the things that I think are really driving the current changes in the industry."

And on a related point, says Jeff Hurt, executive vice president, education and engagement, at Velvet Chainsaw Consulting in Dallas, planners must now comprehend and act upon a basic reality that will have an ever-increasing impact on the success or failure of their events. "Conferences that continue to just offer 'information transfer' — somebody lecturing and transferring information from their mouths to attendee's note books or laptops — is not as valuable as when there is a facilitated learning experience in which attendees are active rather than passive participants," he says. "What that means for planners is that they have to move from being a 'scheduler of speakers or content' to being a 'designer of learning experiences.'"

And in turn, he says, that discipline will tie back to the specific objective of the meeting and focus more precisely on a simple question: What is the problem this meeting solves for attendees and what do they gain from it that benefits the organization?

Somewhat astonishingly, Hurt says and his peers concur, far too many planners still ignore that central focus as the core of their purpose.

And in that very context, Cufauade says, one of the most important considerations going forward will be how people learn. As a result, he says, the science of brain research is now getting much more attention from smart planners concerned about their futures. "And many of them are starting with the book *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and*

Thriving at Work, Home, and School (Pear Press, 2008) by John Medina," Cufauade says, noting that planners must focus much more — and quickly — on learning and how to accomplish it in order to survive and prosper in the changed meetings industry of the near future. "Then you have to understand the implications of that when it comes to meetings," he says. That is an emerging discipline that is going to have to happen."

And central to that discipline is the understanding that "the end of the conference is not the end of the learning," he says. "It is the beginning." Therefore, it is a process that must be specifically engineered for ongoing learning and reinforcement, as opposed to a brief single experience. "We'll start to increasingly see the meeting as a major episode in a longer series of learning experiences that is ongoing," Cufauade says.

And that, in turn, will reinforce and expand the ROI from the original meeting.

Becoming an Architect

Vanneste, who has been hailed as a true meetings industry pioneer since his book appeared, has diagnosed a longstanding ailment of the meetings industry. Too many meetings have not

had a clearly defined objective that was supported by carefully designed and highly relevant content that enhanced it from an educational perspective. And while he agrees with his peers that strategic meetings management has been a key driver of recent change, he believes



Maarten Vanneste, CMM, President and CEO
Abbit Meeting Support, Turnhout, Belgium

that it has focused too much on operations rather than strategy.

Given that, his most basic assertion is that the same degree of expertise and experience that go into a meeting from a tactical or logistical point of view must now be developed based on the three pillars of meeting architecture — learning, networking and motivation. "There is more attention on those components now and more

demand for innovation and change," Vanneste says. "There is more pressure on planners because meetings are being questioned more by finance and procurement people. And that is the driver of the change. So I think it's clear that more and more companies are rec-

"There is more attention on those components (the three pillars of meeting architecture — learning, networking and motivation) now and more demand for innovation and change."

ognizing the importance of those components of a meeting."

As a result, he says, organizations and meeting sponsors are beginning to realize that the industry needs a new breed of "meeting architects" who specialize in the content side of meetings and devote themselves solely to its conception, planning and execution. Such "architects," he proposes, should be trained to work with

The Virtual Reality

Although many planners and industry organizations disagree, futurists believe that virtual meetings will increasingly replace face-to-face meetings in the not too distant future, partly as a result of budgetary pressures and partly as a result of advances in technology.

"There was some recent research from Virtual Edge that was scary," says Maarten Vanneste, author of *Meeting Architecture: A Manifesto*. "It predicts that over the next five years, relatively speaking, there will be almost no face-to-face meetings anymore except for major events." However, Vanneste believes that while virtual meetings will indeed significantly reduce the number of live meetings, that at the same time management executives will believe more strongly than ever in the events that survive. But even those must be constantly improved upon and reinforced if they are to remain viable, he says.

Another well-known prognosticator on the future of

meetings Peter Fisk, founder and CEO of GeniusWorks, agrees that virtual events will increasingly replace "low-value meetings, which most meetings are today." But the next generation of virtual meetings, with mobile access, also will become a new model for changing industries in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Jeffrey Cufauade, president and CEO of Idea Architects, concurs that virtual meetings will cut into the number of meetings and replace more and more non-essential ones. "That's because the technology is getting better," he says, "and also because time is a precious commodity. But it's also because there are ways now to design a virtual meeting that in some ways is superior to a face-to-face meeting." For example, he says, there is growing evidence that in terms of sustained learning, virtual meetings and webinars deliver more tangible benefits than a one-time face-to-face event.

— JB

"There's no single view of what the future of meetings will be. The industry will be even more diverse than it is today."



Rohit Talwar, CEO
Fast Future
London, England

“We’re signing contracts for major conferences years in advance — without any understanding of what the meeting design will need to be or what it will be that far in the future. We...design events to fit that space, meaning that logistics drives the learning as opposed to learning driving the logistics.”



Jeffrey Cufaude, President and CEO
Idea Architects, Indianapolis, IN

CMPs and other meeting organizers to identify a meeting’s learning objectives, design and implement programming accordingly, and then evaluate the event’s effectiveness.

A key question: why should that be a separate and specialized discipline? “Because someone should spend as much time on the content side as on the tactical planning side in terms of destination or hotel or activities,” Vanneste says. And while he does allow for the possibility that some traditional CMP-level meeting planners can do both things, in general he sees content management as an equally specialized

Personal Space

While Vanneste and many independent observers agree that the new concept of meeting architecture will be a foundational kind of change in the future, there are others that are just as important in terms of fundamental reconsiderations.

Key among them is contracting for future meetings, Cufaude says. “We’re signing contracts for major conferences years in advance — without any understanding of what the meeting design will need to be or what it will be that far in the future,” he says. “So we’re locked into certain kinds of space and then we design events to fit that space, meaning that logistics drives the learning as opposed to learning driving the logistics. So right now, the system is broken in that regard, and that’s something that has to be fixed.”

Hurt agrees with that assessment. “Booking meeting space six years out is using a ‘rearview mirror’ approach, because you’re trying to predict your future based on what has happened in the past,” he says. “And you can’t do that anymore because change occurs way too fast, so you have to look to the future and see where you want to be going.” As a result, Velvet Chainsaw now advises clients not to book meeting space more than three years in advance.

And, he says, “The meeting space should not define the use. The behavior should. Meeting planners have gotten really good at using a template over and over again for their meetings. They just plug in a certain layout from last year’s meeting

and replicate it because that’s easy to do. And it’s efficient for the planner. But that doesn’t mean it’s effective.”

Meanwhile, another traditional component of meetings — the keynote speaker — has devolved into a shortcoming in many cases, Cufaude says. Too many companies today rely on a high-priced, well-known speaker to come in and deliver a much-hyped keynote that is not directly related to the goal of the meeting, he says, suggesting that all keynotes should be specifically tailored to specific business objectives. “The speaker should be there to give light to the objectives of the meeting, not just make a great speech,” he says.

Withstanding the Heat

Facing such issues and daunting challenges in the future will require that planners understand a very simple metric, says Cufaude. And that is the bottom-line satisfaction of meeting hosts and attendees. “Increasingly,” he says, “people are going to be saying, ‘You’ve got to give me a very good reason to get on a plane and fly across the country to sit in a ballroom and go through what we’ve historically gone through. And that experience is going to have to be different and better in the future or more and more people are going to say, ‘You know what? I don’t think so.’”

And, he says, that judgment — from either meeting hosts or attendees, or both — will be life-threatening to the long accepted role of planners.

For his part, however, Fisk — who on a broader scale deems traditional meetings obsolete — takes a surprisingly different view when it comes to forward-looking planners who can adapt to the new world of the future. “They will become more important than ever,” he says, “because they will step up to the challenge of making live events even bigger and better and more seminal in the lives of the people who attend them than they are now. And that will make them real change agents and facilitators within the organization.” **C&IT**

“Planners...have to move from being a ‘scheduler of speakers or content’ to being a ‘designer of learning experiences.’”



Jeff Hurt
Executive Vice President
Education and Engagement
Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, Dallas, TX

and time-consuming expertise. “And for one person who is already very busy to do both things means that he is going to double his workload and responsibilities,” he says. “I think there is a very limited number of people who can be effective at doing both, even if they wanted to. And part of that is because it involves a different skill set than the traditional planning of meetings.”

“I need answers to an RFP. ASAP.”

Tom J. Tolvé, CMP
Associate Director, Meeting Operations
Novo Nordisk

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Meeting Trends



A financial firm enjoyed a "staycation" with family members at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. Total Event Resources worked with the zoo to create customized, in-depth tours and kids' activities that ran throughout the afternoon.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Kaplan

Family-Friendly Meetings

Important for Employee-Company Relations, too

As Tevye the milkman from "Fiddler on the Roof" explained, "tradition" is how his village and his family kept their "balance for many, many years." For some companies, family-inclusive meetings are a tradition, one that supports work-life balance for their employees. A longtime financial client of Schaumburg, IL-based Total Event Resources, for example, began staging family-oriented incentive programs "when they had seven employees, and the tradition lived on through today, when they have more than 200," notes Kathy L. Miller, president of the event planning company.

By George Seli

Such firms "recognize the importance of thanking the entire family," says Miller, who has observed that family-oriented programs are more common for mid-tier companies than the big corporations.

Independent planners such as Miller also cite a decrease in these meetings compared to the pre-recession years, since they do involve some added expense for the corporation. The company will pay for the employee, spouse and meals for the children, though typically not airfare for the children or the extra guest

room that a large family might need. And the tighter cost-control around meetings these days has led many firms to restrict the reward to the employee.

"In this economy, about 60 percent of my corporate clients do not bring families and 40 percent do," notes Lori T. Estroff, principal at Marietta, GA-based Premier Meetings Inc., adding that she has "definitely seen a decline" in the percentage of family-oriented meetings. Furthermore, most meetings of that type are incentive trips, and the timing of the qualification period sometimes precludes kids' participation, explains

Mary Jo Valentine Blythe, president of Chicago, IL-based Masterplan Inc. "If the qualification period ends December 31, which is pretty common, the company will usually not want to wait until the summer, when the kids are out of school, to pay off for that incentive."

Rationale for Bringing the Relatives

But there are at least three good reasons for shouldering the extra expense for a family-inclusive meeting and, if need be, adjusting the qualification period so it ends closer to summer:

1. The reward factor. The recession has taken its toll on many employees, who have had to work harder as part of trimmed-down staffs, often without annual raises. The family-inclusive meeting enables them to take a cost-effective vacation with their loved ones, and thus helps them economically and fosters work-life balance. Tammi Runzler, senior V.P., sales and services with Visit Orlando, says that it's one way to continue the greater sensitivity to quality of life that corporations have demonstrated over the past decade. A company "makes it easier for the family to take a trip that may have some savings and

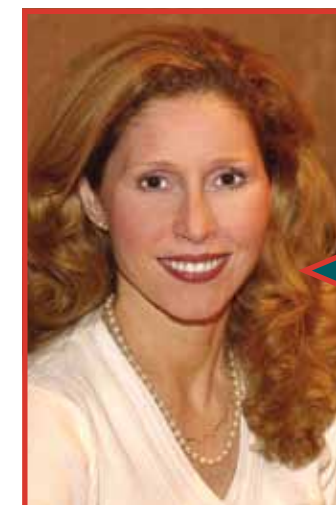
would couple the work with life enjoyment," she says. That's why these meetings often see families arriving early or staying later to enjoy vacation time, and city marketing organizations like Visit Orlando or the Scottsdale CVB often promote that pre- and post-experience.

"Most of the resorts will offer their group rates a couple of days pre and post," notes Kelli Blubaum, CMP, director of sales and services for the Scottsdale CVB. Hoteliers might also extend negotiated concessions such as complimentary Internet and discounted parking. It adds up to a cost-effective family vacation, which will be appreciated by any hard-working employee.

2. The motivation factor. The whole family will be urging on the po-

tential qualifier. "That's much more motivational, and it also kind of puts on the pressure," Blythe notes. "Hey kids, we might get to go to Hawaii this summer, but dad's got to work real hard." If dad (or mom) succeeds, the qualifier's self-esteem will surely be bolstered, more so than with a non-family incentive, since he or she has achieved something for the entire family. The qualifier "gets to look very important to their family," Estroff says, and the company itself is placed in a good light: "Look at what the company has done for me; you all get to benefit as well." It helps lend the support from the family for the corporate culture and the values of the corporation.

3. The teambuilding factor. A business goal with most any meeting is to strengthen the personal bond between participants, and interaction between participants' families tends to make those bonds even more personal. "It takes things to another level of relationship when the spouses and the kids become friends with each other," Blythe observes. "The kids may ask, 'Can we all go out to dinner together?' and actually pull together the relationship. So I think opportunities arise that maybe wouldn't have otherwise through the facilitation of having the children become friends. It's also great for the spouses, who are primarily female, to meet other women and see them with their children and be able to empathize with the demands of their own work-home life, husbands



"The kids may ask, 'Can we all go out to dinner together?' and actually pull together the relationship. So I think opportunities arise that maybe wouldn't have otherwise through the facilitation of having the children become friends."

Mary Jo Valentine Blythe, President
Masterplan Inc., Chicago, IL



The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, AZ, features a "fun department," which offers an entire menu of children's activities and "back of the house" experiences.



Photos courtesy of The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa

who regularly travel for the same company, and so on.

Family-Inclusive Events

That interaction can always happen casually at the hotel, but the way to practically guarantee it happens is by staging a family-inclusive event at the meeting, perhaps the welcome reception and/or final night banquet. Estroff observes that about half of her family-oriented events include children for the final-night gala, while the other half opts for separate children's programming. "Budget would be an important consideration because the company would look at the children's dinner as an added expense," Estroff says. "And the programming within that dinner has to be carefully thought out: Bands that appeal to all ages are always popular, as are comedians with good clean dialogue."

Another concern is to keep kids happy during adults-only events, and Blythe tries to cater to all age groups with activities from the "Rock Band" video game for teenagers to face painting and balloon twisting for younger kids, "and then we will often work with the hotel on baby-sitting services."

An activities director, whether in-house with the hotel or outsourced, is also a plus. Miller remarks,

"The adults love it, because the kids are so entertained for the evening, and they know that they can go enjoy their night and come back and pick them up."

Kathy L. Miller, President
Total Event Resources, Schaumburg, IL



"We've hired one that manages the entire evening and does 'Minute to Win It,' a cake-baking competition based on reality TV, and even uses a leaf blower with toilet paper to entertain the kids. The adults love it, because the kids are so entertained for the evening, and they know that they can go enjoy their night and come back and pick them up."

Kid-Friendly CVBs

Along with a meetings management company like Total Event Resources, a CVB can be a great help when staging family-oriented meetings, including the cost-management side. "We can offer discounts for par-

ticipating families connected to transportation, F&B, theme parks, museums, sporting events and more throughout the destination," Runzler says. "We go out to all of our members, more than 1,300, and say, 'We are putting together a family-friendly program for the next ABC conference and this is what we are looking for.'"

"It's very important to emphasize that even though families may use some of the higher-end hotels, they are still looking for value," Runzler says. "They need to know that they can come down have an enjoyable trip and get a better value than if they just came on their own."

Apart from budget concerns, traveling families also have simple logistical concerns, such as where to find a baby-sitter. This is another area where the CVB can step in and make pre-arrangements and provide information to attendees. "It is very wise to have family-relevant information in the meeting kit," Runzler adds. "We will facilitate that, and help the planner customize a family-friendly website listing the services they have selected. The more of this type of information they can provide in advance, the more families tend to participate because they understand, 'Oh, my concerns have already been addressed.'"

Orlando is in fact a top destination for family-inclusive programs, for obvious reasons that go beyond the quality of its CVB: the slew of major theme parks, outdoor activities

and pleasant weather, not to mention educational options such as the Orlando Science Center and Kennedy Space Center.

"Even if corporate travelers have not been to Orlando for business purposes, they have usually traveled down here and are familiar with our leisure side, which is so family-oriented," says Runzler. "And then when they couple that with the other side of Orlando — the significant meetings infrastructure — it makes a lot of sense to them. Catering to families is part of our culture. Most people tell us they are shocked that the hotels sitting next to our convention center have such incredible family pools. They are really built like resorts for convention hotels, so I think that is a unique proposition we offer."

Westin features 183,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

Meanwhile, the 649-room Fairmont Scottsdale Princess (more than 72,000 sf of indoor/outdoor event space) offers the National Geographic Explorers Camp for children ages 5-12 that features guided photo safaris, treasure hunting using GPS, exploring continents on giant floor maps and meeting world travelers who have worked on assignment for National Geographic. And the 493-room Hyatt Regency Scottsdale (70,000 sf of meeting space) has a Native American

Learning Center "where the kids walk away with a whole educational and indigenous cultural experience," says Blubaum. "It's definitely not baby-sitting or watching them swim in the pool for five hours."

Site Selection

The site selection process also can begin by focusing on family-friendly resorts instead of cities. The obvious choices are major theme parks with

hotels on-property, such as Walt Disney World Resort and Universal Orlando Resort in Orlando, FL, Disneyland in Anaheim, CA, and Hershey Park in Hershey, PA.

Some not-so-obvious resorts include a favorite of Estroff's, the 251-room Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation in Greensboro, GA, which she describes as "perfectly suited" for families. "I think they pride themselves on continuing to come up with different marketing strategies and

amenities to captivate attendees and families. An example is their installation of an ice skating rink for the winter months, which is something that many properties with that number of guest rooms and meeting space could never do or would not even think to do. They also have a little train that goes throughout the property, kind of a Chattanooga choo-choo, which is again very unique for a smaller luxury resort. They're trying to meet the needs of all ages."

Estroff recently met with the Ritz's activities director and the children's program director regarding an upcoming corporate meeting, "and they had a wealth of suggestions for my client, who will be having about 40 children in attendance. It's going to be a summer event and they have a beautiful lawn area for a scavenger hunt ending at the slip 'n' slide. I think the package they are



The Pollywog Theater entertains kids at The Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation in Greensboro, GA.



Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Sandusky, OH, offers year-round fun in its huge indoor water park.

Another fine proposition for family programs is Scottsdale: Its upscale hotels are very cognizant of the needs of families, according to Blubaum. "It's nice to pick a property that has those built-in programs. The kids' camp kind of thing that exists in a lot of the core resorts is definitely an added bonus, because it eliminates the corporate planner from really having to program anything for them," Blubaum notes. "The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa, for example, has a whole 'fun department' and a 'director of fun,' who organizes a scavenger hunt that the kids do all around the property, back-of-the-house tours showing kids how the housekeeping works, and little culinary experiences." The 732-room



The Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa in Dana Point, CA, offers a whole range of children's activities, including the Splash Zone and Kahuna Laguna Kids Club.



The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess features the National Geographic Explorers Camp for children ages 5-12, with GPS treasure hunts, guided photo safaris and more.

putting together is really going to wow the children.”

The “wow factor” for children is also in effect at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Sandusky, OH. On hand are America’s largest indoor water park, an outdoor water park and an outdoor adventure park. Water-park passes are included in the room rates, and discounted group rates pre- and post-meeting dates are available for families looking to extend their stay. Plus, everything is under one roof at the property, including a newly expanded 215,000-sf convention center, seven restaurants and a full-service spa featuring Mommy and Me packages. Daily activities for families include movie night, trivia night, cookie decorating and more.

On the other side of the country, in Dana Point, CA, is the AAA Four Diamond Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa, sitting on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The 378-room property offers more than 50,000 sf of indoor and



Photo courtesy of Gaylord Palms Resort & Conference Center
All Gaylord Hotels, including Gaylord Palms Resort & Conference Center near Orlando, FL, offer the DreamWorks Experience, in which kids get up close and personal with Shrek and other characters.

menus are available daily at the Vue Restaurant and the OverVue Lounge.

The immensity of the Gaylord Hotels resorts and their signature, themed glass-covered atriums offer plenty of space for the kids to run around — and plenty of family-oriented activities. For example, the 1,406-room Gaylord

the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World Resort. All Gaylord Hotels, including Gaylord Palms, Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, TX, Gaylord National near Washington, DC, and Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, TN, offer the DreamWorks Experience, in which the kids can interact with characters from the animated films “Shrek,” “Kung Fu Panda” and “Madagascar” in organized games and craft activities.

Staycations

The aforementioned are just a few family-friendly resorts in diverse areas of the country, but a group needn’t go far in order to enjoy family participation. Companies can stage a local program that offsets the additional expense of bringing families, with reduced transportation costs. Miller’s financial client, for example, has taken their incentive group to South Florida and Scottsdale, but one year they enjoyed a “staycation” in their hometown of Chicago. “People often don’t take the time to enjoy downtown Chicago’s sights and activities,” Miller relates. “We got them to stay downtown at a hotel and do a variety of activities; it might be museum-related or shopping. It’s a fairly young organization, and they have a number of children; some of them have four or five. And a number of families have children under the age of 10, so it does get a little bit challenging for the kids to travel.” The staycation avoids that issue, but when the group does opt for air travel, “We put together a travel bag with magazines and kids toys that are age appropriate that they can take on the plane.”

With a little extra attention to a family’s needs, a planner facilitates what is surely one of the most impactful kinds of meetings a company can hold: one where spouses and children share in the business travel experience that consumes a good deal of an employee’s time. Even a family-friendly meeting that is staged every so often can bolster attendees’ engagement with the corporation. Traditions have to start somewhere. **C&IT**



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“Look at what the company has done for me; you all get to benefit as well.’ It helps lend the support from the family for the corporate culture and the values of the corporation.”

Lori T. Estroff, Principal
Premier Meetings Inc., Marietta, GA



outdoor meeting space, as well as activities for kids of all ages, from the Splash Zone to Kahuna Laguna Kids Club to the nearby Ocean Institute. Activities at the club include making pizza, learning magic tricks, ceramic painting and more. The family-friendly spirit of the resort is evident on Wednesdays, when GM Jim Samuels hosts “Catch with the GM” on the lawn, and coloring books and special Kahuna Laguna children’s

Palms Resort & Convention Center near Orlando, with 400,000 sf of meeting and convention space, just completed a \$50 million renovation that includes the new Cypress Springs Family Fun Water Park, which is a focal point for children’s programs and can be used for corporate events as well. The hotel offers assistance to planners in designing customized childrens’ programs during the group’s stay. The hotel is also just 1½ miles from

New Rules of the Road

Cautions and Concerns for Women Meeting Planners Away From Home

By Stella Johnson

The short-lived ABC television series “Pan Am,” a period drama about life at “The World’s Most Experienced Airline” in the early 1960s, depicted a woman “in flight” as either a stewardess or the wife of a top executive along for the ride and a little shopping. Truth is, if an independent spirit of the “softer sex” harbored any lofty notions of someday seeing a bit of the world, even back in that tumultuous decade of social change, she would either have to become an airline flight attendant or join the Navy. And even that was groundbreaking.

But that was half a century ago. So much has changed, including the number of women who now travel on business, with colleagues or alone. According to a 2011 Cornell Hospitality Reports article “Creating Value for Women Business Travelers: Focusing on

Emotional Outcomes” by Judi Brownell, dean of students at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, women accounted for nearly 50 percent of all business travelers in 2010. In her report, Brownell stated that women want to feel “secure, comfortable, empowered and valued” in their business traveling experience. For example, Brownell noted, in a survey of hotel managers, security was rated as a top concern, so features such as covered parking, secure locks, well-lit hallways and thoughtful room locations were important.

Staying Aware and Alert

Stacey Kent, CMP, agrees. “If there is a difference between the sexes when it comes to travel, it’s a safety one. So, I tend to be more alert when I travel alone, especially on business. It’s the world we live in.”

Family-wise, Kent is a second-generation meeting planner who has worked for several medical education companies, all based in New York City. For the better part of a decade, Kent says, she has managed teams of planners for multiple pharmaceutical clients including Bayer Healthcare. Currently, however, she works as a consulting event manager at New York City-based Corsearch, part of the Wolters Kluwer Legal Services company, which provides “clearance and protection solutions for trademarks and intellectual property professionals.” Kent, who travels regularly whenever a program has to be set up or there is a new site to check out, advises women to remain alert and aware of their surroundings. “Planners are known for being detail-oriented and ‘together’ but we also are doing many things at

once,” she observes. “I say, when you travel for business by yourself, it’s the time to really focus on where you’re going, what you are doing and who is around you. If you look like you know what you are doing, you are not a target. Take the earphones out and put the cellphone away!”

No doubt, over the years, safety has remained a top concern. What has dramatically changed, however, is how business women have armed themselves accordingly.

Weird Vibes From Men

Take the case of one New York City corporate meeting planner who, as a student, studied abroad for two summers with a concentration in travel tourism, culture and cuisine, has a degree in hospitality management and, consequently, certainly knows her way around the world. She recounts the time when, after a business meeting in Colorado, she was asked by her company to stay on a couple of days in order to check out potential venues for the following year’s meeting.

“During that time, two men who were members of our co-sponsor planning committee invited me to dine with them at a local restaurant. I was hesitant. While here were potential networking opportunities in doing so, being the only female made me uncomfortable. My decision was to go ahead anyway. After all, checking out new restaurants in the area for next year’s event was part of the assignment.”

Most of the evening proved fruitful. However, she says that she did receive some “weird vibes from one of the men,” but put it past her.

“After dinner, we went to a local bar for a little tequila tasting. It was both interesting and entertaining in that the owner sat down with us and gave us a sample of his favorite types of tequila while telling us stories about their history. At this point, a female friend of one of the men joined us so I did not feel as uncomfortable as I had earlier, so that was good. But, when I got dropped back off at my hotel, a bottle of champagne was waiting for me in my room

Women-Only Floors

There are planners among us who might remember New York City’s iconic Barbizon Hotel for Women. It seems that cultural history may be repeating itself: “Women-only floors at hotels — an amenity discarded by the hotel industry at the dawn of the feminist movement — may be experiencing a comeback,” Harriet Baskas, an msnbc.com contributor, recently asserted. She noted that the Premier Hotel in New York City, and the Crowne Plaza properties in Washington, DC, and Bloomington, MN, are among the increasing number of hotels that feature women-friendly floors. A spokesperson for The Crowne Plaza Bloomington says his hotel’s women-only floor “is in a secured hallway accessible only by key card.” The rooms feature Bath and Bodyworks amenities, bathrobes, slippers, chocolates and a bathroom scale. The public area provides complimentary snacks, and hallways are brightened with fresh flowers plus women’s magazines as well as news magazines. “There is a slight up charge for rooms on the ladies floor,” he says.

The 318-room Hamilton Crowne Plaza in Washington, DC, has dedicated one floor from Sunday through Thursday for women only — a level that is usually sold out. The floor features exclusive elevator-key access, a personalized concierge, and amenities such as magnifying mirrors, full bath and spa bathrobes. The hotel also reserves a private table for women traveling alone at its 14K Restaurant & Lounge where the hotel hosts the “Women’s Inspired Networking” dinner on a nightly basis.

The 180-room Georgian Court Hotel in downtown Vancouver, BC, has 18 dedicated, women-only guest rooms on its Orchid Floor at no added charge. Special touches include upgraded Aveda amenities, a flat iron for clothes, a curling iron for hair and a “ladies only emergency kit” with pantyhose inside. They even provide in-room yoga mats and fashion magazines. No surprise that guest rooms on the Orchid Floor are often sold out and that the hotel is considering adding another.

And to think there was a time when non-smoking floors were all the rage. Indeed, we’ve come a long way. Expect to see more top-flight hotels discovering their feminine side. — SJ

accompanied with a rather disturbing note from one of the men. It was very upsetting. Since then, I’ve learned to be less trusting and far more cautious of my decisions when on the road.”

As a result, rule No. 1 for this woman is to do everything in her power to not draw attention to the fact that she’s single and traveling on business alone. She also adds that she always gives a copy of her passport, flight itinerary, business agenda and hotel accommodations to someone back home — whether it is a colleague, roommate, family member or friend.

Personal Travel Checklists

Other female planners have also learned a thing or two from a business trip. Based in Chicago, Terry O’Brien is re-

gional vice president for strategic meetings management company HPN Global, which is headquartered in Scottsdale, AZ. She tries to keep her travel time to no more than three nights and, “if possible, do as many day trips as I can.” She advises others to do the following:

- Always pre-arrange for a ride before arriving at the airport.
- Never leave the hotel at night unless accompanied by someone else.
- Always be cognizant of the surroundings, of who is in the elevator and who is walking down the corridor.

“Because I try to arrange it so that I don’t have to spend an unnecessary night away from home, there are many times when I’m at an airport before 6 a.m. and after 12 midnight,” says

O'Brien. "So, I always use the same limo company for peace of mind and, although they charge 25 percent more for pickups prior to 6 a.m. and pickups after 11 p.m., it's money well spent.

"And, while parking at the airport for a day trip would be the most afford-

door doesn't open more than a few inches," she states.

Don't 'Friend' Everyone

Sounds obvious, but sometimes things have to be spelled out, especially



Stacey Kent, CMP, Independent Consultant
New York, NY

"If you look like you know what you are doing, you are not a target. Take the earphones out and put the cellphone away!"

able option, I feel that if my flight back is scheduled to arrive after 11 p.m., I don't want to be walking around O'Hare at that time of night looking for my car," O'Brien says. "So, I'll opt for the limo instead or will choose to valet my car as O'Hare has that option."

Similarly, Kent has her own checklist of musts, one that includes solid locks on guest room doors, adequate lighting and, after one "scary experience" with a private car service, she now only takes official "medallion taxis" to and from airports.

"I also notice which hotels announce your room number out loud when checking in and which hotels write it out so as not to let the whole world know — or at least those standing around you. If necessary, I ask for another room number, written out."

Speaking of rooms, StarCite's Director of Communications Christine Ottow says she doesn't feel as safe as she would like with the prevalent use of electronic key cards. As the person in charge of her company's trade shows and events within the business travel and procurement industries (20 events in the past year including roundtables and client dinners), Ottow finds herself alone in hotels a lot of the time. "So, I always make it a habit to lock the extra bolt or use the chain so that the

for less experienced or all-too-trusting Generation Xers and millennials. To that end, Carolyn Wence, CMP, who owns and operates the destination management company Plans & Action in Portland, OR, and who was president of MPI's Oregon Chapter for 13 years, advises women not to be so friendly with strangers.

"Women have to be a little more cautious about being too friendly, especially with their seat mates on a train or plane," she points out. Wence, who once flawlessly transported 10,000 Nike

that as a joke, except for the fact that he followed me in a cab to my hotel," Wence recalls. "So, I try to ignore seat mates, men or women, and make it a rule to read, nap or work instead."

Still, most women wouldn't forgo their corporate jaunts here and around the world for anything. As Kent notes, "Travel is a powerful thing, especially on business. But, for a woman, it's a rite of passage, especially for the first time. It makes you feel like you've made it."

Thumbs Up for Technology!

No doubt about it, technology is one of the biggest changes since the 1980s for all travelers, but especially so for planners. Technology's biggest improvement and contribution to the meetings industry, in general, is that it has expanded one's base of operation well beyond the office. And, today's electronic devices are so light, portable and capable, that they already make laptops seem like dinosaurs. For instance:

While StarCite's Christine Ottow misses the days when one could be "unreachable," she prizes today's Internet and mobile devices as being invaluable to female business travelers who need



Christine Ottow, Director of Corporate Communications
StarCite Inc., Philadelphia, PA

"I always make it a habit to lock the extra bolt or use the chain so that the door doesn't open more than a few inches."

attendees to a single event in a nearby stadium, emphasizes that for a woman traveling alone, it is not always as easy to get from point A to point B safely.

"Sometimes, being friendly can be misinterpreted as something more. I am older than 50 and, once, because I talked a little too long with a young man who was about the age of my son, he became a nuisance and wanted to know if he could share my room. I took

to stay connected at work and at home. "In many ways, technology has made us all move a little faster and multitask a little more," she says. "These days, there are so many apps and Web tools that allow you to research a destination before you get there and quickly find things once you've arrived. For instance, if you have your GPS running on your iPhone while walking around in Barcelona, you can find anything in-

stantly, even though you might be in a new and far away city."

Plans & Action's Carole Wence notes, "You no longer have to rely on the hotel concierge to help you find restaurants, airline, train and bus schedules, and so on. The phone can, and does, do it all for me."

HPN Global's Terry O'Brien would rather travel with her iPad than a laptop because she can throw it in her purse. "It's also 3G-enabled so I can get Internet anywhere and don't have to pay an extra daily fee at the hotel for the same service. If my flight has 'go-go in-flight' service available, I always buy it," she says. "The extra \$10-\$15 is well worth it. It means I can keep up with my email and work while flying, not having to check my iPhone or BlackBerry when deplaning. Because of smartphones and voice mail, most people don't even know I'm not in my office, and that's how it should be. I try to be as responsive when I travel as the days when I'm in the office. I make sure I have all necessary files on my iPad, or have access to them on my exchange server."

Consultant Stacey Kent relates, "As there is an app for everything, there is a request for it, too. I remember the times when I was asked to find the impossible and, likewise, could not. Well, those days are gone. Now there's more than a good chance that I can find or get more information on anything. I often think about the days when I walked around with a big binder full of information in my arms. Now it's in my phone. Fabulous."

Or, as former corporate meeting planner Deanna Vollmer reflects, "While technology has made it impossible not to be reached at the times you don't want to be reached, it has also made it possible to be reached at the times when it's really crucial to be reached."

Up until last year when she transitioned to the nonprofit world, Vollmer spent her career in the corporate realm, including meeting planning positions with McVeigh & Associates and Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP. Still, reflecting on those recent corporate travel experiences, Vollmer feels that technology

Hyatt's Women & Business Summit

The hospitality industry has taken note that businesswomen traveling or attending corporate meetings alone constitute a growing segment of its annual revenues. So much so, that Hyatt sponsored its first "Women & Business Summit" at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans last fall. Its objective was to "take a deep dive" into researching what women want and need, especially when it comes to meetings.

The summit featured speakers and panelists, including community architect Deirdre Straughan, who blogged:

"As the Hyatt folks told us, women decide 82 percent of travel expenditures, 41 percent of conference attendees are women, and 37 percent of Hyatt revenues come from women — so Hyatt is looking closely at women's travel needs, and wants to make sure that women travelers know that."

When Straughan travels on business, her primary concern is "loneliness," as she dislikes eating meals alone or being in a hotel room at night with nothing to do but work or watch TV. She also hates "hanging around in bars" and getting "hit upon by random men." She notes that although women traveling alone tend to gravitate towards one another, they rarely have a way to actually meet up. (See "Women-Friendly Floors" on page 23).

"Here's where hotel chains could help," Straughan says. She reports that an interesting experiment during the summit was a smartphone app custom-designed by www.yapmo.com to help the attendees retain an ongoing sense of community — by enabling them to interact with other attendees and Hyatt during and after the summit.

Straughan suggested to Hyatt that they "build-out this online community of women, because there's a good chance that some of them will cross paths from time to time in Hyatt hotels around the world." These greater networking opportunities could lead to some "serendipitous outcomes."

- Concerns gleaned from the summit that Hyatt is testing or considering:
- Women agree that the guest room shouldn't be one-size-fits-all. There should be different amenities and services offered for men and women.
 - Women need more places to store their shoes when they travel.
 - Women want a social space (other than the bar) to work, socialize and enjoy refreshments.
 - Women would like housekeepers to note what they cleaned, so they have more confidence there was attention paid to their room.
 - Women would like makeup remover added as an amenity in the guest room so they can travel with fewer liquids.
 - Women want more healthful menu items, so as part of Hyatt's new global F&B philosophy, "Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served," Hyatt is incorporating these on many menus, including banquet and snack menus.
 - Women don't want to sit in a chair all day so the addition of balance balls and high-boy tables for the meeting rooms are under consideration. — SJ



Photo courtesy of Hyatt Hotels

New Orleans



Photo courtesy of Hosts New Orleans

Hosts New Orleans arranged this party for AOL at the House of Blues, New Orleans with entertainment by Chee Weez, a local band.

Everything Old Is New Again in the Crescent City

There are only a precious few destinations that qualify as truly singular places, unlike any other and offering unique charms not to be found anywhere else.

New Orleans is one of them. And for many planners, in fact, it's at the top of that exclusive list.

Now that the meeting industry is returning to full-fledged creativity after the tight-budget conservatism of the Great Recession, planners are flocking to the Crescent City and taking full advantage of what it can deliver.

"Corporate groups are coming to New Orleans in large numbers now," says Jill DiMarco, partner and director of accounts at Signature Destination Management. "And the trend is that they are back to doing more New Orleans-themed meetings and events. For a while, the meetings that were being done here

looked like meetings that could be done anywhere else in the world. But now, everybody really wants to take advantage of the things that really make New Orleans unique."

For example, for an upcoming meeting, DiMarco and her team are staging a Storyville-themed jazz event at time-honored offsite venue Gallier Hall, the city's historic former city hall, a gem of Greek Revival architecture located adjacent to Lafayette Park in the central business district. "Storyville was the birthplace of jazz and the music of Louis Armstrong," DiMarco says. "We're also seeing jazz parties staged at other classic venues and more Mardi Gras-themed events. Planners are going back to ideas that really showcase New Orleans and its unique culture."

Holly Bethay, director of sales and special events at destina-

By John Buchanan

tion management company Hosts New Orleans, a Hosts Global Alliance Member, is seeing a similar trend. "Everything old is new again," she says. "Planners and attendees really want to get back to the roots of New Orleans. For a long time, they didn't take the traditional city tours and Garden District Tours or do the plantation or swamp tours. But they're going back to those things now."

The 'Feel Good' Effect

Aside from its fabled attractions, New Orleans offers yet another distinct advantage for many planners.

"Everybody really wants to take advantage of the things that really make New Orleans unique."

Jill DiMarco, Partner and Director of Accounts, Signature Destination Management
New Orleans, LA



"One of the main factors in our choice of New Orleans was the ongoing aftermath of Hurricane Katrina," says Michael Williams, president of Clearwater, FL-based site selection firm WBC, Inc., which planned a five-day annual meeting held last August for national coupon vendor Valpak at the New Orleans Downtown Marriott at the Convention Center. "Valpak is a company that likes to give back to the community whenever they host their annual franchisee conference. And of all the communities out there, New Orleans was still the one that needed the most help after Hurricane Katrina. It was just a 'feel good' thing to do." Attendees also participated in a day of community service at a local school, which included donating backpacks filled with school supplies and painting the classrooms.

Beth Ann O'Boyle, administration manager at CertaPro Painters Ltd. in Oaks, PA, chose New Orleans for similar reasons for a franchisee sales conference held last August for 350 attendees from the U.S. and Canada and hosted at the Sheraton New Orleans. "Ever since Katrina, we had been wanting to host an event there to be able to give back to the community and be part of their ongoing rebuilding effort," O'Boyle says. "And personally, I've always enjoyed the city when I go. So I knew my attendees would enjoy it, too. And they did."

Dawn Greene, marketing manager at enterprise technology provider Verint Systems in Roswell, GA, hosted her first meeting in New Orleans last February, a four-night global event for 500 attendees at the Sheraton New Orleans.

"We liked the architectural aspect of New Orleans and the history there," Greene says. "And the whole cultural scene that comes with the area, all that atmosphere and food and music. We also felt like the vibe of the city would contribute to our overall theme and what we do in terms of offsite events. And part of the reason for that is that both of our major meetings are events where we are transferring enthusiasm to our em-

ployees and customers. For our employees, for this first meeting, it was to start a new fiscal year and for our customers, it's so they can get excited about what we're doing. So we're going back in June for that meeting, too."

The Value Proposition

At a time when many meeting budgets are still challenged, or at least under scrutiny, New Orleans offers yet another important advantage — solid value.

"It's definitely in the top 10 destinations in the country," says Williams. "The bottom line is very important for our Valpak meeting, and we looked at all the different costs related to the meeting, including the costs of getting there, because attendees pay their own way. And we were also able to get the hotel rates we needed to be able to make our budget quite nicely. I've done that same assessment each year in destinations across the country for this meeting, and in terms of bottom-line value, New Orleans is definitely a top destination."

O'Boyle agrees. "On a scale of one to five, I'd say five," she says. "Airfare was reasonable, as was everything else attendees needed. The city just delivers a lot of value."

Green also endorses that assessment. "When we're looking at a destination, we go in and look at some of the most common average flights, so we can do a projected budget for senior management," she says. "And in New Orleans, thanks to its central location and the fact that it has flights coming in from around the globe, there were good direct flights at good prices. The fares are very reasonable. And with the hotels, we judge a venue based on room rate. And we try to cap our rates at under \$200 a night. And the Sheraton was very good about coming back with a very reasonable room rate, compared to other destinations, so we got an immediate cost saving because they were willing to work with us. They even came in under our budget, and they provided additional incentives, like a percentage back on our food and beverage."



"In terms of bottom-line value, New Orleans is definitely a top destination."

Michael Williams, President
WBC Inc., Clearwater, FL

Offsite Venues

Although New Orleans offers an almost endless array of options when it comes to one-of-a-kind venues, the granddaddy of them all is the iconic Mercedes-Benz Superdome, says Nikki Moon, vice president of sales at the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Whether you are a sports person or not, the superdome is just a venue that is totally unique when it comes to doing events," she says. "You can do a major event

Super Bowl XLVII will be played in New Orleans for the 10th time on February 3, 2013, at the newly named Mercedes-Benz Superdome — the home of the NFL's New Orleans Saints.



Photo courtesy of Mercedes-Benz Superdome

on the floor of the dome, and you can theme it around football or you can theme it around New Orleans jazz or food. The cool thing to do is to drive everybody onto the field in limousines and have them all of a sudden be on the floor of the superdome. It's a really amazing experience."

Adjacent to the superdome are Champions Square and Club XLIV, which made its debut last fall. "Those two venues offer planners the chance to do outdoor-indoor events that are really

District) and recognized as a satellite of the Smithsonian, offers an authentic 1940s diner dubbed The American Sector, which serves gourmet takes on the comfort foods of the era from superstar chef John Besh.

New in town is NOLA Motorsports Park, a sprawling 13-acre complex that opened in May and features multiple race tracks for cars and carts, as well as a state-of-the-art event facility. "For groups, it brings something new and different to New Orleans," says Terry Epton, president of Hosts New Orleans. "Now we have a venue where you can do an adventure-type event that you really couldn't do here before."



"Whether you are a sports person or not, the superdome is just a venue that is totally unique when it comes to doing events."

Nikki Moon, Vice President of Sales
New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau
New Orleans, LA

spectacular," Moon says. "We also have a beautiful City Park that is close to downtown. It's a 10–15 minute shuttle ride away. At one end, you have the New Orleans Museum of Art, which is extraordinary for private parties. The main gallery is just a wonderful venue, and it's a great spot for a reception or dinner. Then right outside, you can also do a reception in the sculpture garden, then finish your evening with a dinner in the gallery. But that is a very special night."

For smaller groups, Moon recommends Musée Conti Wax Museum in the French Quarter. "It's a classic venue with a lot of old world charm," she says. "It can accommodate groups of up to 200, and food is catered in. For larger groups, another great venue is the Contemporary Art Center, where you can do events for several thousand people."

As other one-of-a-kind venue, Bethay cites the National World War II Museum, created by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks with New Orleans-born author and historian Stephen Ambrose, who wrote *Band of Brothers*. The facility, located in the Arts District (formerly known as the Warehouse

chefs such as Besh, Emeril Lagasse and Paul Prudhomme.

"The best part of New Orleans is that you can walk out of any hotel and within just a few blocks, you can be in one of the finest restaurants in the world," Moon says. "You don't have to spend a lot of time in buses or taxis. And you have a limitless list of options."



Photos courtesy of National World War II Museum

The Stage Door Canteen at the National WWII Museum features dining and entertainment including headliner acts, musical productions, big bands, dancing and more. The venue is also available for corporate events.

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Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Bocage Plantation is a stately mansion near New Orleans open for group functions in its double parlors, broad balcony and garden.



Photos by Gourmet Reise

after dinner. They also very much appreciated the fact that there's so much entertainment. It's just a fun destination that everybody enjoyed."

Greene also received enthusiastic feedback from her attendees about the city's restaurants. "They loved the variety," she says. "For the February meeting, we gave attendees one night off to go out on their own with their individual teams. And all of the restaurants there are open to larger groups, which was important to us, because some of our teams can range up to 20 or 25

people. And in New Orleans, most of the restaurants are willing to accommodate groups of that size."

Activities

When it comes to taking maximum advantage of New Orleans as a destination, it's not just jazz and cool local venues that are back — so are the activities that make the city unique.

Top among them are swamp and plantation tours. "Both are fun, and they are also something truly unique to our area of the country and our culture," Moon says.

And, she adds, a great offsite venue located near the swamp tours is Bayou Barn, where attendees can enjoy an authentic crawfish boil, gumbo, jambalaya and live Cajun music in a sprawling indoor-outdoor setting.

DiMarco also touts plantation tours to planners. Key among the venues are Houmas House, Oak Alley, Laura, Bocage Plantation and Nottoway, each offering unique charms and benefits. "The choice depends on the amount of time you have available and whether it's just a tour, or whether it will include lunch or dinner," she says. "For example, if you want to do a historical event, Laura is just fab-



Photo courtesy of Hosts New Orleans

Surrounded by authentic Mardi Gras figures, costumed corporate attendees parade through the New Orleans Marriott on Canal Street at their 2011 annual conference in New Orleans.



Photo courtesy of Hotel Monteleone

The legendary Carousel Bar and Lounge at the 125-year-old Hotel Monteleone in the French Quarter is famous for its rotating bar.

ulous. And if you want to stage a really glamorous event, we use either Oak Alley or Nottoway." Most of the plantations are available for buyouts.

While swamp and plantation tours are time-tested and perennially popular options, there's also a new trend when it comes to activities, Epton says. "Highbrow jazz clubs have made a stunning comeback in New Orleans," he says. "For example, Grammy-winning jazz artist Irvin Mayfield has opened two high-end clubs. One is Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse, located on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter and connected

to the Royal Sonesta Hotel. The other is Irvin Mayfield's I Club, located in the JW Marriott New Orleans on Canal Street. The third venue, featuring performance by artist Jeremy Davenport, who is often compared to Harry Connick, Jr. and Frank Sinatra, is the jazz room at the Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans. They're all three great venues for people that want to dress nicely and drink martinis and listen to great jazz in a great environment in a sophisticated environment," Epton says.

Regardless of which options a planner chooses for a particular meeting, New Orleans is guaranteed to deliver a memorable result, planners say.

"I've been doing meetings for CertaPro for 10 years," says O'Boyle. "And overwhelmingly, I had so much feedback from our attendees that they wanted to go back to New Orleans that I can honestly say it's the first destination where I've ever had that kind of reaction. It's just a wonderful, fun place."

New and Renovated

The 1,329-room **New Orleans Marriott Hotel**, with 70,000 sf of meeting space, underwent a \$3 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space, which was completed last November.

The 1,110-room **Sheraton Hotel New Orleans**, with 100,000 sf of space, is undergoing a \$45 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space that will be completed in February, 2013.

"Everything old is new again. Planners and attendees really want to get back to the roots of New Orleans."

Holly Bethay, Director of Sales and Special Events, Hosts New Orleans New Orleans, LA



Another trend Bethay notices is planners who select a unique offsite venue based on their group size, then have their DMC bring in several famous local chefs to showcase their signature dishes.

"We call them 'A Taste of New Orleans,' and we do them at places like Gallier Hall," Bethay says. "We can do groups of up to 465 reception-style in a single room or 200 for a five-course sit-down dinner. If you buy out the whole facility, you can do up to 800."

For O'Boyle, the local dining scene was a major factor in her selection of New Orleans as a destination. "It was very important, because we did not include dinner plans in the conference, so we wanted a location that had a lot of options for our attendees to go out and enjoy themselves and find good food at reasonable prices," she says. "Our attendees really appreciated the fact that there was the variety there is, at different price points. So that gave them a wide range of options, and they liked that. And a lot of attendees ended up on Bourbon Street

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Photo courtesy of Hosts New Orleans

(Above) Steps away from the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, club XLIV, a new 9,500-sf special event venue, commemorates the New Orleans Saints winning Superbowl XLIV. (Right) Attendees at an event at the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans enjoy the “Champagne Chandelier” as an aerial artist pours the bubbly.



Photo courtesy of Hosts New Orleans

In May, the 570-room **Hotel Monteleone**, with 24,000 sf of space, completed a \$10 million renovation that included updated guest rooms and meeting space and the new Criollo Restaurant and Lounge. In March, the hotel celebrated the grand reopening of its famous rotating Carousel Bar, which added a second, new stationary bar.

The 1,622-room **Hilton Riverside**, with 130,000 sf of space, is undergoing a \$10 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space that will be completed this fall.

In January, the 316-room **Windsor Court Hotel**, with 10,000 sf of meeting space, underwent a \$22 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space.

The 345-room **Omni Royal New Orleans**, with 15,000 sf of space, is undergoing a renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space that will be completed in December.

The 483-room **Royal Sonesta Hotel**, with 20,000 sf of space, is undergoing a \$6.5 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space that will be completed in December.

The 410-room **W New Orleans French Quarter**, with 13,000 sf of space, is undergoing a \$9 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space that will be completed in July.

Last month, the 254-room **Hyatt French Quarter** (formerly Chateau Bourbon), with 10,000 sf of space, completed an \$18 million renovation of its guest rooms and meeting space.

Hyatt Regency New Orleans offers more than 200,000 sf of flexible meeting and event space, including the fully furnished 50,000-sf Elite Hall and two 25,000-sf ballrooms. The substantial space also includes 70 versatile meeting and banquet rooms, 19 executive level meeting rooms and seven permanent boardrooms. Hyatt Regency New Orleans re-opened on October 19, 2011 following a \$275 million redesign and revitalization and features 1,193 guest rooms and suites.

The **New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center** is in the midst of a more than \$60 million renovation that will be completed just in the nick of time for the city to host Super Bowl XLVII on February 3, 2013 — the first time the championship game will be held in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 destroyed parts of the Louisiana Superdome (now the Mercedes-Benz Superdome), home to the NFL’s New Orleans Saints. It will be New Orleans’ 10th time as a Super Bowl site.

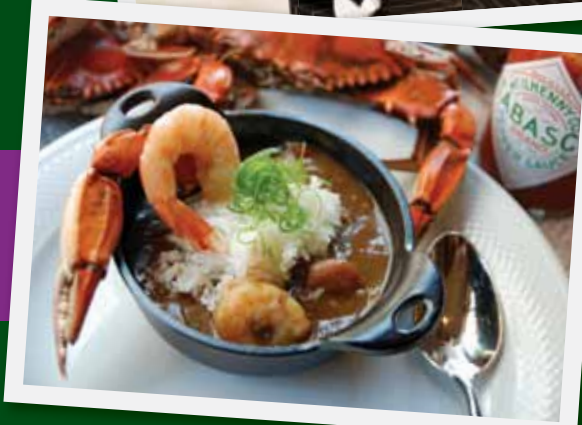
The convention center’s renovation includes the Great Hall, a new 60,000-sf ballroom with 26,000 sf of new prefunction space, and an expanded, grander entrance featuring a new pedestrian plaza with an outdoor terrace.

The Great Hall’s design incorporates a layered ceiling concept that cascades down the walls to provide transitions from an intimate to a more open room environment that accommodates banquets, meetings and exhibitions. There are also hotel-like ballroom features throughout the new venue. Also, the lighting design is an energy-efficient LED system with limitless color combinations that can be used to create a custom environment for events. **C&IT**



A rendering of the new entrance to the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, which has 1.1 million sf of meeting space, 140 meeting rooms and a theater.

Photo courtesy of New Orleans CVB



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GARCIA

Juan J. Garcia was named area director of sales and marketing for Hiltons of Washington, DC, representing The Capital Hilton and Washington Hilton. He was director of sales and marketing for Hilton Orlando, Orlando, FL.

PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, has named Paul Steffens as director of Midwest and West Coast sales. He was director of national accounts at the Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, FL.

Debbi See was named senior sales executive of the Anaheim Marriott,

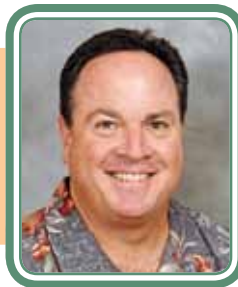


STEFFENS

Anaheim, CA, mid-Atlantic region. She previously served as senior sales manager for Freeman's Southern California office in Anaheim.

Suya Davenport was named director of sales and marketing for One Bal Harbour Resort & Spa, Miami Beach, FL. She was director of sales and marketing for Naples Bay Resort, Naples, FL.

The Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort, Oahu, HI, has named Brad Logsdon as director of sales and marketing. With 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he previously



LOGSDON

served as director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Anaheim, Anaheim, CA.

The St. Regis New York in Manhattan has named Trine Ackelman as director of sales and marketing. She returns to the hotel, where she previously served as director of sales.

The Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, located on the Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM, has named Troy Wood as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served as associate director of sales for the Grand Hyatt San Antonio and Hyatt Regency San Antonio, TX.

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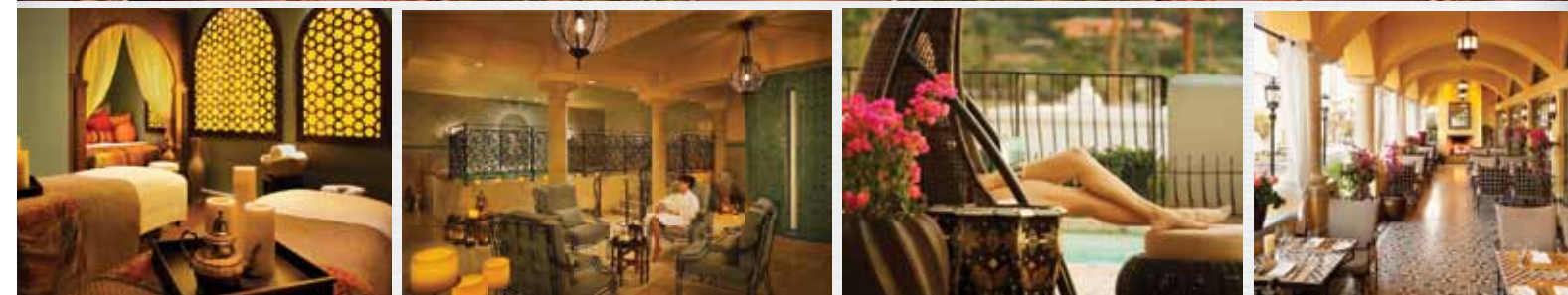


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