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2013

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT



D Second-Tier Destinations

These Popular and Accessible
Options Offer First-Class Value

PAGE 10

A view of downtown
Jacksonville and the
St. Johns River at dusk.

Las Vegas Meeting Planner Guide

PAGE 19

Photo by Ryan Ketterman

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June / July 2013 Volume 6 • Number 3

Departments

- 4 Publisher's Page
- 6 News & Notes
- 7 Snapshots
- 70 Career Track
- 70 Reader Services

ViewPoint

- 8 Event Management
How Do You Know if Your Strategy Is Successful?
By Anita O'Boyle and Kim Vinciguerra



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas, NV

19

Features

- 10 Second-Tier Destinations
These Popular and Accessible Options Offer First-Class Value
By John Buchanan
- 16 Attracting and Engaging Younger Generations
Learn What Attendees Need, and Meet the Challenges
By Mike Bassett
- 56 Renovation Roulette
The Pros & Cons of Meeting at New and Newly Renovated Properties
By Patrick Simms
- 60 How to Overcome Audience Attention Deficit
'Active Learning' Strategies That Engage and Captivate
By Patrick Simms

Destinations

- 19 Las Vegas Meeting Planner Guide
By John Buchanan
- 64 Orlando
Fulfilling Every Planner's Wish List
By Mike Bassett



Photo courtesy of Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority

10



56



64

NRF Spring Clinical Meeting in Orlando photo by Rodney Choice Photography

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Engagement Rules



Walk into any meeting or convention these days and there's a sea of heads bobbing up and down from smartphones to whatever else is going on in front of them. As the old adage says, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. The age of digital distractions is here to stay, so meeting planners are using mobile technology in new ways to engage attendees and enhance outcomes.

But first things first: The road to engagement begins with choosing a destination that gets their attention. Compelling destination selections include first-class second-tier cities (page 10) such as Jacksonville, Florida, "the river city by the sea," on our cover, which offers a captivating waterfront experience along the Riverwalk. Destinations like this work extra hard to deliver a value proposition that includes the high-quality facilities and experiences planners need to keep both stakeholders and attendees happy. Attendance magnets such as Las Vegas (page 19) and Orlando (page 64) are perennial favorites that never stop dreaming up new ways to impress and engage their visitors.

The attendee engagement challenge really ramps up once the meeting starts. In the "old days" — not so long ago! — meeting content was delivered in the same, predictable ways — with speakers at podiums pushing one-way conversations to hushed audiences; and expo halls filled with mazes of booths. Our story on page 60 "How to Overcome Audience Attention Deficit: 'Active Learning' Strategies That Engage and Captivate" highlights interactive formats that foster lively give and take with mobile and social media, interactive games and creative show floor configurations. For example, the American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) uses a central engagement hub on the exhibit floor: "Our goal was to engage our members that were not able to attend, as well as enhance the experience for onsite attendees and exhibitors," says Patrick Andrus, ASHE's director of business development. "Attendees, exhibitors and the remote audience can all engage with key speakers at the booth, which also includes our 'Internet zone,' a new product launch area and an area for meetings/networking."

Needless to say, these strategies are key to attracting new, younger association membership — like the millennial 20-somethings. In our story on page 16 "Attracting and Engaging Younger Generations," learn valuable insights about the generation practically born with iPhones in their hands.

I may not have been born with one in my hand, but when I attend an industry convention, I'm one of those bobbing heads checking out my mobile meeting app. Like the adage says, don't fight 'em, join 'em.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Harvey Grotsky
cccpublisher@att.net

GROUP PUBLISHER
Arthur Hyman
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Mitch D. Miller
cccdirector@att.net

MANAGING EDITORS
Susan W. Fell
ccceditor1@att.net

Susan S. Gregg
ccceditor2@att.net

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Michael Bassett
Karen Brost
John Buchanan
Timothy Herrick
Stella Johnson
Derek Reveron
Patrick Simms

PRESIDENT & CEO
Harvey Grotsky

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
David A. Middlebrook
cccoperations@att.net

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HAWAII
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
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IAEE Midyear Meeting Set for August in Atlanta

DALLAS, TX — The International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) is preparing for this year's Midyear Meeting to be held August 5–7 at the Omni CNN Center in Atlanta, GA. "The Midyear Meeting offers attendees a strategic break from their status quo with a boost of useful information," said IAEE President and CEO David DuBois, CMP, CAE, FASAE, CTA. "In only two days they receive an arsenal of fresh information that they can use to make their mark on the remainder of the year." The meeting will offer nearly 20 education sessions focusing on technology, strategy and engagement such as Create Your Digital Playbook Today - The Latest Ideas and Research to Craft Your Digital Strategy, Attracting and Engaging Young Professionals, Creating the 365-Day Long Conference and Exhibition, and many more. www.iaee.com



DuBois

Long Beach CVB Visits Washington, DC, Area

LONG BEACH, CA — The Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (LBCVB) held its annual Sales Mission in the Washington, DC, area in June. More than 20 Long Beach representatives, including Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, Long Beach Airport Director Mario Rodriguez, several CVB board members, hotel and convention center representatives and staff met with more than 230 customers from more than 180 organizations while holding meetings and events in the Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland areas.



Pictured l to r: First row: Ken Uriu, Port of Long Beach; Steve Goodling, LBCVB; Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster; Alicia Butler, Hilton Long Beach & Executive Meeting Center; Heather Gonzalez, The Westin Long Beach; Joan Cantarelli, LBCVB. Second row: Regina Richardson, LBCVB; Ellen Schwartz, Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center; Nancy Canzone, Hyatt Regency Long Beach; Art Scanlon, LBCVB; Sarah Nguyen-Noh, LBCVB; Bianca Ware, Renaissance Long Beach Hotel; Barb Swaiman, The Queen Mary. Third row: Stephen D'Agostino, Hyatt Regency Long Beach; Allison Lesser, LBCVB; Paul Romero, LBCVB; Dan Lee, Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center; Chris Zappia, LBCVB; Kerry Gerot, Long Beach Airport; Nusrat Mirza, Renaissance Long Beach Hotel; Charlie Beirne, Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center; and Mario Rodriguez, Long Beach Airport.

Association Community and ASAE Mourn Passing of Bill Taylor

WASHINGTON, DC — ASAE The Center for Association Leadership joins the association community in mourning the passing on June 8 of Mr. Robert William "Bill" Taylor, CAE, a former chairman of the board and president and CEO of ASAE. On behalf of the association community, ASAE President & CEO John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE, expressed his sincere condolences to the Taylor family.



Taylor

Mr. Taylor served ASAE as a volunteer leader in numerous capacities rising to chairman of the board in 1974–1975. In 1976, Mr. Taylor received The Key Award — ASAE's highest award for volunteer service; and in 1982, he joined ASAE as president and CEO. Mr. Taylor had a lasting and profound impact on the growth of ASAE and the development of the profession of association management including the establishment of the Certified Association Executive (CAE) program. Mr. Taylor was the recipient of many awards and honors including service on President Ronald Reagan's President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives and was inducted into the Convention Leaders Hall of Fame in Washington, DC. He retired in 1998. Memorial contributions may be sent to American Society of Association Executives Foundation, 1575 I Street NW, Washington DC 20005. www.asaecenter.org

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1-3 Attendees from among the more than 3,200 association and meeting professionals gathered at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC, to attend three ASAE events: the Association International Conference, held May 14–16, the Springtime Expo, May 16, and ASAE Foundation's Annual Springtime DC Golf & Tennis Invitational, May 17. **4** A Roaring '20s Themed Event was a highlight of the 2013 CMP Conclave, held in Spokane, June 8–10. **5** More than 600 civic, business, political, and community leaders gathered as Cuyahoga County (OH) Executive Ed FitzGerald led the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Cleveland Convention Center on June 14. **6** (L-r) Meeting Professional Honoree Lisa Block, Supplier Honoree Gino Giancola and Educator Honoree Cynthia Vannucci, Ph.D., CHME, CHSP, CMP, were honored at the PCMA Education Foundation's 2013 Dinner Celebrating Professional Achievement held May 15 at the Washington Hilton, Washington, DC. **7** This year in Chicago, AIBTM attracted roughly 1,000 regional and international hosted buyers — a 31 percent increase over 2012, and approximately 15,000 business meetings took place with hosted buyers. **8** The ASAE Marketing, Membership & Communications Conference was held June 4–5 at Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, DC.

Photo credits: 1-3, ASAE; 4, Convention Industry Council; 5, MWP/Eric B.; 6, Chuck Fazio; 7, AIBTM; 8, James Minichello Photography

Event Management

Anita O'Boyle



Kim Vinciguerra



How Do You Know if Your Strategy Is Successful?

The average size of a local community in America is 6,200 people. An association's annual conference can include anywhere from 2,000 to 20,000 attendees. That's right — your next event could have a larger population than a small town! So when that many people gather in one location, what are you doing to ensure the event will run smoothly and achieve its goals? How do you ensure that event logistics and management, and trade show and educational services are working together to maximize ROI? Hopefully, your answer involves the word "strategy." In the midst of an ever-changing business and event market, the need for strategy is greater than ever before. But what does strategy even mean?

Kim Vinciguerra and Anita O'Boyle, event strategy leads at SmithBucklin, a leading association management and services company, shared their insights on successful strategy.

WHAT IS EVENT STRATEGY?

O'Boyle: During the past 10 years, event planners have faced some of the toughest challenges ever for the industry. As a result, the need for strategic planning is critical. But strategy is not simply following a production schedule or picking a great venue. It is the careful orchestration of an event's objectives.

Vinciguerra: Strategy is about clear communication and collaboration among team members. Constant contact keeps the team focused on end results and ensures the conference goals align with the organization's strategic plan. Strategy is also the feeling that something needs to change and the inspiration to produce something different and innovative.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Vinciguerra: Regardless of whether you already employ a clearly articulated event strategy, you should take a moment to ask yourself, "What would we do differently if we were starting over?" Answer without thinking of prior obligations, committee rules or budget constraints.

O'Boyle: You have to get input from your members, prospects, attendees, exhibitors and sponsors regarding what they want, what they need and what will create value for them. Take this feedback seriously. You need to know where your

event ranks in the market you serve. Look at the competition. If your market is changing, be honest about whether or not you are addressing these changes. Then get your team ready.

Vinciguerra: An event lead can set the strategy, but you will need your whole team to implement it or it won't work. Include your team members in the conversation and value their feedback or your strategy will be something that only exists on paper.

A CASE FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE

O'Boyle: Talking about the importance of strategy is one thing. Implementing it is a whole different ballgame. At SmithBucklin, I serve an organization of print professionals with an annual event facing challenges that include competition, limited flexibility due to future contracts and a loyal community questioning the overall value of the event. After a decrease in attendance in 2012, it was time to re-evaluate our strategy. For the 2013 event, we gathered data and input, both formally and informally, from our members. Our staff team also identified what we viewed as the event's biggest challenges and opportunities. This research gave us specific goals and data points to help keep us focused on exactly what needed to be updated.

As a result, we made changes and adjustments to the event's website, registration categories and packages, exhibit layout and approach, educational content and format, and marketing. Open communication has proven key, as it ensures everyone has up-to-date information and is engaged and invested in the event's overall outcome and success. The team meets regularly to stay aligned and consistent, and we keep our volunteer leadership and exhibitors aware of our progress.

Change is hard, so not all of our ideas have been met with a positive reaction, but our clearly defined strategy has kept us on track and reminded us that these changes are being driven by member data, not emotion or opinions.

USING STRATEGY TO UPDATE REGISTRATION PRICING

Vinciguerra: At SmithBucklin, I serve a technology or-

ganization that has kept its annual conference registration numbers consistent while its registration revenue decreased. This happened because the organization offered last-minute discounts to boost registration.

To address this issue, we informally reached out to members and discovered attendees had come to expect the eventual "fire sale." Attendees wouldn't register at full price, instead waiting for an email announcing the last-minute discount. This pricing strategy was resulting in negative registration behavior and lost revenue.

After receiving this feedback, we looked at the event budget as a whole and analyzed the current pricing strategy.

During the past 10 years, event planners have faced some of the toughest challenges ever for the industry. As a result, the need for strategic planning is critical. But strategy is not simply following a production schedule or picking a great venue. It is the careful orchestration of an event's objectives.

We learned what discounts were used most often, when and by whom. This information allowed us to set a new pricing strategy that wouldn't deter attendees but would still allow the conference to succeed and be perceived as valuable.

As a result of our new strategy, we reduced the price of registration and stopped offering last-minute discounts. Timely communication was essential, as we needed to get the word out quickly regarding the pricing structure change so members could budget appropriately and know not to wait for discounts. We had to change the behavior of a few thousand people in a very short time frame.

The 2013 conference is just around the corner, and we are on track to meet our registration and budget goals. And, we have received positive feedback on the lowered fees. All thanks to our new pricing strategy!

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR STRATEGY IS SUCCESSFUL?

O'Boyle: Success can be defined in many ways. It's impor-

tant you know what success looks like for your event in particular. Make sure you have clearly defined your goals based on the changes you have made so you can analyze whether they were successful. And don't overlook the importance of a lesson learned. Even if everything doesn't work exactly the way you were hoping, you can still learn from it.

Vinciguerra: Be aware that success can come in all forms. Maybe you'll learn that you need to retire or "sunset" an event or program because it no longer matches your overall strategy. While it may be hard to view that decision as a success, it could be a big step toward accomplishing your goals and providing your members and attendees with what they really want.

STAY FOCUSED ON STRATEGY!

Vinciguerra: If you learn that your event isn't meeting the needs of your constituents, don't be afraid to make the necessary changes. Just make sure you have a clear strategy in place before you do so.

O'Boyle: Creating a successful strategy is not about being more brilliant than everyone else. Instead, it is about being focused, making calculated decisions based on thorough research and knowing how to pay attention to trends that will impact your events. Strategy shouldn't be seen as a list of critical dates — it should be the guiding force behind everything you do.

Anita O'Boyle serves as the Director of Event Services at SmithBucklin. She has more than 25 years of convention, trade show and event experience, having managed large staff teams, and training and mentoring event professionals. Kim Vinciguerra is Senior Manager of Event Services at SmithBucklin, and has more than 15 years of experience planning and executing events for both associations and corporations.

Second-Tier Destinations

These Popular and Accessible Options Offer First-Class Value

By John Buchanan

Second-tier destinations have always been a popular option for associations looking for value and geographical convenience. Since the recession, however, the traditional distinction between first- and second-tier destinations has blurred as more and more destinations have joined the competitive fray, while more and more planners seek more bang for the buck.

In addition, there are other key benefits that are appreciated by a growing number of planners.

“One of the good things about a so-called second-tier destination is that when you come in, you really are a focal point for everybody in town, as opposed to a destination that has major conventions coming in every week, says Cliff Reis, managing di-



Diane Rehiel
Meetings Manager
ASTM International
West Conshohocken, PA

“Our primary consideration is how well we fit into the hotel properties and venues. ...There are tons of good options out there with second-tier destinations. And they’re available all across the country and on both coasts.”

rector and director of meetings and education for the Rosemont, IL-based American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE), which held its bi-annual meeting and exposition for 4,500 attendees in Charlotte, NC, last year. “And that kind of personalized attention is particularly nice for a medium-sized association like us.”

Britt Jackman, CMP, deputy senior director, conventions and meetings, The Optical Society, Washington, DC, is another planner who is sometimes drawn to the unique appeal of a particular second-tier destination. “It’s not rare for us to use a second-tier destination,” says Jackman, who has used San Jose, CA, every other year as home to one of the scientific society’s three largest meetings, for almost 5,000 attendees. “But we only do it when it fits our criteria for a particular meeting. We don’t do it just as a way of reducing costs. The meeting has to fit the destination well. But that’s true whether we’re looking at a first- or second-tier destination.”

Diane Rehiel, meetings manager at the West Conshohocken, PA-based ASTM International, a global standards society, found a new home in Jacksonville, FL, in December 2010 when she hosted a meeting for 900 attendees. ASTM returned in January of this year for a meeting with 700 attendees.

“I guess the meeting industry, in general, would consider Jacksonville a so-called second-tier destination,” Rehiel says. “And I guess it is, compared to destinations like New York, Chicago or Washington, DC. But we usually don’t look at that kind of distinction as our primary consideration. Our primary consideration is how well we fit into the hotel properties and venues we look at. That is always our first concern. And if you



Photo courtesy of Cox Convention Center

Oklahoma City’s Cox Convention Center features a 25,000-sf ballroom, more than 21 meeting rooms, 100,000 sf of exhibit space (80,000 sf is column-free) divisible into eight separate halls, and the center is connected by a glass-enclosed sky bridge to the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel.

look at things that way, there are tons of good options out there with second-tier destinations. And they’re available all across the country and on both coasts.”

Over and above that, Rehiel says, the relative value proposition of a second-tier destination such as Jacksonville is always appealing to her and her attendees.

SAN JOSE, CA



Because of the unprecedented budget pressures placed on many association planners as a result of the recession, destinations such as San

Jose have gained significant market advantage by delivering clear value compared to A-list neighbors such as San Francisco.

“We have been going to San Jose for years, in an every other year rotation with Baltimore,” Jackman says. “San Jose is a preferred destination for us, partly because we can save money over San Francisco, which is very close by. But there are other important reasons, too, why we like San Jose. One is that we are a technical society, and San Jose is located in Silicon Valley and there are top educational institutions like Stanford. But cost and accessibility

Defining Tiers

Over the last several years, the once standard perceptions of the differences among first-, second- and third-tier destinations have blurred as the meeting market has opened up to an unprecedented level of competition based on value, accessibility and unique appeal.

According to current definitions, a first-tier destination is a metropolitan hub that features a major airport with large national and international airlift, a convention center with a minimum of 500,000 sf of gross space, and strong infrastructure such as rail and other public transportation systems.

A second-tier destination is harder to pinpoint. APEX (The Accepted Practices Exchange — an initiative of the Convention Industry Council) defines a second-tier city as one where “the space limitations of the convention center, the hotels or the airlift make the city more appropriate for smaller meetings and events.”

A third-tier destination is one that delivers only limited airlift, usually requiring connecting flights, no convention center and more of a leisure travel appeal, primarily relying on regional drive traffic.

— JB



“One of the good things about a so-called second-tier destination is that when you come in, you really are a focal point for everybody in town, as opposed to a destination that has major conventions coming in every week.”

Cliff Reis
Managing Director and Director
of Meetings and Education
ASPE
Rosemont, IL

are also major factors for us, as they are with most organizations that are looking for a meeting destination.”

Another factor in San Jose’s favor is the highly regarded local convention and visitors bureau (CVB), known as Team San Jose.

“We have a great relationship with the city and with Team San Jose,” Jackman says. “We work very closely with them, and we’ve been invited to participate on their advisory board.”

As a result of its consistent success and high marks from attendees in post-meeting surveys, The Optical Society has now committed to San Jose as the destination for its key meeting this year through 2016.

Team San Jose has been a key driver for many planners who have used the destination in recent years. Unlike most CVBs, which hand off a planner to any number of other contacts after a meeting is initially booked, Team San Jose provides comprehensive, fully integrated support services in housing, event services, food and beverage, permitting, marketing support and technical consultation.

The city’s compact downtown area also offers a nice assortment of excellent restaurants, museums, performing arts venues and hotels with sophisticated facilities because of its role as the business hub of Silicon Valley.

The San Jose Convention Center is currently undergoing a \$130 million renovation and expansion that will be completed in September, adding 125,000 sf of meeting space to its existing 425,000 sf.

CHARLOTTE, NC



The thriving metropolis of Charlotte has followed an evolutionary path similar to San Jose’s by challenging Atlanta as the dominant business hub of the Southeast. And its brand enjoyed a major enhancement last September when it hosted the 2012 Democratic National Convention to stellar reviews and worldwide media coverage.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport now ranks as the sixth busiest in the world, and the city features a modern Center City convention district that boasts more than 4,100 hotel rooms within easy walking distance of the Charlotte Convention Center, which recently upgraded its wireless technology to make it competitive with any facility in the U.S. The convention district features nearly 100 restaurants, as well as a long list of entertainment options, including acclaimed museums, such as the NASCAR Hall of Fame, where Reis hosted his opening night reception with great fanfare.

“Charlotte was an excellent choice for us,” Reis says. “For example, the walking distance from the hotels to the convention center and dining or music/entertainment venues is very short. Everything you want is contained in a nice little area. So that means we didn’t have to worry about transportation. People could walk everywhere.”

Another factor for ASPE was the driveability of Charlotte for attendees, since a large proportion of its members live along the East Coast.

Reis also applauded the convention center. “They were really great to work with,” he says. “For example, we got excellent food and beverage service. And the costs were very reasonable for a convention center.”

And finally, Reis says he got superb support from the local CVB. “They did an excellent job for us,” he says.

As a result, Reis received all favorable feedback from attendees. “They really enjoyed the destination,” he says. “It was a very positive experience for everybody.”

The 438-room Charlotte Marriott City Center, one of the city’s premier meeting properties, with 20,000 sf of meeting space, has completed a \$1.5 million renovation of its 9,108-sf Grand Ballroom and 2,250-sf Junior Ballroom.

JACKSONVILLE, FL



Located on the Atlantic Coast in northeast Florida, Jacksonville is the largest city in the continental U.S., stretching over 840 square miles. Known as “the river city by the sea” because of its positioning between the St. Johns River and ocean, Jacksonville offers 21 miles of beaches, more than 70 golf courses, the state-of-the-art Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center and 200 hotels totaling almost 18,000 rooms.

“One of the reasons that we chose Jacksonville the first time, and one of the things that makes us a little unique as an association, is that we do not do large general sessions,” says Rehiel, pointing out one key reason why Jacksonville worked for her. “We are a technical association, so we do a lot of breakout ses-

sions, so we need a particular amount and configuration of breakout space. And we found that at the Hyatt Regency in Jacksonville. They were able to accommodate us with the exact amount and type of space we needed.”

That was true despite the fact that ASTM fell short of the room-to-meeting space ratio typically sought by hotels these days in a seller’s market. “We require a large amount of meeting space in proportion to our sleeping rooms,” Rehiel says. “So the fact that the Hyatt Regency could accommodate those requirements at reasonable cost was another important factor in the hotel’s selection and the fact we have been back. They were willing to work with us, so that just made the hotel a good fit.”

In addition, Jacksonville was a hit with attendees. “The feedback we got was good for both of those first two meetings,” Rehiel says. “We were there during winter months, and who wouldn’t enjoy Florida in December or January?”

As a result of the combination of timing and venue, Rehiel and ASTM will return to the city for three back-to-back meetings in October, November and December.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Much like Portland, OR, Minneapolis is a city that artfully combines urban chic with abundant natural beauty and unique charm. Known as the most bike-friendly city in America, Minneapolis also offers kayaking on the Mississippi River and an almost endless list of parks and other outdoor attractions, such as famous St. Anthony Falls and the Stone Arch Bridge.

Its meeting infrastructure includes nearly 7,000 hotel rooms in the business/convention district downtown, with 4,500 of them connected to the convention center via an indoor Skyway system.

Kimberly Akoto, CMP, meeting and event planner at the National Association

of Letter Carriers (NALC) in Washington, DC, chose Minneapolis for the organization’s bi-annual meeting last July for 7,000 attendees from all 50 states.

Akoto and NALC do not make a distinction between first- and second-tier destinations. They make the decision based on destinations that have a unionized convention center and unionized hotels — typically more common in first-tier cities.

IN & OUT

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“Oklahoma City has some of the best steak houses in the country, like Cattleman’s. There are a lot of hotel options at various prices — from budget to luxury. So there are a lot of choices for our attendees.”

Denise Morris
State Adviser
Family, Career and Community
Leaders of America
Stillwater, OK

“Minneapolis was selected because it offered the best price for a convention center and because it had hotels that could accommodate our room block,” Akoto says. “It’s also an easy destination to get in to and out of.”

Akoto had high praise for the local convention center. “Their service is excellent, and the way the facility is built is very good because it’s stacked, which means that even though you’re doing a lot of walking, you don’t feel like you’re doing a lot of walking,” she says. “It’s also easy to get to several of the major hotels because there are the skywalks.”

Akoto does no formal research after her meetings. However, she says, there was no doubt Minneapolis was appreciated by attendees. “Our attendees are very outspoken,” she says. “So I know on the spot whether they like a destination or not. And I got great feedback on Minneapolis. Everybody enjoyed it, because it’s such a convenient, walkable city. So it’s not a matter of whether we will go back. It’s just a matter of when.”

The big meeting news in Minneapolis is the much-anticipated debut of the \$137.5 million, 500-room Radisson Blu Mall of America, with 26,300 sf of meeting space.

Based on the burgeoning demand nationwide for the upper-up-scale hotel brand, a California investment group recently purchased the Radisson Plaza Hotel and announced plans to transform it into a second Radisson Blu in Minneapolis, scheduled to open next year.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK



Less well-known than most of its second-tier competitors, Oklahoma City has a surprising amount to offer.

Denise Morris is state adviser for Stillwater, OK-based Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, a statewide high school student association that has held its annual convention for more than 7,000 attendees in Oklahoma City every spring for more than 60 years.

“It’s a fun destination, although most people who aren’t familiar with it probably don’t think of it that way,” Morris says. “But for example, Oklahoma City has some of the best steak houses in the country, like Cattleman’s. There are a lot of hotel options, at various prices, from budget to luxury. So there are a lot of choices for our attendees, depending on what fits with their school budgets.”

Morris uses the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel as her headquarters property. “It’s connected to the convention center, so that makes it a very convenient choice,” she says. “And because it’s connected by a skywalk to the convention center, we also do some of our meeting sessions at the hotel, as well as hosting meeting sessions and hosting our exhibits at the convention center.”

The Cox Convention Center, located at the heart of the downtown business district, is an excellent facility, Morris says. The facility features 100,000 sf of exhibit space, 27,500 sf of meeting and event space, and a 25,000-sf ballroom.

In 2018, Oklahoma City will debut a new, \$252 million convention center.

In the meantime, everyone else in town works well together to deliver top-notch meeting infrastructure and service, Morris says. “All of them — the CVB, the convention center, the hotels — they all know each other very well, which makes it easy to work with them as a team.”

And, she says, that kind of integrated, personalized teamwork is one of the most obvious benefits of a second-tier destination.

A TRIO OF OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

Nashville has steadily gained popularity over the last decade, thanks to its status as Music City USA and major meeting venues such as the sprawling, world-class Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. Nashville debuted its new 16-acre Music City Center in May. The complex’s official headquarters hotel, the new Omni Nashville Hotel, with about 800 rooms and 80,000 sf of meeting space, will open in October.

Centrally located on the Atlantic coast, 20 minutes from Norfolk International Airport, is the fabled vacation resort town of Virginia Beach, which features more than 10,000 hotel rooms, with 3,500 of them within 2.5 miles of the Virginia Beach Convention Center, the first convention center in the country to achieve LEED Gold certification for existing buildings.

The facility offers 500,000 gross sf of space, including a 150,000-sf, column-free exhibit hall and 29,000 sf of meeting space.

And finally, just as San Jose has positioned itself to compete with San Francisco, Long Beach, CA, has challenged Los Angeles for West Coast conventions. The city has recently invested \$35 million in a renovation of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. And last December, the city debuted the results of a \$140 million renovation and modernization of Long Beach Airport.

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Attracting And Engaging Younger Generations

Learn What Attendees Need, and Meet the Challenges

By Mike Bassett

Generation Y or millennials — broadly defined as those born between 1980–2000 — will, according to a 2012 estimate from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, make up more than 40 percent of the work force. They will significantly outnumber any other generation.

There's little question Generation Y or millennials are transforming the way we work — and the way we meet, and organi-



Nancy Drapeau
Director of Research
Center for Exhibition Industry
Research
Dallas, TX

“The bottom line is that these face-to-face events are perceived to be valuable, particularly as we look out over the next few years when younger professionals say they plan on increasing the number of events they’re going to attend.”

zations are starting to realize they need to understand the preferences of these younger workers if they're going to get them to join their groups and associations and attend their meetings and events. One such group, The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), in May released a report “Generational Differences in Face-to-Face Interaction and Activities.”

The “great news” says Nancy Drapeau, CEIR’s director of research, is that despite the fear that the onset of the digital age may signal a waning interest in the perceived value of face-to-face interactions, and that face-to-face meetings may be declining in relevance, “that’s hardly the case.”

Among the findings of the report is that the top-five ranked reasons for attending conventions and exhibitions is the same across generations. Most professionals attend these events in order to look for new products, gain insights on industry trends, network with colleagues, see and talk with current vendors/suppliers, and look for new products/vendors. Additionally, younger attendees also seek to gain inspiration and motivation for their jobs.

What is particularly interesting about the study is that when looking at the value these events deliver compared to two years ago, and even looking into the future, more than 90



Attendees from all generations practice exercises designed to reduce repetitive motion problems at an Oklahoma State University conference session devoted to healthful lifestyles in the workplace, which was arranged by Associate Professor Sheila Scott-Halsell.

percent of attendees said the value is the same or even greater — and the perception of increased value is greatest among the youngest professionals.

“The bottom line,” Drapeau says, “is that these face-to-face events are perceived to be valuable, particularly as we look out over the next few years when younger professionals say they plan on increasing the number of events they’re going to attend.”

So the good news is that younger generations still find value in these face-to-face interactions. And that really shouldn’t be that much of a surprise, says Doreen Ashton Wagner, chief strategist at Greenfield Services, an Ontario, Canada-based meetings and events industry market research and business development consulting firm. Younger generations “are certainly not meeting or event averse,” she says, pointing out that they’re used to attending events such as concerts or summer camps in quantity — “more than most boomers ever did.”

Instead, for most of the younger generations the question of value concerns the nature of the meeting itself.

WHAT DO YOUNGER ATTENDEES WANT FROM MEETINGS?

Last year, the Professional Convention Management

Association (PCMA) released “What the Millennial Generation Prefers in their Meetings, Conventions and Events,” a report based on a survey of more than 2,000 people ages 18 to 30.

The survey’s results show that associations should discontinue the traditional meeting format of talking heads, lectures and PowerPoint presentations, says Sheila Scott-Halsell, Ph.D., an associate professor at the School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration at Oklahoma State University and one of the PCMA report researchers, and that millennials want to be entertained and want to personally benefit from events.

“There’s a kind of ‘what’s in it for me?’ attitude at work,” says Scott-Halsell. For example, when asked what was the prime motivation for attending events, 86 percent of the survey respondents listed “job opportunities.”

And while millennials do value the education they receive at meetings and conventions, they want it delivered in an entertaining way. Consequently, the term “edutainment” accurately describes what millennials hope to experience at events, the report authors write, adding, “if you motivate the millennial with an inspiring and fun event, they will come.”

“This is very much the ‘Disney generation’ in a lot of ways,”

says Ashton Wagner. “They’re used to seeing shows with a lot of glitz and attention-getting graphics — they don’t want to see some old dude lecturing at the front of a meeting room with some boring PowerPoint presentation, and if they get that, they’re all going to tune out.”

That said, millennials do like experts, they just don’t particularly care for the stand-up expert type and prefer a more interactive experience, Scott-Halsell says. This is an area in which technology plays a role, she points out, since millennials want to interact with speakers, but reject traditional stand-up question and answer methods. Instead, they want to be able to take out their smartphones or other devices and tweet speakers and ask questions that way.

EIBTM, one of the leading global exhibitions for the meetings and conventions industry, meets annually in Barcelona and attracts more than 15,000 attendees. According to EIBTM Exhibition Director Graeme Barnett, the attendees range from



Sheila Scott-Halsell, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK

“So, the older the millennial, the more they tend to be like those older generations. So planners really need to know their audience.”

top-level CEOs to middle management and also those at the beginning of their careers. Barnett points out that recent research released by Amsterdam RAI finds that Generation Y expects a real *experience* when they visit an exhibition.

In addition to acquiring information, they want to be actively involved before, during and after the event, says Barnett. “Plus, participation, co-creation and being able to improve and develop themselves are vital.” He says that Generation X also has specific demands with regard to event visits: They want to know what to expect in advance of their attendance and place great store in trust, requiring transparent, honest information that is as personal as possible.

“Gen Xers want to know exactly what they are paying for and what they will receive in return,” Barnett adds.

From a meeting and event design standpoint, says Ashton Wagner, meetings and individual sessions should probably be shorter, interspersed with longer breaks, “giving (younger attendees) a greater possibility of talking and connecting, and letting them get on their devices so they can do what they have to do.”

Scott-Halsell also points out that shorter meetings are preferable since millennials don’t want these events to cut into their personal lives. “We didn’t find a huge difference over whether they wanted meetings on weekdays or weekends,” she says. “They just don’t want to be away as long. They are a lot more interested in the work-life balance than older generations.

Kurt Krause, general manager, the National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA, says that younger generations also have different expectations when it comes to their physical surroundings during meetings. “The setting outside the classroom is important,” he says. “Younger people want comfortable places to meet and greet and to talk, and the more of that kind of space we have — particularly outside space when the weather is nice — the more I see people utilize it. It doesn’t take the place of the traditional classroom, but it does enhance the educational experience.”

There are also slightly different requirements when it comes to food and beverages. Younger attendees tend to drink water and reject soft drinks, says Krause. And while most attendees still like comfort foods, portion size isn’t important to the younger ones. “Rarely do I see someone from a younger generation go back for seconds or thirds,” says Krause. “Whereas you can usually count on the other generations having a harder appetite.”

TECHNOLOGY AS A DRIVING FORCE

Krause says that younger generations definitely have higher expectations when it comes to technology issues. “They have less patience for not having Wi-Fi or not having great cell coverage,” he says. “Older generations might complain, but as long as they could plug in somewhere they would be fine. But millennials expect a facility to be wired.”

“Technology is one of the driving forces behind the industry, and thus one of the key areas of interest for younger meeting

“They don’t want to see some old dude lecturing at the front of a meeting room with some boring PowerPoint presentation, and if they get that, they’re all going to tune out.”

Doreen Ashton Wagner

Chief Strategist, Greenfield Services
Ontario, Canada

professionals attending the show, both in terms of engagement and education,” says Barnett. “We understand that they have high expectations regarding the availability of social media to engage with EIBTM and other attendees before, during and after the show, so we have Twitter platforms, the EIBTM Facebook page,

Continued on page 55

Las Vegas

MEETING PLANNER GUIDE

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Continued from page 18

LinkedIn and our own YouTube site, plus a show website to inform and engage. “

The use of social media is “a must” in engaging young attendees and connecting and creating new relationships through the EIBTM and IBTM global community, says Barnett. During EIBTM 2012 there were 5,353 tweets recorded during the show with a reach of 2,052,956, in addition to the 23,547 accounts reached through Facebook, says Barnett, all of which “clearly demonstrates the power of social media in reaching and engaging with audiences.” (For more on audience engagement, see story on page 60.)

The evolution of social media has also enabled a faster pace for learning, something EIBTM’s younger attendees have come to expect when attending shows,” Barnett says. “This generation has become accustomed to immediacy and bite-sized education, allowing more knowledge to be consumed in less time.” As Drapeau points out in her research, however, “we have seen that social media is largely regarded as a supplement to face-to-face networking rather than a replacement.”

The desire for education is not limited to technology, Barnett says, pointing out that EIBTM’s younger attendees have an increased interest in furthering their careers through learning and education. Consequently, EIBTM’s education program encompasses specific sessions designed to appeal to all ages and levels of experience, including bite-size sessions and the Technology Hour, which takes place in its own theater on the show floor.

Barnett also points out those technological innovations such as the successful launch of the Hybrid Conference at EIBTM 2012, which was designed to appeal to younger attendees. With the Hybrid Conference, EIBTM streamed five key education sessions as they happened, which allowed virtual delegates to join physical attendees for a dedicated interactive experience. In addition to the live-streamed sessions, the Hybrid Conference also featured a virtual exhibition gallery, resource center and networking lounge. Virtual delegates were able to join panel discussions and ask questions live to the conference hall via a virtual MC, and network real time with other participants — “which were key features for all involved,” Barnett says.

CHALLENGES FOR ASSOCIATIONS AND PLANNERS

First of all, says Ashton Wagner, the ability of younger generations to form their own networks via social media means “they aren’t as tied to or loyal to professional and industry groups as their predecessors were. Obviously this has created some turmoil for associations in a lot of areas, and they’ve had a lot of catching up to do in order to capture the attention of and to engage younger generations.”

One area in which associations have had to make changes, Ashton Wagner says, is the way they market their events and

trade shows. “It used to be, ‘let’s get a list, mail to 10,000 people and whatever number we get will be sufficient.’ That doesn’t work anymore. Now you really have to prove your worth because there are a host of competitive events out there, and people have less time and are more guarded about what they are going to spend money on to attend.”

“Plus, participation, co-creation and being able to improve and develop themselves are vital. Gen Xers want to know exactly what they are paying for and what they will receive in return.”



Graeme Barnett
Exhibition Director
EIBTM
London, England

Consequently, planners are being required to perform somewhat of a balancing act since they still have to satisfy the preferences and desires of other generations as well as Generations X and Y.

For example, baby boomers are still quite comfortable with speakers and experts talking in a traditional format that younger attendees are rejecting. And there are even differences within the younger generations. According to Scott-Halsell, older millennials are similar to baby boomers in that they are looking for professional development opportunities when they attend meetings and conventions, whereas professional development means less to younger millennials who are at the beginning of careers in which they have less invested.

“So, the older the millennial, the more they tend to be like those older generations,” says Scott-Halsell. “So planners really need to know their audience.”

Also complicating matters is that different generations can evolve if they have to. While younger generations have had the advantage of growing up with the technologies that are driving the way meetings are now being designed, baby boomers have also demonstrated the ability to “pony up” technologically. “I have an iPad and an iPhone, and I’m on Facebook and LinkedIn because I have to be for my business,” says Ashton Wagner.

There has been this push through the ranks where attendees are expecting different things, and there’s a higher threshold that planners have to reach in order to grab their attention,” adds Ashton Wagner. “So meeting professionals and association planners are being challenged to engage their attendees in many different ways now, which is something they never had to do before. And as a meeting planner, you’ve simply got to rise to the occasion.”

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Renovation Roulette

The Pros & Cons of Meeting at New and Newly Renovated Properties

By Patrick Simms

Members of the State Bar of Texas had a little “before and after” experience at one of their traditional meeting hotels, the AAA Four Diamond Hyatt Regency Dallas, a property that underwent a \$50 million guest room makeover that began in May of last year, and prior to that completed a meeting space renovation. The Bar held a four-day family law conference with 1,500 attendees at the 1,120-room hotel in 2009, which effectively was the “before” experience. The guest room renovation was “pretty much completed” by the time the group returned for another meeting, according to Julie Marshall, meetings and sponsorships manager with the Bar, and “the difference was really stunning because we felt very comfortable before, but now it was that much better.” The project, which celebrated the Hyatt’s 35th anniversary, replaced the dark gray carpet in the meeting areas and “really lightened everything up; made it look very sleek and modern,” Marshall says. “We had a couple of attendees say they weren’t even sure it was the same hotel.”

Renovations generally mean improved experiences for delegates, in terms of comfort, convenience and aesthetics. As such, they continue to be a selling point toward planners. “I love seeing soft goods upgrades and renovations that keep the property fresh and new,” remarks Windy Christner, senior director, meetings and expositions for the Washington, DC-based American

Pharmacists Association. “I love seeing the fact that there is that kind of investment in an existing property.” Many hotels make that investment regularly, promising something for returning attendees to look forward to: a chic, redone lobby, plush new carpeting, or perhaps a new spa or restaurant. One example is The Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa, “one of my favorite hotels down in Florida,” says Daniel J. Lough, CMP, director of meeting management, education and training for the North Olmsted, OH-based Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Union. “They renovate every few years, and it seems like we are never there during the renovation, but when we get there, it always looks fresh.”

Renovations that overlap with a group’s meeting — or those that could potentially overlap — have always concerned planners.

“Because we have such a long-term relationship with the folks at the Hyatt Regency, we felt very assured by their comments that the project would go in a timely manner and that it wouldn’t adversely affect our group.”



Julie Marshall
Meetings and Sponsorships
Manager
State Bar of Texas
Austin, TX

Pharmacists Association. “I love seeing the fact that there is that kind of investment in an existing property.” Many hotels make that investment regularly, promising something for returning attendees to look forward to: a chic, redone lobby, plush new carpeting, or perhaps a new spa or restaurant. One example is The Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa, “one of my favorite hotels down in Florida,” says Daniel J. Lough, CMP, director of meeting management, education and training for the North Olmsted, OH-based Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Union. “They renovate every few years, and it seems like we are never there during the renovation, but when we get there, it always looks fresh.”

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That scenario, which risks the disruption of meeting activities, is usually the only downside to renovations. While the Hyatt’s guest room refurbishment was only fully completed after the State Bar of Texas’ most recent meeting at the hotel, Marshall says she didn’t have any reservations about booking. “The room renovations that were close to the meeting space had already been completed, so we were not really worried about noise issues. And because we have such a long-term relationship with the folks at the Hyatt Regency, we felt very assured by their comments that the project would go in a timely manner and that it wouldn’t adversely affect our group. We work with Hyatts in cities all over Texas, so I definitely do think it gives us that extra level of confidence.”

CONTRACT CLAUSES

In cases where there is less confidence, Marshall says the Bar does instate a contract clause to the effect that any renovations or other construction projects will not adversely affect the meeting, which is fairly common in meeting groups’ addenda.

Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM, manager meetings & events/exhibits for the Kansas City, MO-based Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, says the organization’s contract also specifies that the hotel is to “notify us of any kind of renovation, especially if it might affect us. They need to provide us with information on what the project is going to entail, when it is going to be complet-

ed, if it is going to impact any of the areas that our group is going to use and so on.” She cites one hotel that was conducting an exterior renovation that disrupted the main entrance and “they had to move the registration reservation desk to a temporary location. Sometimes that can affect the meeting, and as a planner you want to know that.” Given the demographics of her attendees, logistical inconveniences can be especially undesirable. “Primarily they are older folks and even now, in this day and age, many younger veterans could be limited in their mobility.”

The goal at the contracting stage is to avoid surprises and ensure that a planner is in a position to decide, if a renovation is in store during meeting dates, whether to go through with the meeting or rebook it for a later date. Some planners in fact prefer that their group not be the first to experience a major renovation that

“The new properties have all the new bells and whistles. Overall, they are building in the wireless technology, easy-charge stations and all of the things people expect now.”



Windy Christner
Senior Director, Meetings and Expositions
American Pharmacists Association
Washington, DC

has been completed. Christner, for example, holds that it’s best to meet at the property “after they’ve had an opportunity to do a trial run, possibly with another group. I don’t particularly love being the first group in a renovated place because the kinks haven’t always been worked out yet.”

The delay allows the opportunity to confer with colleagues who have experienced the results of the project, prior to booking. “We have a very tight network of meeting planning relationships, and it’s easy to find out who has been into any facility ahead of you over the prior year, make a couple of calls and ask those planners what went well, what didn’t go well, so you can have a heads-up to focus on those issues,” Christner explains.

DISCOUNTS

Sometimes a discount can be negotiated for groups willing to meet while a renovation is in progress. However, this approach is not always advisable, if the project will likely entail a disturbance for the attendees. “It’s your members who are going through the pain, and those are the people you need to come back year after year,” Christner says. “So even if you might be getting a little bit of a discount from being at that property, your members may have to go through an adverse experience. You need to make sure you

Renovation War Stories

Daniel J. Lough, CMP, director of meeting management, education and training with the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Union, has had his share of meeting mishaps with renovating/recently renovated properties in his long history of planning. These experiences have caused him to ask more questions upfront and revise his contract to address potential renovations in more detail. In what follows, Lough describes these experiences, which will naturally make planners wince:

Hotel A "tore the whole lobby out, including a huge fountain in the middle of the lobby, and just had a temporary setup there. They took my meeting space and turned it into their temporary sales office and told me, 'We are going have to give you something else.' And then they took away the club level and all of my VIP suites; for my president to be in a standard room is unacceptable. They tried to make amends by giving my group some perks here and there, but it was an absolute nightmare. They did not tell me beforehand, and everything was great during the site inspection."

Hotel B completed a property-wide "billion-dollar renovation, and they were in such a hurry to open it that they really didn't train the staff too well on all levels: valet, room service, banquet service. I had a small, two-week meeting set up there with my president and all of our top officers, and they couldn't wait to get out of there. When I got to the hotel, the attendees couldn't wait to pull me aside and tell me everything that was wrong."

Hotel C, "where we were holding a large regional conference, was having some labor issues. They were doing a total renovation, and the plumbers and electricians were arriving in stages. At some point there was a disagreement with the plumbers, who picketed right up to our meeting and then reached a tentative agreement. But the hotel was a disaster, inside they were putting guests in rooms that had mold on the walls, leaks everywhere, and it smelled like a flooded basement."

The point of such "horror stories" isn't their shock value, but rather to remind planners that they should tread around renovating/recently renovated hotels with care. Such properties often promise new and exciting features for attendees, but they can also result in headaches for attendees and planners if hotels fail to properly communicate their situation to incoming clients. — GS

"I enjoy the newer hotels in regards to flexibility and being able to handle large shipments and large groups of people."



Daniel J. Lough, CMP
Director of Meeting Management, Education & Training
Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Union
North Olmsted, OH

by somebody else," Marshall relates. "As soon as the hammering began we went to our contact at the hotel and said, 'OK, what can we do to make it stop?' And they immediately went to the folks at the parking garage and within 20 minutes, they were able to get all of the hammering to stop, have it postponed it until after our meeting had ended. If that had not happened, I'm sure they would have worked with us to come up with a financial (compensation), but we didn't get to that point."

While it's important to address the possibility of renovation in a contract, planners with strong relationships with hoteliers tend to see them proactively communicating upcoming renovations that may coincide with clients' meetings. "Hotels are pretty good about letting clients know that they are undergoing a renovation that can affect our convention," says Kane, who has been involved in planning since 1978.

WELCOME UPDATES AND IMPROVEMENTS

They also have promotional reasons for doing so, of course, as many renovations will be especially attractive to meeting groups. Kane notes a trend in creating more inviting, high-tech lobbies that feature both natural lighting and kiosks. "They renovated the lobby at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, which we use every year for our legislative conferences. I don't think people are staying in their rooms as much; they come down and socialize more, and so the Hyatt has opened up the space a little more and made it more comfortable to be down in the lobby, including little areas where people can sit and visit or they can hook up their laptops."

Technological improvements are especially welcome in the older, classic properties, Lough adds. "Some of the older hotels don't have wireless Internet capabilities, and it is nice when they do get around to bringing the property up to date."

Lough in fact generally prefers newer hotels for his meetings, since they are quite "up to date." "I love the historic hotels. ...They are beautiful, and the history is beautiful, but sometimes I think that conferences were an afterthought (in their design). In the really old hotels, the hallways are a little narrow and the shipping docks are kind of a nightmare. I enjoy the newer hotels in regards to flexibility and being able to handle large shipments and large groups of people."

Christner observes, "The new properties have all the new bells and whistles. Overall, they are building in the wireless technology, easy-charge stations and all of the things people expect now." But while newer properties do have their virtues, a newly opened hotel does call for a careful site inspection, she notes: "You really do want to take your time and look at things you might normally not take a long look at, such as whether they have loading docks and storage."

STAFF EXPERIENCE

In addition, there is the typical concern about staff competence at new properties. One factor, Christner notes, is the often high volume of turnover in the early stages. Another is simply the cohesiveness of the initially hired staff, which may not yet be optimal even if they are experienced hires. Oftentimes, however, staff will not be entirely new, but include transfers from other properties in the chain. "Sometimes, when you have a brand new opening, if folks come over from another property that you already know and have a relationship with, that makes it easier," says Marshall. A site inspection is an opportunity to meet the new staff members, but its value as a predictor of staff performance at the meeting is limited. "The people that I work with that make my meetings a success once it is sold are the back-of-the-house people, the convention

"I ask (the convention services staff) about their experience level and background, because I have been partnered before with somebody whose job I had to do in addition to mine, and that's frustrating."



Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Manager Meetings & Events/Exhibits
VFW United States
Kansas City, MO

services staff," says Kane. "Meeting them face to face is important, but it's not going to tell me that my meeting is going to be a success. Still, I ask them about their experience level and background, because I have been partnered before with somebody whose job I had to do in addition to mine, and that's frustrating."

When a new hotel does prove itself, however, it adds to the memorable quality of the convention. Delegates are experiencing much more than a new ballroom or refurbished guest rooms. It's a new lodging experience, coupled with a newly assembled staff that's eager to show they have what it takes to facilitate a successful convention and encourage the group's return. AC&F



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How to Overcome Audience Attention Deficit

'Active Learning' Strategies That Engage and Captivate

By Patrick Simms

Any good teacher knows that quality content isn't enough to engage students; delivering that content in a compelling format is what staves off boredom and distraction. The same principle applies to an association meeting planner's "audience," the membership in attendance. They know that cutting-edge educational content and valuable interpersonal connections await them at the convention; indeed, that's why they've paid to be there. And unlike young students, delegates probably won't get bored or distracted from the agenda. But why not ramp up the overall engagement from suitable to robust, by delivering content in the attention-getting formats of mobile, social media, games and combinations thereof?

Presenters, not just planners, are adapting to the statistical realities of the digital age. A significant percentage of today's audience



Patrick Andrus
Director, Business Development
American Society for
Healthcare Engineering
Chicago, IL

"Social media and digital polling software provide an incredible opportunity to get real-time reactions and information from an audience, which is very powerful."

will not only be digitally savvy, but obsessed with mobile and immersed in social media. Complementing a presentation — while it's in progress — with content pushed through these channels will draw in the digital enthusiasts. "I've been doing presentations for a number of years, and the first couple of times when you are presenting, and you notice a third of your audience is looking down at their mobile devices, it's kind of disheartening," says Kurt Nelson, MBA, president and founder of Minneapolis-based The Lantern Group, an employee motivation solution provider. "But if they are retrieving some of your content on social media and being engaged by it, you are adjusting to a much bigger group."

Engaging with digital content might even be considered a new learning style. "We have to be flexible because we realize that adult learners learn in different ways: Some just want to look and listen, others want to take notes, and some may want to look at a slide on their mobile device," observes Amanda Fiesler, manager, education and learning, with association management company SmithBucklin. And most will want some kind of interactivity during the talk, which is being facilitated by mobile technologies that allow survey questions to be answered and questions posed to the speaker in real time. "Many of the audience response systems have already started using mobile technology, which makes it easier for people to be able to afford it," adds Julie Ferry, senior manager, education and learning, SmithBucklin. Examples include Poll Everywhere, Mentimeter and mQlicker.

"Social media and digital polling software provide an incredible opportunity to get real-time reactions and information from an audience, which is very powerful," observes Patrick Andrus, director, business development with the American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE). "It allows speakers to adjust their presentation to meet the needs of their audience and deliver a more ef-



The American Society for Healthcare Engineering tries to drive much of the activity at its annual meeting to a central hub on the exhibit floor known as ASHE Connect.

fective presentation. That does not mean it is applicable for every single presentation and every audience, but it does add value for the attendees if used appropriately." There is the concern that incorporating mobile into presentations actually draws more attention to the devices, effectively promoting distraction. But Andrus counters: "If attendees are disengaged from a presentation, there's good chance they'll get distracted with their mobile device, regardless of whether the speaker is using this technology."

Mobile-assisted learning is also expanding beyond the duration of the meeting. "Our association clients have been incorporating mobile into their annual and regional conferences for four or five years already, but what we are seeing now is they are using mobile for year-round engagement," says Fiesler. "For example, I work with a health care group that releases standards every quarter, and they strategically push those updates out to members, who can download them through their mobile apps."

GAMIFICATION

Perhaps the most active learning style mixes education with games in what's come to be known as gamification. Competing for points or prizes makes for a fun, memorable experience that supports the educator's primary goal: retention. Given the popularity of teambuilding, most planners are not strangers to deploying games in non-game contexts. "In the broadest sense of gamification, meetings have been using it for a long time. So for example, if you include a scavenger hunt where you are working either individually or as a team to earn points, technically that would be a gamification of the meeting," Nelson points out. "But where gamification has really taken off lately is the digital component.

A number of different companies have built the kinds of mobile apps that you can use in order to participate in some of these games."

The scavenger hunt is one of the main types of games that Nelson has seen transition to mobile. In the context of association meetings, such a game can promote booth visitation in the exhibit hall. Certain booths (most often those exhibitors at a certain level of sponsorship) will be among the scavenger hunt locations, but with mobile, organizers can ensure there is significant interaction at those booths by requiring the scavenger hunters to answer a question about the exhibitor's products or services via their devices. Such games can be woven throughout the conference, Nelson notes, with participants having the opportunity to earn points and be awarded badges that appear on their mobile screens, representing a certain number of items found on a scavenger hunt, networking contacts made, trivia questions answered and so on. "You might earn 100 points for trivia questions, 150 for networking, 75 for the scavenger hunt, and then you are ranked among other competitors in those areas. Conference organizers can set up leader boards that show up-to-the-minute scoring, so attendees can see 'I'm in 10th place out of 100' or 'These three people are ahead of me,'" Nelson explains.

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Kurt Nelson
President & Founder
The Lantern Group
Minneapolis, MN

Keeping in mind the goal of engagement, game developers want to ensure that a good number of participants will be able to do fairly well and be motivated to continue playing, while still offering a challenge. "One of the most important things is not to create a game that is so easy you are boring people, nor so difficult or cumbersome that it either monopolizes peoples' time and effort or they give up," Nelson warns. Assuming the conference is three or four days, participants should know they have major opportunities to score points beyond the first day, particularly



Dana Freker Doody
V.P. Corporate Communications
The Expo Group
Irving, TX

“Commonalities also exist between city planning and trade show planning. You need to think about how your citizens, your attendees, are using the space and what activities you want to incentivize when you create your floor plans.”

ees and exhibitors,” says Andrus. “Attendees, exhibitors and the remote audience can all engage with key speakers at the booth, which also includes our ‘Internet zone,’ a new product launch area, and an area for meetings/networking.”

Designed by Irving, TX-based The Expo Group, the hub is “a turnkey service of the company since 2010,” remarks Dana Freker Doody, vice president, corporate communications with The Expo Group. “But no association client has embraced it as much as ASHE and really made it their own. It’s a showcase of everything ASHE offers their community, and education is obviously a big focus for that association, which is why they bridge the gap between conference and exhibition with the booth. You have a lot of shows where the conference and exhibition are separate and people don’t necessarily visit the exhibition; they’re there for the conference. So this is a way to bring the conference right into the exhibition. It really has been very successful for ASHE in promoting the education that they are offering; they use it as a marketing tool. There is always an ASHE membership representative in the space, in a corner area. It’s like the old Main Street Town Hall concept.”

Conference speakers are invited to give informal talks at the booth, adding to the draw. “After a conference speaker is done speaking, about half a dozen people rush up there, and they have questions and want to give their business card, etc.,” says Doody. “So we encourage speakers to take that conversation that happens afterward and put it on the show floor. Tell attendees, ‘I’m heading to the trade show now; I’m going to be at the ASHE Connect booth for the next 15 minutes. Come hang out with me there.’”

ALLAYING EXHIBITORS’ FEARS

Doody admits that “sometimes exhibitors get really nervous when they hear there’s going to be education on the show floor, because in their mind that means you will be taking those people and trapping them in a classroom that you’ve built on the floor. And in my experience at the Expo Group and working with exhibitors and their needs, that’s exactly the opposite of what this is designed to achieve. We keep the education segments short, about 15 minutes, so that attendees can then get up and go shopping at the exhibits, and maybe they come back in another half an hour because the next speaker’s coming up. Or maybe they start engaging with someone on the show floor and they don’t make it back.” In addition, the booth has a very open design so that attendees aren’t hidden away from the trade show experience.

The gamification trend is also reflected at ASHE Connect, although the emphasis is basically diversion. The membership team will conduct games for attendees during the evening exhibit hours, such as Plinko from “The Price Is Right” with tchotchkes as prizes. “Sometimes those old-fashioned games are very effective on the show floor,” Doody observes. “We’ve kind of embraced gamification as ‘It has to be on message,’ but many attendees, especially the

younger generation, really want five minutes where they can take a break from having to deal with salespeople in a booth. So they’re putting in foosball tables, air hockey tables and so on.”

URBAN-PLANNING THE SHOW FLOOR

Social media and games have a key engagement-boosting factor in common: They both make participants feel like part of a community. The convention isn’t just a place to listen to presentations and exchange business cards on the show floor. It’s a communal atmosphere where people are in constant virtual dialogue and even partake in diversions together. Ideally, the design of the exhibit floor will support that environment by providing places for members to gather as well as the rows of “storefronts,” just as if they were in a downtown.

“These kinds of spaces on the show floor, especially when there are engaging and fun activities, help people’s brains break out of that same old routine” of scanning exhibit after exhibit, Doody maintains. “I really encourage show organizers that the Expo Group works with to look at the trade show floor more as a retail environment where you maybe have the big box retailers at your four points and then smaller ones in between. Commonalities also exist between city planning and trade show planning. You need to think about how your citizens, your attendees, are using the space and what activities you want to incentivize when you create your floor plans. A good city plan will have smaller tighter streets with residences and mom-and-pop shops, and then wider boulevards with those big-box retailers. Several associations are starting to segment their show floor like that and having success.”

What’s more, show floors that appear to be maximizing every inch of selling potential may even disengage some members of Gen Y (roughly, those born between 1980 and 2000). “Studies have shown that Gen Y has this aversion to being marketed to and sold to,” Doody notes. “So it’s a stressful situation for them to walk onto a show floor and be bombarded with exhibit after exhibit. Sometimes

they’re criticized as being the ‘Me Generation,’ but that doesn’t have to be a criticism. They need options, so give them choices as to how they want to spend their time and how they want to interact with people. If they get to the end of the aisle and there’s a little hub there where they can sit down or they can challenge their boss to a game of foosball, that’s a five-minute break and it’s not hurting anybody.” (See related story on page 16.)

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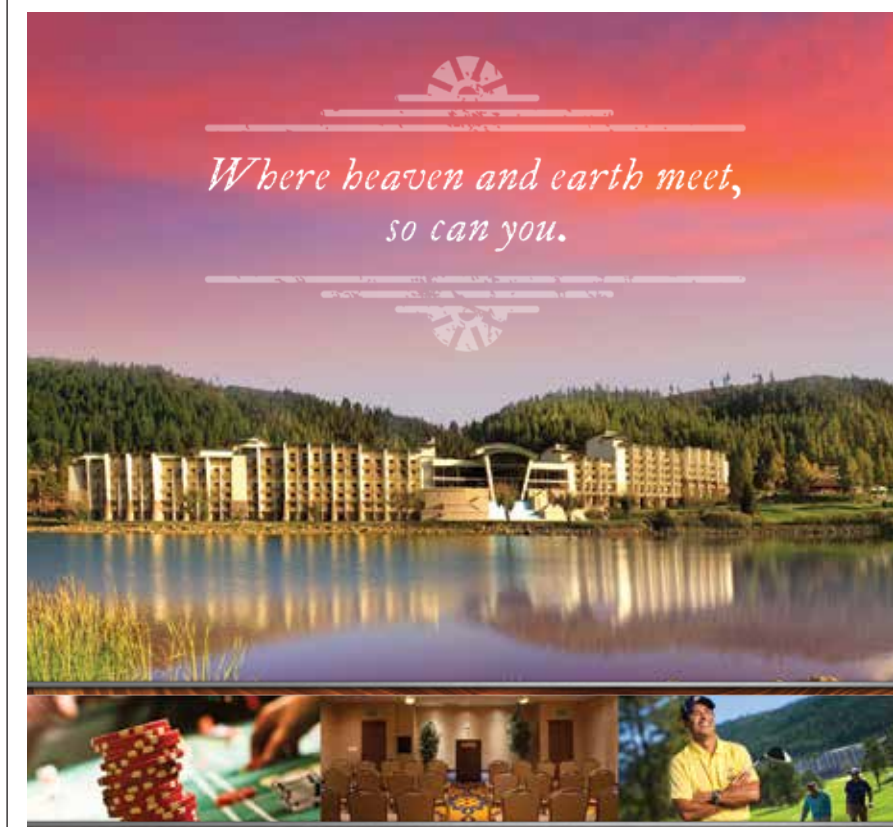
SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

With all of the social media options available today beyond the big four (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube), more thought has to be put into which sites the convention will have a presence on, in order to maximize engagement. “Five years ago people would (do little more) than say, ‘Oh, we’re out there’ on social media. Now I think people are taking a step back and strategically thinking about how they are incorporating their social media to reach out to different types of membership communities,” says Fiesler. “For example, one part of the membership might use more of the association’s website rather than publicizing on social media.”

Another approach is to try to consolidate most of the virtual communications on one platform. Andrus explains that “While we use a number of social media platforms in our communications plan, we try to drive all conversations to one platform (Twitter) to increase the value of these interactions. This is a commonly used outlet among our members/audience, and allows on-site and remote attendees to comment and react to specific issues discussed during the event.”

CREATING AN ENGAGEMENT HUB

Speaking of consolidation, ASHE also tries to drive much of the activity at its annual meeting to a central hub on the exhibit floor known as ASHE Connect, a 40-by-50-foot booth that serves a number of functions. Given the booth’s success as an engagement tool, the slogan “If You Build It, They Will Come” has certainly proven accurate. Both onsite and remote attendees come to ASHE Connect, insofar as it’s where the streaming session is conducted. “Our goal was to engage our members that were not able to attend, as well as enhance the experience for onsite attend-



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Orlando

Fulfilling Every Planner's Wish List

By Mike Bassett

“Orlando was built on imagination,” says George Aguel, the president and CEO of Visit Orlando. “And it’s constantly re-inventing itself to remain a top-ranked destination among professionals.”

And Aguel should know. Before replacing the late Gary Sain at Visit Orlando, Aguel spent 22 years as vice president of worldwide sales and service for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, during which he has seen the area continue to cement its status as one of the world’s top tourist and meeting destinations.

“Orlando’s broad range of hotel options, abundance of versatile meeting space at the Orange County Convention Center and nearby convention hotels, low-cost accessibility and vast dining and entertainment options mean far more than just tangible cost savings for meetings,” says Aguel. “This ideal combination of attributes provides an overall experience that encourages attendees to become more engaged in the conversation and inspires ideas that produce positive results.”

All of those attributes are what keep Orlando at the top of most meeting planners’ destination wish lists. The area now boasts a hotel room inventory of 116,000 rooms, and Central Florida hosted more than 3 million meeting and convention visitors last year, a number that is expected to grow in 2013.

Orlando is known for great weather and attractions such as Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando, but even without the attractions “Orlando has great facilities,” says Terry Matthews-Lombardo, CMP, an independent planner based in Orlando, “and at the end of the day, you need to have the product to get conventions to come here. The variety of hotels we have here, along with the incredible diversity they provide in meeting space, keeps conventions coming back to town.”

Orlando’s proximity to such a large variety of tourist attractions has, through necessity, turned Orlando International Airport into one of the world’s busiest airports, making it accessible to groups with national and international memberships. “And as far as price point, we’re pretty competitive with the rest of the country,” says Matthews-Lombardo. “We’re certainly not New York or Chicago. It’s a very negotiable city for hotel rooms and for contracts from a planner’s standpoint, because there are just so many hotel rooms and such a vast array of meeting spaces to choose from.”



Photo by Rodney Choice, Choice Photography

The National Kidney Foundation held its annual Spring Clinical Meeting in Orlando at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel in April.



Photo courtesy of the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel is sized right for conventions, with 2,267 guest rooms and 329,000 sf of meeting space.

PLANNER TESTIMONIALS

The hotel offerings around Walt Disney World are extraordinarily extensive. One of the most popular properties for association convention planners is the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel, located between Epcot and Disney’s Hollywood Studios. The property’s two hotels, owned by Tischman and managed by Starwood, are located on Walt Disney World Resort property, and as such offer a variety of Disney benefits including an onsite Disney ticket desk, complimentary transportation to the theme parks, exclusive additional park hours for hotel guests and more.

The hotels have a combined 2,267 guest rooms, 17 restaurants and lounges, the Mandara Spa, five pools, a white sand beach and two health clubs. The important statistics for meeting planners are the resort’s 329,000 sf of meeting space and 84 meeting rooms, including four major ballrooms — the largest at nearly 50,000 sf — and the ability to offer 110,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space, plus 100,000 sf of outdoor event space. When they opened in 1989 and 1990 the Swan and Dolphin provided more convention space than any other property in the southeastern United States.

Kristi Sokol is meetings manager for the National Kidney Foundation, which has held its annual Spring Clinical Meeting in Orlando — and specifically the Swan and Dolphin Hotel — four times, most recently this past April.

A continuing education conference for nephrologists, nurses, social workers and dieticians, the five-day event usually draws 3,000–5,000 attendees. The convention rotation brings the event back to the Swan and Dolphin every three or four years.

Orlando appeals to her group, Sokol says, because of Disney (many attendees extend their stays to take advantage of the attractions) and because of the airlift into Orlando, “which is important because our membership is coming in from all over the country.”

As for the Swan and Dolphin, “the property is a good size for a convention,” Sokol says. “We fit in there very nicely. The meeting space is compact, but there is enough of it. So you don’t feel like you’re lost, and you also don’t feel like you’re being squeezed into a place. We also like that the property is so close to the parks; our attendees can bring family members and make a little vacation out of it.”

Michelle Randall, CMM, CMP, director of convention and meetings at the National Communication Association

“It was probably the smoothest convention I’ve ever run. From the convention side of things, they really know what they’re doing.”

Michelle Randall, CMM, CMP, Director of Convention and Meetings
National Communication Association, Washington, DC

(NCA), just finished planning and executing her association’s annual convention in Orlando. Her group also used the Swan and Dolphin, as well as the nearby Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek.

Her four-day convention consists of 60 to 75 breakout sessions, for a total of 1,200 sessions during the course of the event, with each day concluding with a general session. This year’s event drew about 4,000 attendees, most of them communications educators from colleges and universities.

The resort “really worked,” as the host for the convention, says Randall. “It was probably the smoothest convention I’ve ever run. From the convention side of things, they really know what they’re doing.”



Kristi Sokol
Meetings Manager
National Kidney Foundation
New York, NY

“We also like that the property is so close to the parks; our attendees can bring family members and make a little vacation out of it.”

Many of the NCA attendees added days before and after the conference to take advantage of the area attractions, but Randall did find that despite holding the conference in a premier tourist destination, her attendance dropped slightly.

“I just think the model itself didn’t appeal to as many people as an East Coast convention normally would,” she says. East Coast meetings usually attract more attendees because of the simple fact that there are higher concentrations of universities and colleges in the eastern United States.

“But we’re usually in a city center, so this was a different model,” Randall says. “People are used to being able to just hop out of the hotel for a few minutes to grab something to eat. But in this case we had to do quite a bit of dissemination of information about how to find dining spots, for instance. So we ended up with fewer attendees than normal, but those who came were very happy with the location.”

Courtney Papp is the meeting manager for the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN), which held its 2012 annual conference at the Hilton Orlando in 2012. The hotel has 1,417 guest rooms and 225,000 sf of total meeting and event space, including 50,000 sf of outdoor event space; three grand ballrooms; nine boardrooms; and 21 meeting rooms.

Orlando makes sense, Papp says, because “it’s a popular — and



Photo courtesy of Orange County Convention Center

The Orange County Convention Center, which features more than 2.1 million sf of exhibition space, is undergoing a major renovation.

beautiful — location, and it’s easily accessible.” And when she sources hotels, she wants “everything in-house — the rooms, the meeting space, the exhibits. And the Hilton was able to offer that.”

Like Sokol and Randall, many of Papp’s attendees built in some extra time before and after the meeting to take advantage of their Orlando surroundings. “I know I did,” says Papp, who spent some time with her husband and daughter at Walt Disney World.

The Hilton Orlando is connected to the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC), which offers 2.1 million sf of exhibition space. Skybridges also connect The Peabody Orlando and the Rosen Centre hotels to the convention center, and construction has started on a fourth, between the convention center and the Rosen Plaza Hotel, named the Gary Sain Memorial Bridge in honor of the Visit Orlando president and CEO who passed away suddenly in May 2012. The OCCC has just begun a five-year, \$187 million capital improvements project. The West Building is undergoing a major renovation, which includes aesthetic enhancements, life safety update, and retrofitting to provide flexible space for groups. And new furniture groupings and an upgraded system for wireless communications are designed to enhance both face-to-face and device-to-device connectivity. The OCCC is the second largest convention facility in America, and each year attracts more than 200 events, bringing in approximately 1.4 million attendees. The convention center was recently nominated as the No. 1 convention center in the U.S. by *Business Review USA*.

A DIVERSITY OF NEW OPTIONS

In downtown Orlando, the Amway Center, which opened in 2010, is considered to be one of the country’s most advanced arena-and-events centers. And under construction, with a scheduled completion in fall 2014, is The Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, which will be the latest of Orlando’s up-and-coming entertainment venues, providing two theaters, a public performance space, outdoor plaza and separate educational facilities.

Orlando’s theme parks continue to expand their offerings, and all of them offer a multitude of special group options within their parks for ready-made themed events. SeaWorld Orlando just opened the Antarctica: Empire of the Penguins attraction. And in June Universal Orlando unveiled Transformers: The Ride-3D at Universal Orlando Resort. Harry Potter fans will flock to Universal’s newest offering upcoming in 2014: the all-new Diagon Alley, located in Universal Studios, will complement the adjacent Hogwarts & Hogsmeade attraction in Islands of Adventure with recreations of London sights and experiences as described in the Harry Potter books.

Walt Disney World Resort recently opened the all-new Fantasyland at the Magic Kingdom Park, the largest expansion in Magic Kingdom history. Downtown Disney will undergo a multiyear transformation and morph into Disney Springs by



Photo courtesy of Universal Orlando Resort

Rendering of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter’s new Diagon Alley and “London,” which will debut in 2014 in Universal Studios.

2016. The destination will feature more than 150 establishments for shopping, dining and entertainment as well as new private-event options for groups.

Along International Drive — nicknamed I-Drive — which runs through the heart of theme park country and past the convention center, a \$250 million redevelopment of the Mercado site will debut in the summer of 2014. Dubbed I-Drive Live, the new area will include more than 75 shops, restaurants and attractions, including a 25,000-sf Madame Tussauds wax museum, a 25,000-sf Sea Life Aquarium and a 425-foot Orlando Eye observation wheel.

For those interested in the U.S. space program, over at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Cape Canaveral, the Space Shuttle Atlantis exhibit is opening June 29, 2013. The \$100 million, 90,000-sf attraction allows visitors a close-up, 360-degree view of the Atlantis. The space shuttle is elevated 30 feet off the ground and rotated at a 43.21-degree angle, with its payload doors open and robotic arm extended, so it appears as if it is actually in orbit.

The attraction features state-of-the-art multimedia presentations and more than 60 interactive exhibits and high-tech simulators demonstrating the complex systems and components of a spacecraft that flew 33 missions and



Photo courtesy of Rosen Hotels and Resorts

The Rosen Centre Hotel’s skywalk connects to the Orange County Convention Center. A skywalk for Rosen Plaza Hotel is under construction.

ended up traveling 126 million miles in space in the course of completing almost 5,000 orbits around the Earth.

NEW AND RENEWED HOTELS

The big hotel opening on the horizon is the \$360 million Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort, which is scheduled to debut in 2014. The 444-room hotel will feature 37,000 sf of function and meeting space, including a 14,000-sf main ballroom and a 6,000-sf junior ballroom, as well as a full-service business center. Resort amenities include the existing Tom Fazio-designed Osprey Ridge championship golf course, three swimming pools and a lazy river, and basketball and tennis courts, as well as a complete fitness center.

The new resort also will feature a 14,000-sf spa with 18 treatment rooms, and dining options that will include a main restaurant overlooking the lawn and lake, and a rooftop restaurant designed to give diners a view of the nightly fireworks displays coming out of the Magic Kingdom.

There are several hotel renovation projects that have been, or are nearing completion:

Rosen Hotels and Resorts has renovation news to report for their convention hotels, including the introduction of free wired

Orlando is “a popular — and beautiful — location, and it’s easily accessible.”

Courtney Papp, Meeting Manager
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses, Cherry Hill, NJ

and wireless Internet in all guest rooms and public areas. Rosen Centre Hotel (1,334 guest rooms; 124,000 sf of meeting space) recently completed a multimillion-dollar renovation of all guest rooms as well as the presidential and hospitality suites. Rosen Centre’s meeting space includes a new 18,000-sf Executive Ballroom, which also features 4,000 sf of prefunction space; the 35,000-sf Grand Ballroom; 14,000-sf Junior Ballroom; and 24

meeting salons. Rosen Plaza Hotel (800 guest rooms; 60,000 sf of meeting space) recently completed a floor-to-ceiling renovation of all guest rooms as well as hallways and hospitality suites. Rosen Shingle Creek (1,500 guest rooms; 445,000 sf of meeting space) recently enhanced its 50,000 sf of outdoor meeting space with an additional 16,000 sf. There’s also a 40,000-sf outdoor event



Terry Matthews-Lombardo, CMP
Independent Meeting Planner
TML Services
Orlando, FL

"We're certainly not New York or Chicago. It's a very negotiable city for hotel rooms and for contracts from a planner's standpoint, because there are just so many hotel rooms and such a vast array of meeting spaces to choose from."

The 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate earlier this year opened the 55,000-sf Osceola County Conference Center. With a 28,800-sf ballroom and accompanying indoor meeting space, the new conference center gives the Omni a total of 128,000 square feet of indoor event space and an additional 70,000 sf of outdoor space.

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando (42,000 sf of meeting space) completed a \$14 million renovation of all 750 guest rooms in April. Renovations to the meeting space and ballrooms at Universal Orlando's Loews Royal Pacific (1,000 guest rooms; 85,000 sf of meeting space) and Hard Rock (650 guest rooms; 6,000 sf) hotels were finished last September. Guest room renovations at Loews Royal Pacific will be completed in stages with the first half scheduled for a 2014 and the rest in 2015.

The newly renamed Wyndham Orlando Resort International Drive is completely refurbishing and upgrading its 613 guest rooms and suites, and is adding a new entrance and lobby featuring a contemporary lobby bar and technology lounge. An expanded conference center will add 25,000 sf of flexible meeting space for a total of 60,000 sf of space. Renovations are expected to be completed by October 2013.

As Orlando continues to live up to its reputation as a top meeting and convention destination with a world-class convention center and an ever more diverse array of hotels, resorts and unique venues, associations that meet here will continue to exceed the expectations of all who experience it. AC&F

lot to take advantage of Florida's great weather. Shingle Creek Golf Club is home to the Brad Brewer Golf Academy.

Earlier this year, the 2,000-room Orlando World Center Marriott finished the first phase of its multimillion-dollar renovation project. The North Tower's 514 guest rooms, including 10 suites, have been refurbished, as well as another 110 guest suites. And the 13 North Tower meeting rooms have been updated with new carpet, vinyl, air walls and electronic door cards. The Falls Pool & Poolside Function Lawn are being renovated as well and will include an expanded pool deck and lawn, and a new slide tower featuring two 200-foot winding water slides and one 90-foot speed water slide. The hotel offers 450,000 sf of event space, a full-service spa and an 18-hole championship golf course.



Downtown Disney will transform into the new Disney Springs by 2016 with new retail, dining, entertainment and private group event options.

Photo courtesy of Walt Disney World Resort



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Leslie A. Pchola was named area vice president, Southeast, covering Hilton Worldwide hotels and resorts in Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, western Florida and South Carolina. She was general manager of the Hilton Austin in Texas.

Hyatt Regency Dallas, TX, has appointed **Chris Watson** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Louisville, KY.

The Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Keith Kirsten** as director of sales. He formerly served as director

of sales based in Fort Lauderdale for the Rio Mar Beach Resort, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.

The Fontainebleau Miami Beach, FL, has promoted **Louis Gonzalez** and **Jackie Payano** to assistant directors of group sales. They both most recently served as directors of national accounts for the hotel.

The St. Louis (MO) Convention & Visitors Commission has named **Maureen Hare** as national convention sales manager. She was senior account executive at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis, IN.



PCHOLA



WATSON

The Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, Honolulu, HI, has named long-time Starwood executive **Karen Hughes** as vice president of Meet Hawaii and travel industry partnerships. She most recently served as vice president of global leisure sales and distribution for Starwood Hotels & Resorts. AC&F

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13	Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau	405-297-8906	www.visitokc.com	Johnny Danrich III	jdandrich@visitokc.com
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