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Attendees at ASAE's 2013 Springtime Expo at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC.

Photo by James Minichello

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Photo courtesy of the Global Center for Health Innovation

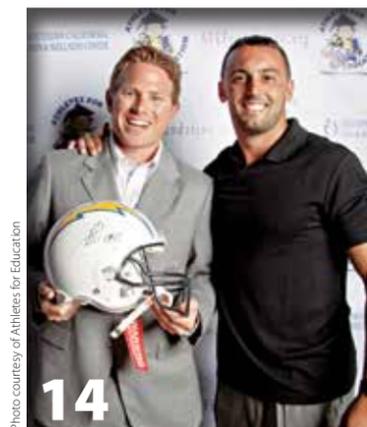


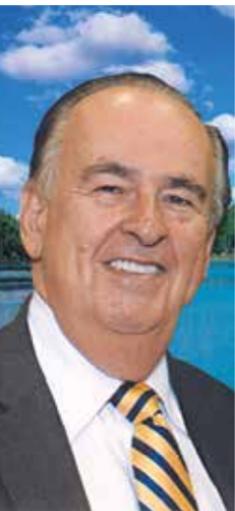
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Photo courtesy of the National Athletic Trainers' Association

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Offline Social Networking



The term "social networking" is most often associated with online sites and services that facilitate connections with others who share our interests. But networking is at its best when we can take it offline. The steady or growing numbers of attendees at industry meetings and conventions bear this out. Most recently at IMEX America at the Sands Expo in Las Vegas, more than 50,000 face-to-face appointments took place over the three days of the show, representing a 27 percent growth over 2012. Experiences and relationships forged at the show were as valuable to the attendees as the business deals were for the exhibitors.

Networking weaves the fabric of an association, which is made stronger and more relevant through the powerful connections its members create. Meeting face-to-face is the original form of social networking, and a simple handshake cements relationships like no tweet or text can.

But the digital age certainly is responsible for redefining the strategy behind making face-to-face networking more compelling and productive: ASAE's Amy Ledoux calls it "industry segmented targeted networking." Planners are customizing face-to-face networking experiences in the same way that the online experience has allowed us to customize our consumption of news and information according to our own likes and dislikes. "Networking is more engaging when you talk to people who experience the same things you do," says Ledoux, who is senior vice president of meetings and expositions. "We encourage this at our annual conference with a lot of smaller networking events along with our larger events. The more you target networking events to specific attendees, the more successful they are." Our feature on page 20 explores all the ways this is so, plus other creative ideas and techniques that break the ice (read how a secret handshake did the trick for one association), engage and ignite new, mutually beneficial relationships.

An environment conducive to networking also helps: Lori Marker, director of meeting management for The National Athletic Trainers' Association, explains in our Las Vegas destination feature on page 26, "Athletic training is a close-knit profession, and the ability of a majority of our attendees to sleep, learn and network under one roof at Mandalay Bay also played a role in our success."

Networking is of course the key to pulling off successful fund-raising events, and hobnobbing with celebrity supporters boosts the effort manyfold. Read how planners are unleashing celebrity star power in our feature on page 14.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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San Jose McEnery Convention Center Unveils Expansion



The San Jose McEnery Convention Center.

SAN JOSE, CA — The grand opening of the San Jose McEnery Convention Center's recent \$130 million renovation and expansion was celebrated October 10. The new center boasts 125,000 sf of additional flexible ballroom and meeting room space, increasing the facility's space to 550,000 sf of usable space. The recently installed public artwork — Idea Tree — provides an artistic, interactive and technology-driven element to the entrance as a place for conference attendees and visitors to network. Additional new features include a revamped lobby with sit steps where convention attendees can plug in and network between sessions; a new networking lounge; more breakout rooms; additional flexible meeting spaces; event spaces with beautiful bright California colors and reclaimed redwood ceilings; a modern high-tech feel; and a new open plaza entrance facing downtown San Jose. www.sanjose.org

Hilton Worldwide Offers Meeting Planners New Connect Online Portal and a Chance at \$1 Million

MCLEAN, VA — Earlier this year, Hilton Worldwide introduced Connect at Hilton Worldwide, an online portal (www.hiltonworldwide.com/connect) that gives planners instant access to event management tools and everyday business solutions through one convenient site. "We believe in the power of personal connections. We understand the impact of a handshake and the value of customer relationships," said Mark Komine, senior vice president, head of sales - Americas, Hilton Worldwide. "We are committed to the success of each individual planner, which led us to consult with leading meeting professionals in the development of Connect+."



Komine

Hilton Worldwide on October 23 launched Million Dollar Booking, a sweepstakes providing event planners in the U.S. and Canada a chance to win their next meeting free, a two-day New York City getaway and a chance to win \$1 million (Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.milliondollarbooking.com for full rules and regulations). Planners who complete a booking at any Hilton Worldwide property in the Americas by December 31, 2013, and then execute the event and register at www.milliondollarbooking.com by December 31, 2014 will receive a chance entry for the grand prize drawing.

For more information, visit www.hiltonworldwide.com/connect, [www.connectathiltonworldwide.com/linkedin](http://www.hiltonworldwide.com/connect+ and <a href=).

Aulani Adds Event Lawn, Expands Water Play Area

KO OLINA, HI — Aulani, a Disney Resort and Spa announced the addition of the new Hālāwai Lawn, which provides a 16,000-sf landscaped environment for networking and other special events. The new lawn is part of the resort's total 36,000 sf of function space, which includes a 14,000-sf conference center. Also, the resort expanded its Waikolohe Valley water play area, Ka Maka Landing, which features an infinity pool with a realistic grotto, a splash zone, and new poolside and beachside dining. "With Aulani, we've introduced an entirely new Disney experience for incentives and meetings," said Anne Hamilton, vice president, resort sales and services, Disney Destinations. "In keeping with the rest of the resort, events on the new Hālāwai Lawn will immerse attendees in the resort's exotic Hawaiian landscapes and spirit of Aloha, paired with the quality and service associated with the Disney Meetings brand." www.disneymeetings.com

Fairmont Chicago Unveils Meeting Space Renovation

CHICAGO, IL — The Fairmont Chicago, Millennium Park debuted a \$2.5 million renovation of the hotel's 63,000 sf of meeting space, which now includes 15 meeting rooms ranging from 400 sf to 16,000 sf. The holistic "green" approach of the lobby-to-roof renovation included using low VOC paint, compact fluorescent lighting fixtures and carpeting manufactured with minimal environmental impact to the renovation. The project also includes the addition of Cuvee, a posh 1,360-sf event space located adjacent to the lobby, and an executive boardroom located on the 37th floor of the hotel. www.fairmont.com/chicago



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1,2 IMEX America 2013, held October 14-16 at the Las Vegas Sands Expo, was successful according to IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom who said that hosted buyer numbers increased from 2,400 last year to just under 2,700 in 2013. **3** ASAE and its strategic partner Reno-Tahoe USA, who hosted the NextGen Summit, brought together young professionals from across the country to address the issues facing the association community. **4** Global Center for Health Innovation's grand opening in Cleveland, OH. **5** Attendees at last year's Michigan Showcase in the Greater Lansing Area are readying plans for the 2013 Destination Michigan Showcase of Ideas to be held at the Eagle Eye Golf Club on November 6. **6** Newly inducted Convention Industry Council (CIC) Hall of Leaders are (l to r) Stephen Powell, S.V.P., worldwide sales, InterContinental Hotels Group; Liz Erikson, executive director, meetings & incentives, Fairmont-Raffles-Swissotel; Eduardo Chaillo, CMP, CMM; Jorge Castex, honorary president, COCAL and senior advisor MCI Argentina; and Peggy Daidakis, executive director, Baltimore Convention Center. **7** Announcing that the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) achieved LEED EBOM Gold certification are (l to r) Abby Gulden, sustainability coordinator OCCC; Jan Addison, deputy general manager OCCC; Kimberly Lewis, senior vice president USGBC (United States Green Building Council); Dina Belon-Sayre, executive director of Green Destination Orlando; Teresa Jacobs, Orange County Mayor; and John Martinez, former Orange County Commissioner.

Photo credits: 1-2, IMEX America; 3, John Chen; 4, The National Association for Law Placement; 5, Destination Michigan; 6, Convention Industry Council; 7, Orange County Convention Center

Four New Realities for Health Care Associations

David Schmahl



Grow Commercial Support Despite New Regulations

What happens when you mention the 1990s to an assembly of health care-specialized sales and development professionals? You hear a unified “Those were the days.”

It's true. Those were the days for professionals engaged in sales and development with pharmaceutical and medical device companies. Eight of today's top 10 blockbuster drugs were approved for marketing between 1995 and 2000. Tens of millions of dollars were spent in pre- and post-launch marketing efforts, with little meaningful regulation or oversight. The “gray area” of funding wasn't between marketing and education activities, the entire realm of funding seemed to be in “the gray.”

Let's come back to reality. Today, PhRMA, AdvaMed and ACCME (the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education) are scrutinizing commercial support more than ever. The Affordable Care Act of 2010 is taking effect in various stages. Physicians and other clinicians are increasingly cautious to comply with changing regulations. And “big Pharma,” on the heels of recession and a slump in blockbuster drug launches, has tightened purse strings. Phew!

While the landscape is different, opportunities for growth haven't disappeared altogether. We're examining four new realities, and offering suggestions to keep commercial support a healthy component of your trade show or meeting.

1. Less money, more uncertainty. To comply with regulation, pharmaceutical and medical device companies (“commercial supporters”) have cleaved general sponsorship budgets into distinct marketing and education budgets. Unfortunately, total available budgets are trending downward. Some companies are increasingly hesitant to allocate funding given the uncertainty of costs associated with future regulation. However, these companies play a significant role in informing health care professionals by supporting continuing education, and ensuring health care professionals are informed about patient care products and services.

Health care professionals value commercial-supported education, and nothing unites them more efficiently than their respective medical societies. Accordingly, collaborations between societies and industry partners should be established and nurtured. Successful societies work to devel-

op educational activities (accredited and non-accredited) that can be measured against specifically stated outcomes. Furthermore, it's important to leverage your society's protocols and culture to assure supporters that the highest levels of ethics and compliance will prevail. It's a win-win.

To secure funding, it's critical to demonstrate a thorough understanding of each company's education and business objectives. Offer customized opportunities that meet their needs. Consider new ways to access your society membership year-round. Then develop relationships with marketing and education teams, and meet with them regularly to discuss how dialogue with members can be improved. Another suggestion is to invite commercial supporters into positions of society leadership (committees, task forces). The optics of such a governance shift demonstrate the society's commitment to mutually beneficial relationships between membership and supporters.

2. Varied and complex grant procedures. Supporters have all worked to design grant submission, review and selection processes that reflect a non-biased and almost scientific methodology. The trouble is, none of them are the same. These processes serve the disbursement of education-related funding. Such funding differs from general marketing and promotion dollars typically associated with the exhibit floor.

The new reality in accessing these education-earmarked funds is that more care, time and knowledge of each supporters' protocols and requirements are necessary. Societies substantially increase their chances of winning grant applications when they employ staff with specific expertise in preparing and submitting these grant applications. Expertise ensures that an application includes key elements such as defined learning objectives, needs assessment, budget details and a relevant program with speakers and working session titles. While most companies require submission no later than 60 days prior to the meeting, the varying decision times mean that the earlier the submission, the better. It's no longer unusual for a grant application that was submitted in February to be awaiting decision in August.

3. The Sunshine Act — find a rainbow. The Physician Payment

Sunshine Act went into effect on August 1, 2013, nearly three years after being signed into law. The delay was intended to provide pharmaceutical and device manufacturers time to put in place appropriate processes, resources and systems to properly collect and disclose any “transfer of value” to physicians. This has resulted in a significant amount of new protocols and rules, issued by supporters and societies alike, for development professionals to study and learn. Factors such as whether the meeting is accredited or non-accredited, whether meals are served buffet-style, and whether faculty received any honorarium now have real impact on possible funding success, since these factors require additional Sunshine Act-related reporting for supporters.

Complexity of today's corporate structures, however, and fast-changing organization charts make it difficult to accomplish this. Many drugs advance through development stages under stewardship of multiple companies — through joint ventures, collaborations or speedy acquisitions. Globalization is a driving factor behind the constant shifting of personnel. Researching drugs or devices, in efforts to identify those likely to be supported by large education and marketing budgets, requires much more time and an effective means to track and organize all the information.

It's critical that today's development professionals utilize a powerful, yet user-friendly Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Spend time establishing a flow-

Invite commercial supporters into positions of society leadership (committees, task forces). The optics of such a governance shift demonstrate the society's commitment to mutually beneficial relationships between membership and supporters.

In past months, pharmaceutical and device companies have been sending out notices to grant seekers with declarations of specific exclusions from future support, related to the Sunshine Act. Carefully file any forms that accompanied the notification. If such notifications haven't been received, contact your historical supporters and inquire about any changes driven by the Sunshine Act. It will be appreciated. There is a vocal debate within the overall health care industry on the merits of the Sunshine Act. As a professional charged with securing support for your society, it's critical to stay above the political debate and simply be informed and comply.

4. More corporate complexity. Forming and nurturing relationships with key personnel within supporter companies should never be neglected. Online grant processes and seemingly impersonal decision factors will never wholly eliminate the value gained, either in the form of information or advocacy, of a friend within the target company.

chart or roadmap that explains how a drug or device in development stage will proceed to market. Then test for clarity and understanding with your various contacts. This will heighten respect of your knowledge within the companies you are targeting and make you more efficient. The companies themselves often can explain their complex business relationships.

Health care innovation will never cease, and the outcomes will need to be promoted, marketed and explained. By considering these new realities and selecting ways to adjust your approach, success is more likely to be achieved. AC&F

David Schmahl is the executive vice president and chief executive of SmithBucklin's health care and scientific industry practice, which supports the missions and objectives of 26 health care and scientific organizations. He provides unmatched expertise and specific knowledge of the issues, challenges and actions distinctive to the changing health care environment. SmithBucklin's Jeanette Ruby, senior manager, health care and scientific industry practice, and Jennifer Shupe, senior manager, sales services, also contributed to this article.

Health Care Grappling With New Challenges

Resourceful Planners Discover Solutions

By Michael Bassett

As we head into 2014, one of the big issues facing medical meeting planners is the introduction of the Physician Payment Sunshine Act, or what the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service now calls the National Physician Payment Transparency or “Open Payments” program.

Janet Cooper, CMP, director of convention operations for the Oak Brook, IL-based Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), has enough on her plate as the organizer of what is the largest medical meeting in the U.S. — RSNA’s annual medical meeting, which attracts 50,000 attendees and takes place the week after Thanksgiving at McCormick Place in Chicago. But



“We will continue to focus on our user friendliness by making a very large convention feel small and intimate. Enhancements have been made to our mobile app and annual meeting central website using a responsive web design.”

Janet Cooper, CMP
Director of Convention Operations
Radiological Society of North America
Oak Brook, IL

“the changes that are taking place in health care delivery and reimbursement, and compliance issues” (like the “Open Payments” program) affect her members and exhibitors, Cooper says, and continue to pose a challenge to medical association planners.

Starting in August this year, manufacturers of drugs and medical devices that participate in federal health care programs are required to report certain payments and items of value given to physicians and teaching hospitals. This means

that planners from those organizations will have to track payments ranging from travel, lodging and food and beverage, to speaker’s honoraria, meeting and event space rental, consulting fees and charity donations.

The act was promulgated as an effort to halt the lavish spending on physicians by drug and device manufacturers in order to influence them to buy their products, says Pat Schaumann, CMP, CSEP, DMCP, president of Meeting I.Q. in St. Louis, and the founder of the International Medical Meeting Professionals Association (IMMPA). “And if you’ve been in the industry for as long as I have, you’ve certainly experienced that — seen the lavish spending and exotic trips. So it’s definitely a good thing to mandate transparency in order to show, for example, what a pharmaceutical company is spending on a doctor.”

But the impact on meetings will be significant, she says, and that impact will extend to medical associations and their meeting planners.

THE BIG IMPACT

Where association planners will see a big impact is with sponsored events, says Schaumann. (See *ViewPoint* on page 8.) Manufacturers have typically sponsored things ranging from receptions and dinners to lanyards, pen and other tchotchkes. “Whatever it is, if it’s sponsored by a drug or device manufacturer, and the manufacturer reaches a spending threshold of \$10 per physician, that will have to be reported.”

Consequently, Schaumann points out, these companies are cutting back on what in the past they would have provided during association meetings. “So that’s a big impact on health care associations in that in the past they’ve counted on that input for years,” Schaumann says. “All of sudden (planners) don’t have the money or products for these events that used to be hosted. They have operating budgets they’ve been using for five, 10 or even 20 years based on that input from sponsors and all of a sudden that’s gone, so there is a financial effect.”



Photo courtesy of The Global Center for Health Innovation

The Cleveland, OH-based Global Center for Health Innovation showcased current and future spaces in the facility at its recent ribbon-cutting ceremony.

While there is no responsibility on the part of medical trade shows or association organizers to report spending, the chances are, Schaumann says, that they will do what they can to help make that reporting burden easier for their exhibitors.

For example, for reporting purposes manufacturers are required to collect the National Provider Identification (NPI) from physicians, which is something that some associations and trade shows are already doing for their exhibitors.

Or, if exhibitors at an association meeting are having a function at a restaurant, planners can be a useful resource in helping them understand what a modest meal is under the compliance guidelines.

That can be a tricky issue, considering there’s bound to be regional differences in what constitutes a modest meal — a dinner in New York City is bound to be more expensive than one in Omaha.

Deborah Hinson, chief brand strategist/partner of the Hinson Group LLC in New Orleans, and current president of the International Medical Meeting Professionals Association, also points out that living within that modest guideline is a challenge. “Years ago ‘modest’ was put out as \$100 for a three-course meal with two glasses of wine, inclusive of tax and services — \$125 for a market like New York City,” she says. “That hasn’t changed in years, and the guidelines are comparable for breakfast and lunch.

“So it’s interesting to see how we’ve become more creative (in planning meals) considering that commodity prices have increased over the last four or five years, labor rates have increased, and utility rates have gone up,” she adds. “But what goes as a modest meal has remained flat. That’s not anything that’s new for 2014, but it’s something we constantly have to deal with.”

VALUE IN ATTENDING FACE-TO-FACE

Jeanne Mendelson, an association executive at SmithBucklin currently working as the COO for Washington, DC-based Lamaze International, says that as a consequence of the Sunshine Act and other compliance challenges that have hit medical and health care meetings, associations have started to look at “repositioning the support” from the industry so that support is targeted at the association rather than the meeting.

“And that makes a huge difference in retaining those dollars over the year by using technology to be able to extend the learning and connectivity (achieved at meetings) and retain that support beyond the meeting,” she says, adding that other things associations are doing is incorporating educational content that can still draw in some of that industry support.”

Planners also are concerned that compliance issues — as well as other changes in the health care environment that impact things like physician reimbursement — can have a negative impact on attendance, “so that maintaining attendance in light of that is something we’re all working really hard on,” says Hinson.

It helps, says Mendelson, that younger physicians and health care professionals are seeing value in attending face-to-face medical meetings, which, she says, is helping to increase or maintain meeting attendance. “And we’re also seeing an increase in international attendance as well,” she points out.

On the other hand, adding virtual components to medical meetings not only helps medical meetings survive, it’s making them stronger, Mendelson says. “We’re getting ahead by using virtual conferences, virtual civic halls and other virtual components (that have been sponsored) throughout the year, connecting those things to a meeting, but before and after as well.”



Pat Schaumann
CMP, CSEP, DMCP, Founder
International Medical Meeting
Professionals Association
St. Louis, MO

“And if you’ve been in the industry for as long as I have, you’ve certainly experienced that — seen the lavish spending and exotic trips. So it’s definitely a good thing to mandate transparency.”

She does see a shift in the way that exhibition halls are being used. “I think exhibitors are seeing less value in just sitting in a booth on the exhibit floor,” she says. “Industry support is there, and they still want to attend the meeting, but they’re being more proactive, whether it’s by using technology through sponsorships or education symposia sponsorships, rather than just sitting in a booth waiting for people to walk by. The old-fashioned trade show floor is still a prime place to showcase products and services, but I think people see value in utilizing meetings in more holistic ways.”

RSNA 2013

While Cooper has concerns about the effect “Open Payment”

and other compliance issues has on her annual meeting, the other challenges she deals with are multiplied by the sheer size of the Chicago event. Roughly half of the 50,000 attendees are health care-related professionals.

According to Cooper, planning for each annual meeting begins 18 months before the event takes place, “so that while everyone is working on the current year, planning for the following year has already begun.” For most of the 12 staff members in RSNA’s meeting department, 80 percent of their time is spent on planning for the annual meeting, Cooper says.

Like many medical meetings, RSNA has added a virtual component. The inaugural RSNA virtual meeting launched in 2011 with the goal of establishing an expanded environment of the RSNA annual meeting to further engage members, nonmembers, international professionals, students and commercial vendors from across the globe.

According to Cooper, the virtual meeting attracted 3,492 registrants and offered one day of streaming live content from nine approved courses and sessions for continuing medical education (CME) credit. She says that through the 2011 survey results, they learned that content was king, and that attendees wanted access to more educational content and a simpler user interface.

So in 2012, the educational program was expanded to include access to seven days of streaming live content from 46 approved courses and sessions for CME credit, with the recorded content

available on demand for the duration of the week of the physical meeting. Planners also added exhibitor product theater demonstrations. Consequently, more than 6,900 registered for the virtual meeting in 2012.

The RSNA 2013 virtual meeting offers another robust education program, Cooper says, featuring seven days of streaming live content from 40+ courses and sessions for CME credit, access to “Case of the Day,” digital education exhibits and scientific posters and the exhibitor product theater. The meeting will be able to be accessed via computer, iPad, tablet or mobile device, and at the request of the 2012 virtual meeting registrants, content captured through live streaming will be extended. Attendees can catch sessions they missed for on-demand viewing through December 13, a full week after the meeting ends.

Engagement opportunities between the virtual and physical audience include: Twitter, chat, interactive RSNA Diagnosis Live and audience response sessions, and the ability to ask questions of the speakers during the live sessions.

According to Cooper, in order to demonstrate the value of



Jeanne Mendelson
Chief Operating Officer
Lamaze International
Washington, DC

“We’re getting ahead by using virtual conferences, virtual civic halls and other virtual components (that have been sponsored) throughout the year, connecting those things to a meeting, but before and after as well.”

the meeting’s education content and to offset incurred expenses, the RSNA board established a registration fee structure for all members and non-members accessing the virtual meeting. For RSNA members, it’s \$100. For non-members, it’s \$300. And for RSNA member-in training, medical student members or retired members, it’s free.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

Even after years of utilizing the largest convention center in North America — McCormick Place in Chicago — RSNA’s annual meeting still faces technical challenges. In the past, Wi-Fi connectivity has been an issue and one that meeting organizers continue to try to improve. “We hired an external consulting firm to help us with Wi-Fi,” says Cooper. “They not only worked with us and McCormick Place to better utilize the existing Wi-Fi gear, but they also increased the density of Wi-Fi in areas that were lacking. But Wi-Fi services were still not up to the level we expected.”

“We’ve become more creative (in planning meals) considering that commodity prices have increased...labor rates have increased, and utility rates have gone up. But what goes as a modest meal has remained flat.”



Deborah Hinson
Chief Brand Strategist/Partner
Hinson Group LLC
New Orleans, LA

So, Wi-Fi continues to be a challenge as RSNA heads into the 2013 annual meeting. “McCormick has totally upgraded their system, and we’re hiring another consultant to help oversee the implementation,” Cooper says. “Our other challenge is working with McCormick Place to acquire a second Internet service provider so that we have redundancy.”

What else is new for this year’s RSNA? “We will continue to focus on our user friendliness by making a very large convention feel small and intimate,” Cooper says. “Enhancements have been made to our mobile app and annual meeting central website using a responsive web design based on the user’s screen size, platform and orientation. Users can search courses by subspecialty, author, time, date, keyword search, in addition to searching technical exhibitors by products and services with visual walking paths.”

Now, with their mobile devices, Cooper says attendees can have an even richer meeting experience — from enhanced education exhibits to answering “Cases of the Day” to the popular game sessions including RSNA Diagnosis Live.

She also points out that new for RSNA — but not new to the medical meetings industry — is the opportunity for attendees to document their attendance, evaluate courses and sessions and claim their continuing education credits online. The link will be accessible through the RSNA website, mobile app and on computers at McCormick Place.

“Our Mobile Connection booth in the RSNA Services, will feature ‘Navigating RSNA 2013’ discussions conducted in seven languages, and led by veteran meeting attendees who will provide insight and guidance to help our international attendees make the most of their meeting experience,” Cooper adds. “And we will be offering a professional portrait studio in the RSNA Services area where attendees can get a fresh new headshot for their CV or social media profiles from a professional photographer.”

RSNA 2013 also will enhance its greening efforts by replacing the traditional plastic meeting bag with a reusable tote, Cooper says, and is enhancing the McCormick Place dining list to include listing by location and by cuisine, so that attendees can search according to whether they’re looking for something vegetarian, ethnic or even gluten free.

Conference Centers Offer ‘Compliant’ Packages

Convene, a leading developer, owner and operator of urban day conference centers in the U.S., currently operates three state-of-the-art conference centers in Manhattan.

The company developed new all-inclusive meeting packages specifically for biotech, drug manufacturing and medical device companies that want to host productive meetings and events without stressing over the reporting guidelines and details of the Physician Payments Sunshine Act.

Each package includes a meeting room, audio-visual and flexible menu options as well as comprehensive planning and day-of support. Three tiered menu options are available to fit the needs of every type of meeting — from advisory board and investigator meetings to speaker training sessions and internal meetings.

Christopher Kelly, co-founder and



Photo courtesy of Convene

Convene opened its third location in Manhattan, a nearly 40,000-sf facility at 32 Old Slip in the downtown financial district, which offers special packages designed for pharmaceutical meetings.

principal of Convene, explains, “Many of the top pharma companies are located throughout the tri-state region. We specifically designed these packages to address the challenges posed by

government caps and regulations. By simplifying the options, we’re also helping pharmaceutical meeting planners to streamline the reporting process.” www.convene.com

Star Power

Boosting Fund-Raising Success With the Help of Celebrities

By Karen Brost



If your organization regularly hosts a charity fund-raiser such as a walk, fun run, golf tournament, silent auction or other activity, you're probably always looking for ways to make your event even more successful. One effective way is to involve one or more celebrities in your event. So we asked some association planners for their secrets to unleashing celebrity star power.

Athletes for Education (AFE) is a San Diego-based nonprofit dedicated to helping youth engage with mentors who can teach them about making healthy lifestyle choices and the importance of education. AFE regularly taps into the large base of athletes the city has and enlists their help with fund-raising events. "In San Diego, we have a great pool of athletes to pull from, and they're very community-minded, so it's great for us," says a former executive director of the organization.

AFE hosted its third annual Celebrity Bowling Bash in February. "The way the sponsorship works is you bought a lane for the evening," she explains. "You would bring your guests, and one of the athletes that we have a relationship with would come and bowl with you, so it makes it really fun."

When asked for tips for working with celebrities, she responds, "You have to be extremely flexible, but the biggest thing is the timing." She advises doing some

United Way of Licking County Ohio raffled off a celebrity photo shoot with two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin.

Photo courtesy of Martin Digital Photography

Photo courtesy of AFE



Athletes for Education hosted a fundraising Celebrity Bowling Bash, in which well-known local athletes bowled, signed bowling pins for sponsors and participated in a silent auction.

research before approaching a celebrity to make sure that conflicts such as team commitments or other celebrity events won't prevent them from participating.

She also noted that family-oriented events are very popular with celebrities. "Everyone does the black and white gala at the hotel," she states. "But celebrities are busy. They're traveling all over the place, so if they can bring their family, it really makes for a great event." She added that since AFE is a charity that benefits at-risk and low-income youth, it makes perfect sense to have a family-friendly fund-raising event. "Athletes can bring their wife or their child and everybody bowls together, and they can have a great time, too."

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The AFE board brainstorms a list of potential celebrities "because everybody has different jobs and careers and might know of someone," the former executive director says. "It's all who you know. Maybe they're a person third down the line, but at least that gives us an in."

"You could also do your homework on understanding what their passion is," she notes, giving this example: "(Former MLB pitcher) Trevor Hoffman had his kidney removed, for example, so he's really big into the Kidney Foundation. Whatever it is, if you can find a tie-in with your foundation or your mission, then they would like to support that." (See sidebar on page 16.)

The former executive director then offered a few tips on how to contact the celebrities on your list. "For TV celebrities, they usually have most of their contact info online so you can reach out to them that way. We like to have a TV personality (at our event), as well. And then for athletes, you can go through their community relations department. Sometimes they're inundated, so you kind of have to figure out a creative way to get to them when you want them to come to your event.

"Don't think you have to always go 'A list,'" she advises. "You can have a variety. And then you do your PR announcements with their name, and that helps to drive sponsorships and sales.

"A week before the event, we send out a very, very detailed email

for information about how the event is going to run," she explains. "(It says) 'Your celebrity check-in is here. This is your contact. They will show you to your lane. This is what you wear. This is what's expected of you at the event. This is how long the event is going to last. You can bring a guest. We have VIP parking for you.' Any kind of perks you can give them, those stand out."

MAKING THE MOST OF THEIR TIME

She noted that it's helpful to brainstorm ways to maximize the impact of having celebrities participate in the event. "At the bowling event, I had my athletes take a turn ever half hour making an announcement for the silent auction. I also bought brand new bowling pins, and I had each athlete sign each bowling pin and that's what I gave to the sponsors as a parting gift at the end of the night." She added that the celebrity also may be willing to donate an auction item such as a guitar if the celebrity is a musician or a private dinner for 10 if he or she is a celebrity chef. "You really have to think broadly about what's popular right now," she adds.

AFE also conducts a celebrity golf tournament where sponsors pay a higher price for their foursome if they want a celebrity to play with them. "Then you spend the whole day with them," she explains. "It's a really cool thing. I usually invite the spouses to the banquet afterwards, so that makes it fun, too. And that keeps the athlete around. It's a really fun day.

"You have to figure out creative ways to raise money," she states. "It could be having an athlete putt for you. Or, for \$5 you could have an athlete bowl one of your frames. For the putting contest, you could do something fun like have the athletes putt against each other – some kind of competitive thing that makes people excited about the day."

THE PIGGYBACK EFFECT

Ruth Handelman, marketing director for the United Way of Licking County in Newark, OH, described a creative way her organization came up with to do a quick and easy fund-raiser. When their local chamber of commerce announced they were hosting a

“It can be tough to get past (celebrity) gatekeepers, but if the people looking for support can refer to a celebrity’s past charity work in their field, it can help make the approach more informed and personal.”

Myrlia Purcell

Founder & Senior Editor, Look to the Stars
Orville, CA

major breakfast event where two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin, who played for Ohio State University, would be the keynote speaker, they arranged to get permission to run a “Win an Archie Griffin Photo Shoot” contest. Members of the public could buy a raffle ticket for a chance to win, and 15 winners were chosen from the 500 entries. The photo shoot was then scheduled to take place immediately after the breakfast.

“All of the winners were there waiting for him when he came into the room,” Handelman explains. “It was very streamlined, so it didn’t take very much of his time at all. We’re in the midst of Ohio State country here, so having a two-time Heisman trophy winner right here from this area is pretty cool. We worked with a local photographer who donated his time to do the photos, which turned out amazing.

“The key is to be able to get somebody who’s not charging you,”

she says. “We were fortunate. We weren’t charged for him to come and do this for us so there was no overhead there.” She added that Archie Griffin also good-naturedly agreed to don a United Way T-shirt for the photos. “He was a good sport. He was a very, very wonderful, kind person. It was just a good experience.”

TURNING THE TABLES

Celebrities are typically used to being waited on, but Family Compass, a Dallas-based nonprofit that works to prevent child abuse, turns the tables by having celebrities wait on tables at its annual fund-raiser.

“For 18 years, our gala has been known as the Celebrity Waiter Gala where we had local celebrities who attended our event and basically entertained a table of 10 to raise tips for our center,” explains Tiffani Oltmanns Davis, director of development for Family Compass. “Our waiters would do silly antics like stealing silverware from the guests’ tables. They could tip in order to get their silverware back so they could eat. We had a saxophonist who would play his saxophone for tips. Miss Texas USA would sing for tips. We would have pushup contests by NFL players for tips. Or we would have a model next to an athlete and they would do a pushup contest.

“It’s a lot of fun and there’s a lot of activity going on in the ballroom that evening,” she adds. “We average about 250–300 guests at our gala. We have about 30 waiters, so at every table there’s a different theme going on.

“We try to make it really easy to give that evening,” she notes.

“When the guests arrive they are assigned a bid number. The entire evening they can use that number to tip, make donations, bid on silent or live auction items, purchase raffle tickets, whatever it may be that we’re offering that evening can be charged to their bidder number, and it’s actually processed to their credit card.”

For the coming year, Family Compass is planning to change things up by using a “legends” theme instead of celebrities. “My new event co-chairs who are community volunteers and well known thought that it’s time to kind of revamp the event and move the celebrity waiter theme to a legendary theme with a level of celebrities who were just a little bit stronger. (Before) we would use the term celebrity pretty loosely: News anchors to models to reality TV stars, musicians, former NFL players, etc. Now we’re trying to up it a little bit and get more of the legendary figures at the event.”

When asked about what she’s learned about working with celebrities, Davis answers, “Every celebrity is different, that’s for sure. Some are very easygoing and laidback. It’s whatever I need. They’re even willing to help me solicit auction items or donate an auction item personally. They’ll even invite their own friends to the gala.

“Some I don’t even hear from until the week before. It just depends on the celebrity. For the most part, I would say that they’re very amenable to work with unless I have a big-time celebrity where I have to work through an agent, then that’s a different story. For our local celebrities, they’re more than willing to give their time and energy to our event because they believe in our cause, child abuse prevention.

“A lot of news anchors have a media representative you must go

“For our local celebrities, they’re more than willing to give their time and energy to our event because they believe in our cause, child abuse prevention.”



Tiffani Oltmanns Davis
Director of Development
Family Compass
Dallas, TX

through,” she continues. “It’s their requirement. And then I work with them on getting their bios and pictures. If it’s a retired NFL player, a lot of times I work directly through them. Even with someone like an Emmitt Smith, we go directly to him and his wife.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

“It takes all year to plan a gala of this size,” Davis continues. “Our event is typically held in April, which is child abuse prevention awareness month. Immediately after the event concludes, we start looking for our new event chair of co-chairs and choosing our honorary chairs and then immediately start recruiting our celebrities.”

When asked about the best way to contact celebrities, she responds, “It depends on their age. Some don’t communicate via email. They go old school and phone only. Some are all verbal commitment. Some I don’t ever speak to, it’s all email.

“I even work through social media nowadays to recruit celebri-

Celebrity Causes

The odds of getting a celebrity involved in supporting your fund-raiser can increase significantly if the cause you’re supporting is one that is near and dear to their heart. So how can you find a good match without Googling every celeb-

erity under the sun? You can turn to Look to the Stars (www.looktothestars.org), the top Internet source for celebrity charity news and information.

The site was established in 2006 by Steve and Myrlia Purcell to publicize all of the good work that celebrities do. The site offers a searchable database where you can enter a cause such as “cancer research” or “child abuse” and find a list of celebrities who support that cause.

“Our original aim was to turn people away from the negative, gossip style of celebrity news, and instead show the good things they did,” Myrlia explains. “We hoped that the general public would learn about nonprofits and find one or

Pop singer Joe Jonas visits The VOICE at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, an interactive closed-circuit broadcast multimedia center made possible by The Ryan Seacrest Foundation. To learn more visit: www.gifttochildhood.org/thevoice.



Actress Teri Hatcher’s autographed shoes were auctioned to benefit Soles4Soles, a charitable organization that donates gently used shoes to countries in need. The celebrity auction was hosted by Piperlime, Gap’s online boutique.

two that resonated with them. But along the way we discovered that what we had created was even more directly beneficial to the nonprofit world. We were so pleased to know that the charities themselves had started using our site for research, helping them plan their own events and decide which celebrities would make likely and well-matched spokespeople.

“As there are thousands upon thousands of celebrities out there, it can be difficult to narrow down who you want to contact, as well as a waste of money and resources to reach out to people who are not at all likely to support your event or cause. So, many nonprofits and people striving to create benefits, auctions and fund-raisers use

Look to the Stars to research celebrities in advance. If they know who has been actively involved in their field, who regularly donates auction items, or who participates in events such as charity runs in advance, they can be sure they are approaching a likely candidate to support their own work.

“It can be tough to get past the gatekeepers,” she adds, “but if the people looking for support can refer to a celebrity’s past charity work in their field, it can help make the approach more informed and personal: ‘We are aware that Mr. X has been actively supporting the fight against cancer for many years...’”

If you decide to turn to Look to the Stars to do your own celebrity research, you certainly won’t be alone. The site, which is run by volunteers, has more than 200,000 monthly readers, including major organizations such as the Associated Press, BBC, CBS, MTV and Forbes who use the site to conduct research in this field.



Lady Gaga’s Born This Way Foundation is dedicated to building a “kinder, braver world.” She received the Trevor Project’s Trevor Hero Award for LGBT Community Work.

— KB



Pictured at a Celebrity Waiter Gala hosted by Dallas nonprofit Family Compass are (clockwise from bottom left) Dallas television personality Gloria Campos and husband, Lance Brown; Family Compass Director of Development Tiffani Oltmanns Davis and husband; actor/model Kris Clinton with Miss Texas United States Natalie Clarke; NFL analyst and former Dallas Cowboys fullback Daryl Johnston and wife, Diane; and former NHL Dallas Stars goaltender Marty Turco and wife, Kelly.

ties. I've been successful. If I go to their website and find information via Google, sometimes it leads me to their Facebook account and I can send them a private message on Facebook. It's crazy, but sometimes they'll reply to me that way. I've really enjoyed using that tool."

THE VIP TREATMENT

Family Compass also sets up a special VIP room at its annual event. "We provide a separate private room at the venue where we offer cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and we personally thank them," Davis says. "We give them little thank-you gifts. We have our board chair and executive director Jessica (Trudeau) speak to them and kind of go through the agenda of the evening with them. We invite our sponsors and our board of directors to this back room, also, to meet and take pictures with the celebrities.

"When I'm there with the board members, we're trying to get them pumped up and excited," Trudeau notes, "and we tell them the importance of what we do for our community as well as how critical the funding for this event is for us and that they're basically a part of our cause.

"I think that the reason that this event has been so successful is not only having the celebrities or legends there, but because of the engagement of the celebrities doing things that are fun that makes the event a really special event," she continues. "It gives notoriety to the agency because in order to secure these individuals to come out and be a representative on behalf of our organization, it indicates that we're a worthwhile organization to support."

Davis adds, "It also makes us stand out among the thousands of luncheons and galas here in Dallas because there typically may be one speaker (there). So people are excited to come to our event year after year because they get to interact with celebrities."

UNLEASHING STAR POWER

Herrmann summed up the key to working with celebrities. "It's just being really mindful of them being there and making the most of their time in a positive way to help raise money for your organization. If they're passionate about (your cause), then it goes hand in hand, and it comes from the heart." AC&F



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Madrid is the best destination for those who wish to obtain excellent results by staging of any type of event. The city hosts the head offices of 90% of the major companies that operate in Spain and is the third European metropolis in terms of the presence of multinationals, which makes the capital a large global showcase for the presentation of products and a perfect setting for proposals.

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Madrid
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Ways to Increase Attendance

By Derek Reveron



ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, CAE, and Greta Kotler, CAE, ASAE's chief global development officer (right) network at the Annual Meeting.

Use These Creative Networking Ideas and Techniques

Ask any attendee at an association meeting why they attend, and networking will likely be a top reason. Post-meeting surveys taken by a range of small and large associations over the years show that networking is a huge draw. Indeed, many attendees consider networking their most vital activity and want networking events that provide valuable professional connections, knowledge, ideas and business contacts.



Amy Ledoux, CMP, CAE
Senior Vice President
Meetings and Expositions
ASAE
Washington, DC

“Networking is more engaging when you talk to people who experience the same things you do. The more you target networking events to specific attendees, the more successful they are. I call it industry segment targeted networking.”

Truly productive networking events do more than simply put people into a room with name badges, drinks and hors d'oeuvres. The best sessions creatively inspire networking and drive membership by encouraging attendees to return year after year to renew contacts with valued friends and acquaintances.

TARGET GROUPS

Association planners and leaders say that networking is most

effective when it is peer-to-peer. “People really want to talk to other people that do their same job,” says Amy Ledoux, CMP, CAE, senior vice president, meetings and expositions, ASAE, The Center for Association Leadership. “Networking is more engaging when you talk to people who experience the same things you do. We encourage this at our annual conference with a lot of smaller networking events along with our larger events. The more you target networking events to specific attendees, the more successful they are. I call it industry segment targeted networking.”

Targeted networking events were among the more than 600 functions at this year's ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition in Atlanta, which attracted more than 5,000 people. The conference included a multitude of strategically created small networking events. “We target them by job title and function,” says Ledoux. “We know the number of people who attend, the type of food and beverage they like, and what they liked and didn't like about past networking sessions from their evaluations after past meetings. We consider that in choosing the size and type of room seating. We premarket to attendees who might be interested. Say it's a reception for marketing professionals. We send them a postcard or email that highlights the reception.”

ASAE lends creative touches to networking sessions to spur interest from attendees. For example, Ledoux describes this year's networking function for first-time attendees, which attracted more than 200 people. “We put a smiling ‘newbie/bee’ bumble bee sticker on their name badges. We also put a paragraph in our conference program book asking members to look for people with bees on their badges and welcome them. It helped connect the newbies with others in a fun way. During our big opening reception, we designated an area for them and had a sign with a



A host of networking opportunities at the 2013 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition awaited a record number of attendees in Atlanta this year. They ranged from the opening celebration at the world-famous Georgia Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola to a special event for 200 first-time attendees, the painting of historic “shotgun” houses in Dr. Martin Luther King's birth neighborhood and much more.



Photos by Jamey Guy Photography

lighted star on it that invited newbies and veterans to network with each other."

BREAKING THE ICE

The most creative networking events are surefire icebreakers that bring people together with smiles and laughs, according to most planners including Bill Ruby, the co-chair of the National Restaurant Association's Marketing Executives Group (MEG). Ruby, the vice president, operations for Spartanburg, SC-based Denny's Corporation, the largest family-style restaurant in America, says they started off the MEG meeting in Denver in October with an offbeat networking/introduction session that set the stage for forging connections during the entire three-day gathering.

The group, comprised of more than 100 restaurant marketers, suppliers and vendors, gathered in a meeting room at the Grand Hyatt Denver to kick off the event. "We called the meeting to order, and everybody stands up and does the secret MEG handshake," says Ruby. "We demonstrate the handshake on stage



Bill Ruby
Vice President, Operations
Denny's Corporation
Spartanburg, SC

"If somebody says something like I'm a Pittsburgh Steelers fan or I love sushi, and another person has those things in common, it's a way for them to connect with that person in the hallway and say 'I loved what you said.'"

and sometimes have a video and photographs on how to do it. Then people do it with each other. We make a big deal out of it on purpose to bring everybody together to break the ice. It takes everybody's guard down."

After the handshake sets the tone for networking, the group passes around the microphone so attendees can introduce themselves and share interesting personal facts. The information encourages networking throughout the entire conference, says Ruby. "If somebody says something like I'm a Pittsburgh Steelers fan or I love sushi, and another person has those things in common, it's a way for them to connect with that person in the hallway and say 'I loved what you said.'"

The novel approach provides a comfort level that carries over to MEG's "networking lunch," "networking dinner" and "networking breaks," as they are labeled in the group's program.

MEG's creative and purposeful networking pays dividends for members, including Ruby. "There is a gentleman I have known

for years at MEG who is a beverage consultant. I feel very comfortable calling him out of the blue and saying, 'Do you think this is something our company should pursue?' We bounce ideas off each other and work through challenges," says Ruby.

MAKING IT EASIER TO MINGLE

Some associations tailor creative networking to members who, for whatever reasons, don't mingle much. For instance,

Connecting With Mobile Apps

More groups are using mobile apps, websites and social media to aid networking by allowing people to connect with others who share their interests before, during and after meetings.

For example, Victor Bohnert, the executive director of the VMware User Group (VMUG), an association of more than 3,000 customers and producers of software, is turning to technology to enhance networking at its annual conferences. "Members are creating profiles for their memberships on our website," says Bohnert. "We are tying that back into the mobile app we will use at our events. This will allow people, starting in 2014 through our app or website, to pre-qualify or seek out others they would like to meet."

Members will be able to select others they want to meet by selecting a series of items. These include VMUG's interest groups such as CloudOps, Healthcare, Public Sector or Higher Education, says Bohnert. The items also will include attendees' organizations, industry sector and level of familiarity with specific types of technology. Online communities created after the conferences will allow attendees who connected at the event to continue their relationships and discussions.

The mobile app that VMUG uses will have features common to most mobile meeting apps. While some of the apps focus more on onsite networking than others, most typically include personal profiles, attendee directory, meeting schedules, connections to social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram), agenda, exhibitor directory and networking tools that allow users to find others with similar interests.

Some apps also have topic-specific chat boards. Mobile apps include pathable.com, Dub Events (poweredbydub.com), zerista.com and topi.com. —DR

Kimberly Eskew, the executive director for The Society for Hematology and Stem Cells (ISEH) based in Chicago, noticed that its members called "junior investigators" (junior researchers) were reticent about networking at the organization's Annual Scientific Meeting, which typically attracts more than 600 people from around the world.

The junior investigators were missing out on the benefits of networking, says Eskew. "It's important because it helps their careers and reputations in the field. The more people a junior investigator knows, the more likely it is that they will get a better job and move forward. They were partly shy. Some of it was the language barrier. And a lot come on their own from small labs and aren't there with others who might already know people."

So during its four-day 2013 annual meeting in Vienna, Austria in August, ISEH introduced a unique game to encourage junior investigators to network. "We created a bingo-type card unique to the group," says Eskew. "Each of the 25 squares had a one-liner related to the field of hematology and stems cells or something personal. They try to find ISEH members who fit the criteria in each box and have them sign the card and provide their email. The first person to turn in the card before the conference ended received a free membership for next year."

Eskew ticks off examples of the cards' one-liners: "Has cloned a novel gene. Speaks more than three languages. Has published in *Experimental Hematology* (the official ISEH journal). Has seen all of the Oscar nominations. Likes Woody Allen movies. So, they might walk around saying, 'Hi, do you like Woody Allen movies? Would you sign my card?'"

The cards had an impact immediately after they were distributed during the networking session for junior investigators, attended by 100 people in the courtyard of the Imperial Riding School Renaissance Vienna Hotel. "We used a space that has an open feel to it so people can get up and walk around with their cards. Once we passed out the cards and the committee chair explained the game, everybody started moving around, the level of noise got louder, and people were laughing and having a much better time."

A much different version of the bingo-type activity was just as effective with a much larger group. Eskew, who also is operations senior manager for the Chicago-based National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) and a senior

"We used a space that has an open feel to it so people can get up and walk around with their cards. ...Everybody started moving around, the level of noise got louder, and people were laughing and having a much better time."



Kimberly Eskew
Executive Director
The Society for Hematology and
Stem Cells (ISEH)
Chicago, IL

manager with association management company SmithBucklin, used the strategy during the group's four-day 2013 Annual Congress in San Antonio in May.

The cards were distributed to all 6,000 attendees in their registration bags. The cards included one-liners such as: "Like NAON on Facebook. A NAON member for at least 10 years. Has orthopedic nursing certification." Attendees turned the cards in at the

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Apryl Savino, CMP
Conference Director
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Washington, DC

“We are using our content to drive networking. Each group will have a person who will facilitate conversation. But it’s a free-flow environment that encourages people to move from one area to the next and mingle based on their interests.”

they get out of the conference is meeting people with similar issues so they can help each other. We want to facilitate that for more people,” says Savino. “Having all these areas focused on different targeted topics allows people to connect based on similar interests, troubleshoot problems and discuss challenges. It gives everyone talking points focused on an issue or problem, as opposed to that awkward first meeting of “What do you do and what company are you with.”

TRIED-AND-TRUE POINTERS

While groups can creatively spice up networking events in a variety of ways, it’s important not to ignore the basics. Here is advice from association planners and executives on how to improve networking techniques.

- **Use name tags creatively to encourage interaction among attendees.** Here are three ideas. One: Add an “Ask me about ___” line on the name badge. Attendees can fill in the blank as they wish. Two: Have people make their own name badges and encourage them to be creative and funny. Three: Leave space on the badges for attendees to write the names of their Twitter handles or other social media connections.
- **Use registration lines to encourage networking.** For example, organize the lines by geographic area and city rather than the alphabet. This can encourage people to strike up conversations while in line.
- **Use food to encourage conversation.** Serving “interactive” foods such as fajitas and fondue encourage people to gather in small groups around food stations, where they are bound to talk to each other. Along these lines, have at least one buffet meal because it sparks engagement.
- **Set up a social media platform** where attendees can chat with others, ask questions and connect with people who share similar interests. Allow attendees to create a short online profile that includes topics they want to learn more about and areas where they can serve as a resource to others. This can be done via LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+.
- **Finally, evaluate networking events.** “After meetings, we send out evaluations to all members asking questions about every aspect, including a few questions about networking,” says Eskew. “We ask if they had enough time to network and if we provided enough avenues for networking to occur. We also judge by looking at networking events to tell if people are interacting to get the connections they need.”

All association planners and executives want attendees to come away from meetings with much more than business cards and a series of short and superficial conversations. Instead, meetings should provide a chance for attendees to relate on a deeper professional level and build lasting relationships that benefit and enrich their careers — all of which will bring them back again next year.

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end of the conference, and they were entered into a raffle. The winner received free membership for the next year.

The cards ignited networking like a wildfire. “It was very effective,” says Eskew. “During the 15-minute breaks between the courses and sessions, we saw people whipping out the cards and talking and trying to find people as they were heading to their next room. You saw people huddled in groups with their papers talking to each other, trying to complete their cards. It was like that the whole time.”

LEARNING LOUNGES WORK

Some associations creatively encourage networking around specific topics. For example, the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) based in Washington, DC, is introducing an innovative format this year in November at its annual conference in Amelia Island, FL, which will attract about 500 people.

The association will set up a “learning lounge” in a hotel ballroom. Apryl Savino, CMP, ICE conference director, explains how it works: “We are using our content to drive networking. We will have eight areas in the room where people can participate and engage with one another around a different topic. Each group will have a person who will facilitate conversation between members around a topic. But it’s a free-flow environment that encourages people to move from one area to the next and mingle based on their interests,” says Savino.

The areas will be set up to encourage different types of personal interactions and allow attendees to move to areas where they feel the most comfortable networking and have greater interest in a topic. “We have theater-style that encourages people to listen to a presentation, and we allow plenty of space around the theater to encourage them to engage with each other and those who are listening,” says Savino. “We also have round-table areas where people talk in small groups face-to-face. Every area will have its own seating arrangement, lighting and signage.”

The format is designed to help attendees fulfill one of their top reasons for coming to the conference. “People say that what

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Las Vegas

Motivating Attendees to Get in the Game

By Karen Brost

Associations are always looking for new ways to boost attendance at their annual meetings, and once again, Las Vegas has proven that it has the edge in that department. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) has reported the results of a 2013 exhibit survey that indicate that attendance increased an average of 13 percent among trade shows surveyed when their shows rotated into Las Vegas.

THE BIG BOOST

Lori Marker, director of meeting management for the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), has seen the power that Las Vegas has to boost attendance firsthand. The members of her Dallas-based organization are health care professionals who prevent, diagnose, treat and rehab injuries and illnesses. "This year marked our 64th convention and our largest ever with 15,500 total attendees. The appeal of the destination played a significant role in our success this year. Since 2009 (downturn of the economy), our post-convention surveys clearly show the growing importance of a destination's appeal.

Attendees are looking for education and an experience. Las Vegas remains an attractive destination for business and/or pleasure, and its international appeal resulted in a record number of international attendees at our convention.

"We believe Las Vegas also played a significant role in attracting a record 26.5 percent of first-time attendees to our convention," she continues. "While challenging for show managers, Las Vegas' abundance of hotels at every price point imaginable makes it an affordable destination, which also increases its appeal. Accurate perceptions of the city and misperceptions about meetings held in Las Vegas have resulted in some controversy. Recognizing this, we focused our promotional efforts on highlighting and delivering excellent education, the best products and services at our AT Expo, and the many other key elements of our convention. We avoided all references to the 'extravagances' of the destination."

NATA held its annual meeting at the 3,211-room Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, an MGM Resorts International property that includes a three-level, 1.7 million-sf convention center. Marker explains why NATA chose this particular property. "Athletic training is a close-knit profession, and the ability of a majority of our attendees to sleep, learn and network under one roof at Mandalay Bay also played a role in our success." She also appreciated the streamlined overflow hotel contract process she was able to take advantage of with other MGM hotels nearby and the "excellent convention sales and services, and banquet personnel who were invested in our success." She noted another important distinction: "Mandalay Bay's philosophy of focusing on meetings and conventions, and delivery of exceptional service to its customers and their attendees. You never feel second fiddle to casino and entertainment operations within the facility."

Marker also commented on Mandalay Bay's family-friendly attractions such as the Shark Reef Aquarium and Mandalay Bay Beach. "If there's such a thing as a family-friendly hotel in Las Vegas, Mandalay Bay is it," she says. "This was very important for our attendees bringing their families."

Mandalay Bay recently introduced its Seascape Ballroom,



Photos by Renée Fernandis

The National Athletic Trainers' Association held its 2013 annual meeting at Mandalay Bay. (Above) Attendees at the opening day reception relived the '80s at a concert by the Spazmatics. (Right) Nearly 10,000 members attended the NATA General Session to hear the Johnson & Johnson keynote address by former NFL Pittsburgh Steeler Merril Hoge.

which offers dramatic views of the Shark Reef Aquarium. The 1,675-sf venue can accommodate up to 125 guests.

A GRAND EXPERIENCE

The Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA), headquartered in Springfield, VA, held its spring conference for approximately 125 attendees at another MGM Resorts International hotel, the 5,044-room MGM Grand Hotel & Casino. "It was a wonderful experience," says Cindy Atwood, CVTA's deputy director, lauding the excellent service she received from the hotel staff.

"We use a lot of meeting space (for the size of our group). It's always a good challenge with us, but we were lucky that they were able to accommodate us, and they did so quite well. The MGM Grand really rose to the occasion. They were amazing."

A SUITE DEAL

Last year, the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds (arvc) held its annual conference and expo for more than 500 attendees at the 2,522-room Rio All-Suites Hotel & Casino, a Caesars Entertainment property located off The Strip.

"It was nice to be a little bit out of the fray," explains Jennifer Schwartz, arvc's senior director, marketing communications and partnerships. "Parking was really convenient, and that was important to our members."

"Their onsite staff is very attentive and super friendly," she continues. "All of them were very empowered to help. And the food was amazing. The VIP suite accommodations are

a nice upgrade — very roomy and conducive to having smaller meetings or hosting hospitality suites." In May, the Rio unveiled 380 redesigned Samba Suites, which are located in the hotel's Masquerade Tower. The new 600-sf suites feature a vivid teal and orange color scheme, and upgraded bathrooms with granite countertops and walk-in showers.



Schwartz says that the Rio's meeting space is a "healthy distance" from the main lobby and guest rooms, but that once attendees get there, due to arvc's full daily agendas, they have little reason to go back to their rooms. "The configuration of the expo and meeting space is nice. We were able to have a centralized registration area, and that was really great."

She says that one key advantage of meeting in Las Vegas is the good airlift. "It's very affordable, and there are frequent flights from major locations across the U.S. They've made some great upgrades to the airport. I used to think that all you do in Vegas is wait in line, and that's different now. I didn't wait in a line once at the airport. It's easier to get in and out of now. It's a beautiful new airport." Just over a year ago, McCarran International Airport opened Terminal 3. The technologically advanced, 1.9-million-sf terminal was designed to improve the travel experience for visitors arriving in Las Vegas as well as to handle the increasing traffic from international visitors.

IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL

Greg Nockleby, international marketing and PR manager for the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) based in Colorado Springs, CO, says his organization meets frequently in Las Vegas. "Las Vegas is, as we all know, the conference capital of the United States," he says. "It does offer something for everyone."

NSCA recently held its annual national conference at the 2,916-room Paris Las Vegas, a Caesars Entertainment hotel. "It's the most affordable one on The Strip in the center of The Strip," he explains. "As far as a caliber Strip hotel, it's a good midway point both in location and price for our members." The conference draws 2,000-3,000 attendees every year.

He adds that the fact that Las Vegas is a 24-hour city is a dis-



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Convention Center

During the past two years, more than \$20 million in improvements were completed at the Las Vegas Convention Center.



MGM Grand Hotel & Casino offers 501,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space.

Photo courtesy of MGM Resorts International



The National Strength and Conditioning Association held its 2013 annual national conference at the Paris Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

tinct advantage. “There are some niceties about having a 24 hour city — everything is so accessible. There’s no waiting for taxis, for example, whereas in other cities, you may have to wait or call for one. Vegas actually offers more of a concierge experience compared to other cities.”

NEW UPGRADES AND DEVELOPMENTS

The city’s \$2.5 billion development of the new Las Vegas Global Business District will add a new dimension to its identity — as the innovator and leader in delivering 21st century infrastructure that reinforces the value and productivity of face-to-face meetings. To be completed in three phases over the next decade, the project will first focus on the renovation and expansion of the Las Vegas Convention Center and the creation of a convention district campus.

During the past two years, more than \$20 million in improvements were completed at the Las Vegas Convention Center: The façade of the center was painted two different shades of gray, and the interior was painted; the green parking lot was expanded, and designs are underway on two more parking lots to allow for more convenience and access; more than 1 million sf of new red carpet was installed inside; lighting was upgraded in the Central and North Halls and delivers up to 20 percent more light with 42 percent less energy; Starbucks added a double-sided counter inside its recently expanded store, resulting in faster service; and American Express opened its Open Business Lounge inside the main entrance of the center.

Designated in 2011 as an official World Trade Center site through an agreement between the LVCVA and the Consumer Electronics Association, the second phase is the creation of a dedicated World Trade Center facility to attract more meetings and conventions to the destination.

A centralized transportation hub designed to improve connectivity in the resort corridor and improve the overall customer experience is the third and final stage of the project.

Sustainability is a necessity in the nation’s No. 1 trade show destination: In 2012, the LVCVA set a record by recycling 68 percent of the 3,288 tons of materials discarded at the Las Vegas Convention Center and Cashman Center. According to the LVCVA, this represents the equivalent of 14.5 Statues of Liberty or 651 school buses in terms of the amount of material that has been diverted from the landfill.

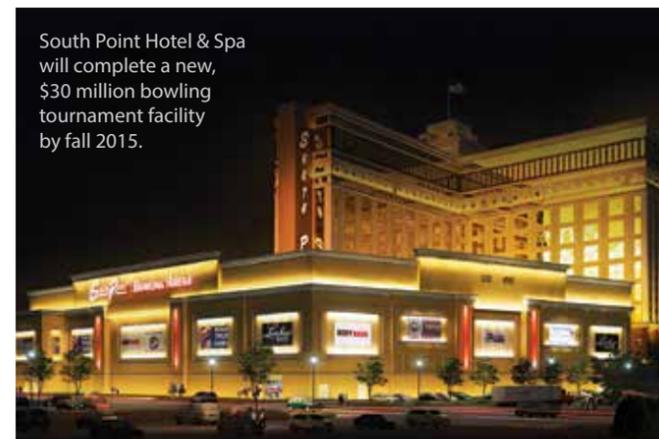
And in another recent development, Malaysia-based Genting Group announced the acquisition of the partially completed Echelon project from Boyd Gaming. The once highly touted project, on the former site of the Stardust Hotel, fell apart during the recession after construction had begun. Genting, which operates casinos in Singapore and New York, bought the project for less than \$500 million and will invest an additional \$1.5 billion to develop an 87-acre, Asian-themed casino hotel complex — complete with a replica of the Great Wall of China — under its Resorts World brand. The new 3,500-room property is expected to open in 2016.

MGM Resorts International is partnering with AEG to build a new \$350 million, 20,000 seat arena, which will be part of a revitalization project being planned for the area between the New York-New York and Monte Carlo resorts. Groundbreaking is scheduled for the spring of 2014 with a grand opening projected for spring of 2016.

Caesars Entertainment is in the midst of completing the Linq — a \$550 million outdoor dining, entertainment and retail district that will be anchored by the High Roller — a 550-foot-high observation wheel fitted with 28 giant glass-enclosed cabins.

HOTEL NEWS

Groups with members who just can’t bear to leave Fido at home will be happy to learn that Vdara Hotel & Spa recently launched its V-Dog program, which allows guests to bring a furry friend of 70 pounds or less. The canine-friendly program includes a freshly baked dog treat, a 24-hour dog park and an in-suite doggie dining menu. A select group of suites has been set aside for



South Point Hotel & Spa will complete a new, \$30 million bowling tournament facility by fall 2015.

Photo courtesy of South Point Hotel & Spa

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“The appeal of the destination played a significant role in our success this year. ...We believe Las Vegas also played a significant role in attracting a record 26.5 percent of first-time attendees to our convention.”

Lori Marker
Director of Meeting Management
National Athletic Trainers' Association
Dallas, TX

those with canine companions so as to not disturb other guests. Vdara also recently debuted its new Silk Road meeting/event venue, which features views of Aria Resort & Casino. The 6,400-sf space accommodates up to 200 attendees and is comprised of a 3,700-sf ballroom and 900-sf breakout room.

South Point Hotel & Spa, the United States Bowling Congress (USBC), Las Vegas Events, and the LVCVA announced a 12-year deal to host several annual USBC events, both citywide and inside a new, \$30 million bowling tournament facility with more than 60 lanes at South Point, which is expected to be completed by fall 2015. The property's current bowling center annually hosts top events such as the World Series of Bowling.

Caesars Palace has unveiled its new Nobu Hotel Suites. Ideal for VIPs or private events for five to 45 guests, the 18 luxurious suites offer a special menu featuring the cuisine of celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa.

Another new hotel-within-a-hotel, set to debut in early 2014, is the 1,100-room, all-suite Delano, the newest addition to Mandalay Bay, taking the place of THEhotel.

The completely renovated Tropicana Las Vegas - a DoubleTree by Hilton is one of the few remaining landmark properties from the 1950s golden age of Las Vegas. After a \$200 million transformation, the Tropicana recently announced plans to significantly expand its meeting and convention facilities to more than 100,000 sf. Currently offering more than 60,000 sf of meeting and exhibition space, the conference center at Tropicana Las Vegas can accommodate large events for up to 3,000 delegates. The hotel will build five 650-sf breakout rooms on the second floor of the Club Tower, adding to its three ballrooms, which comprise 19 breakout rooms in the conference center.



Together, the Palazzo, Venetian and Sands Expo and Convention Center offer 2.25 million sf of meeting and exhibit space.

Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands Corp.

Additionally, the resort will expand the Tropicana Pavilion, which is a wing of Tropicana Las Vegas' conference center. When combined with existing space in the Tropicana Pavilion, the venue will offer more than 55,000 sf that can be used for large exhibits and general sessions.

Las Vegas Sands Corp., the parent company of The Venetian and The Palazzo five-diamond luxury resorts on the Las Vegas Strip, is expanding its green meetings offerings as part of its Sands ECO360 Meetings program that was launched in 2011. New additions to the program include the services of a "Green Meeting Concierge" and the availability of a "Sands ECO360 Event Impact Statement," a report that documents a meeting's sustainability performance. It also offers groups the option to participate in volunteer projects where they engage with the local community.

VENUE UPDATE

Ground has been broken for a new attraction called Dinner in the Sky Las Vegas. Definitely not for acrophobics, the new venue will serve meals to up to 22 diners suspended 180 feet in the air on each of two open-air tables weighing nearly seven tons.

Remember those massive neon marquees that used to light up the city's original iconic hotels on the Vegas Strip back in the day? Well, they've been retired to the city's Neon Museum. Evening tours are now being offered at the "Neon Boneyard," where the signs are uplit for dramatic effect. The venue also offers a 3,500-sf outdoor space for private events.

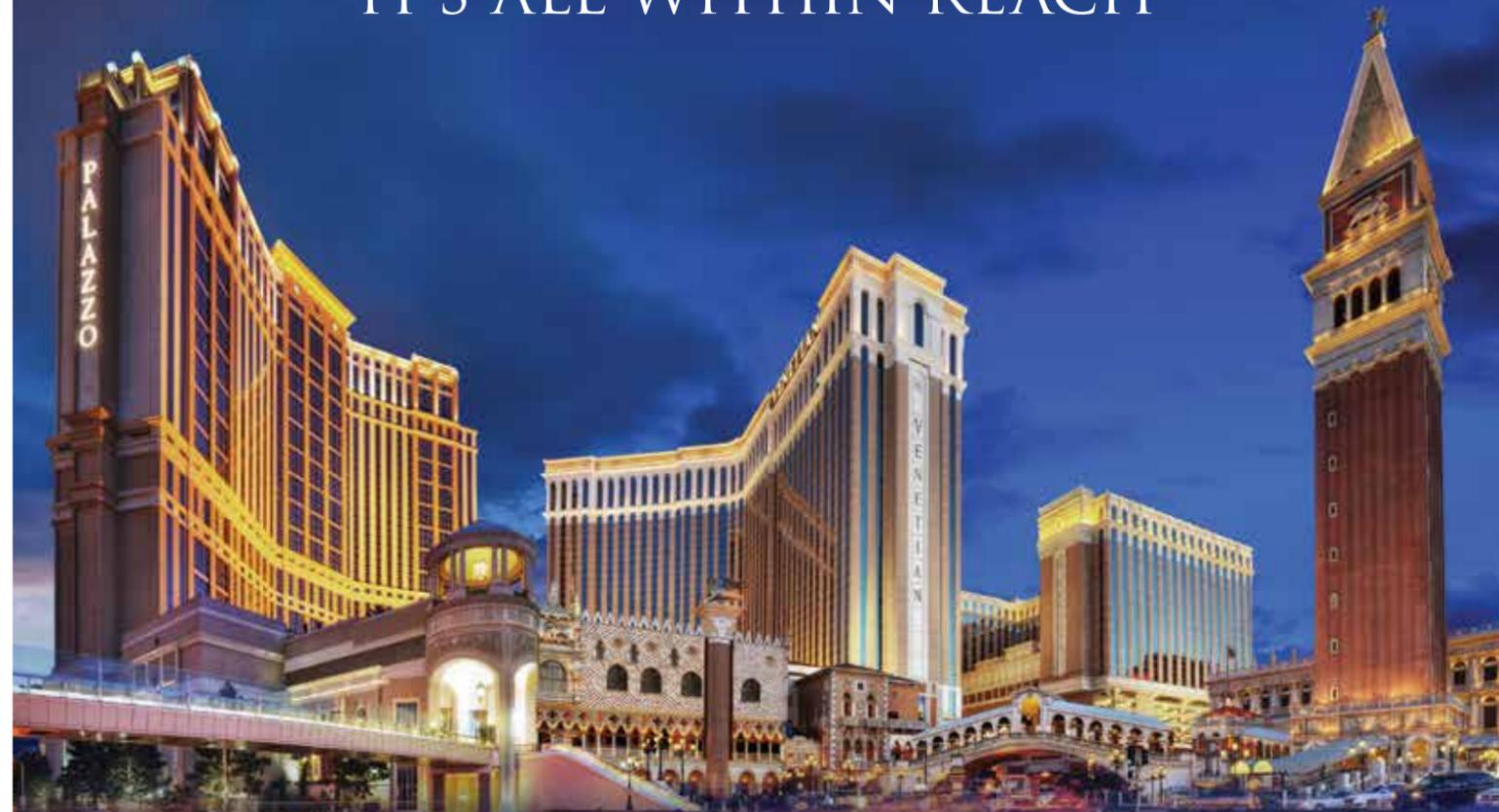
A popular venue that is also available to host private events, The Mob Museum, The National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, is now offering guided 90-minute tours

during regular business hours. The museum offers a fascinating look at organized crime through the lives and artifacts of famous figures such as Al Capone, "Lucky" Luciano, John Gotti, "Bugsy" Siegle and Sam Giancana, as well as the famous undercover agents who made a career of fighting the Mob.

SO MANY CHOICES, SO LITTLE TIME

With so many properties in Las Vegas to choose from, where do you begin? "Be strategic in selecting your host property," Marker advises. "Understand its location on the Las Vegas strip and proximity to other hotels, entertainment and attractions that can lure your attendees away. Most importantly, find a property that's willing to work with you to meet your group's unique needs. Talk to other meeting planners and also vendors like GSCs, AV service providers, etc., about

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their experiences in Las Vegas. The more insights you have, the better positioned you'll be to make the best decisions.

"Knowing your attendees and their demographics is crucial," she continues. "Will Las Vegas be an appealing destination? Can you develop an affordable and attractive convention package for your attendees? If they are a social and close-knit group, can you offer a convention package that keeps everyone close together with entertainment and restaurant options onsite or very close by? And, if they are social, consider adjusting your meeting schedule to provide time outside of your event to explore the city."

RENO

Grand Sierra Resort and Casino, which offers 2,000 guest rooms and the largest casino in northern Nevada, is under new ownership and undergoing a \$25 million renovation. As a nod to nostalgia, the resort displays the chandelier from the original MGM Hotel and Casino. The renovation project includes upgrades to the lobby and guest rooms, a new ultra lounge and restaurant, a nightclub, luxury concierge level and racquetball court. Grand Sierra's 200,000 sf of meeting space also will be included in the renovation.

The south end of the 500,000-sf Reno-Sparks Convention Center is being repurposed into Film Reno Tahoe, a new division of the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority (RSCVA). The new facility will contain three huge, clear-span stages designed for building film sets as well as production offices in an



The Reno-Sparks Convention Center.

Photo courtesy of Reno-Sparks CVB

effort to attract its share of the billions of dollars of movie and TV productions that are currently going to other states.

To encourage planners to experience the meetings and entertainment facilities the Reno Tahoe area has to offer, the RSCVA is offering a "Come See. Fly Free." promotion. They'll even make a charitable donation in the planner's name, just for making a site visit

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Marker shared a few suggestions for association planners considering booking Las Vegas for the first time. "First and foremost, you have to know your convention, and perhaps most importantly, know your attendees. There's a plethora of hotel/facility options to choose from. Educate yourself about the city (not many people realize the Las Vegas strip is 4+ miles long!) and hotel/facility options. Understand that it is not easy to hop from one hotel or destination to another due to underestimated distances and cost." Given the destination's track record of boosting attendance, she offered another piece of very valuable advice. "Look for flexible space as you may have to adjust your plan in response to record numbers."

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SHEA

Visit Orlando, Orlando, FL, has promoted **Fred Shea** to senior vice president of convention sales and services. He had served since 2010 as the organization's vice president of strategic partnerships.

The St. Louis (MO) Convention & Visitors Commission has named **Lucy Roate** as convention services manager. She was travel director for Maritz Inc.

Jeanne O'Grady, CEM, was promoted to director of sales and client services for the Pasadena (CA) Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pasadena Convention Center. She most recently served as associate director of sales.

Brad C. Mettler was named director of



O'GRADY

sales and marketing for the Grand Hyatt New York. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa in Oahu, Hawaii.

The Anaheim/Orange County (CA) Visitor & Convention Bureau has named **Junior Tauvaa** as senior vice president of convention sales and meeting solutions. He was senior V.P., strategic partnerships for MPI and its Foundation.

The Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau has appointed **Erick Garnica** as director of international sales. He was senior international tourism sales manager at the Lee County (FL) Visitor & Convention Bureau.



TAUVAA



GOSSE

Visit Indy, Indianapolis, IN, has named **Emily Gosser** as meeting sales manager. She most recently served as the marketing coordinator at The Westin Indianapolis.

The Greater Miami (FL) Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Kathy Semmes** as director of sales, regional sales, Washington, DC. She was a senior account executive for the Renaissance Chicago and Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach.

The Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Dennis Johnston** as V.P. of sales. Prior to joining the bureau, he was the V.P. of sales at the Lexington CVB in Lexington, KY. AC&F



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33	South Point Hotel & Spa	702-797-8050	www.southpointmeetings.com	Maureen Robinson	sales@southpointcasino.com
23	Tropicana Casino & Resort (Atlantic City)	609-340-4398	www.tropicana.biz	Group Sales	plavegli@tropicana.net
25	Universal Orlando Resort	888-322-5531	www.uomeetingsandevents.com	Group Sales	meetings@universalorlando.com
31	The Venetian/The Palazzo	702-414-4202	www.venetian.com	Chandra Allison	chandra.allison@venetianpalazzo.com
COV IV	Visit Orlando	800-662-2825	www.orlandomeeting.com	Donna Morse	convention.sales@orlandocvb.com

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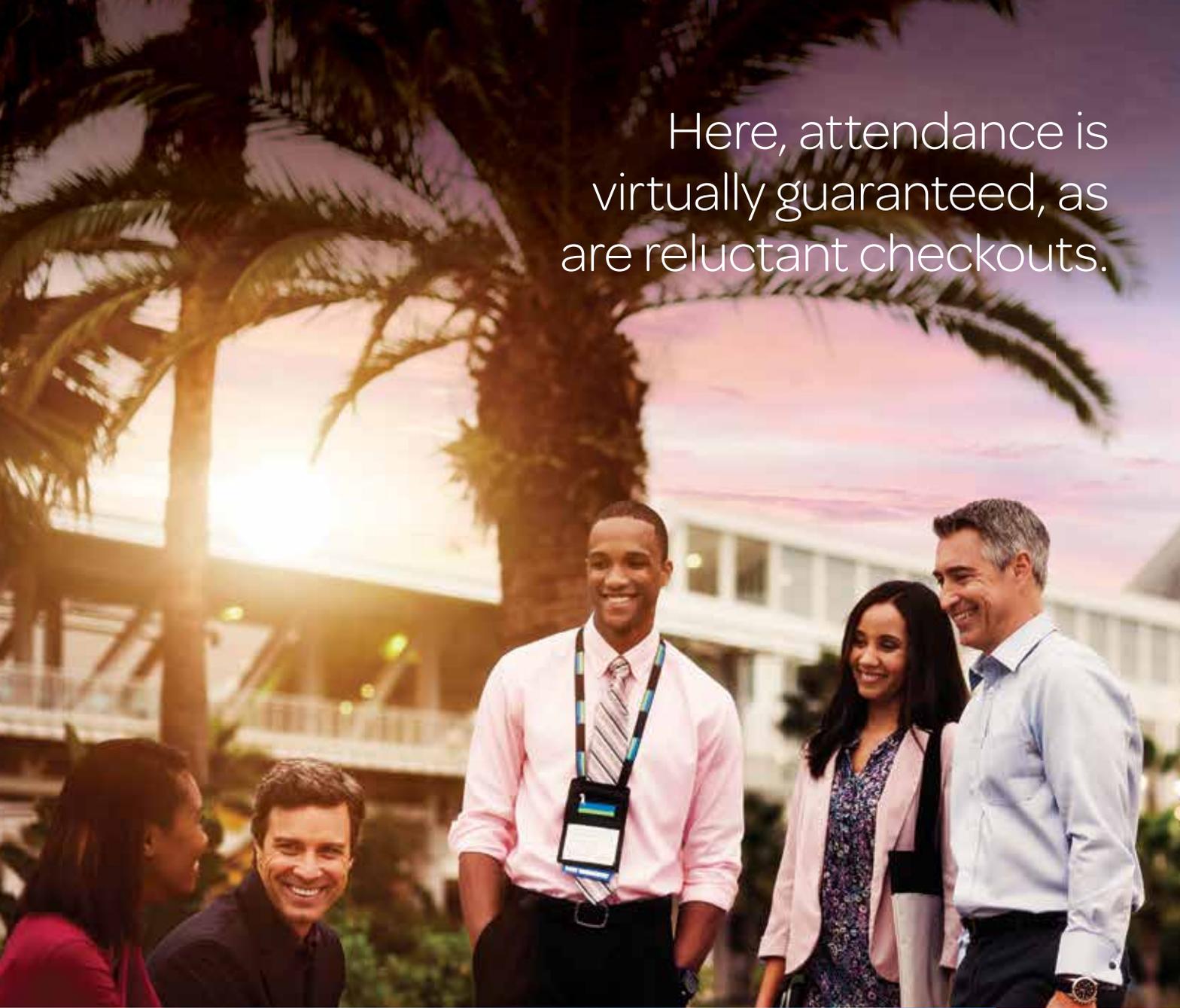


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