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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING & INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS



Freebies, Perks and Points, Oh My!

**Beware the Ethical
Pitfalls of Planning**

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Golf & Spa Events

**Maximize the
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Airline Mergers

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It's So Miami

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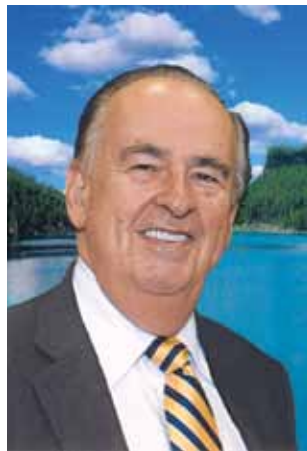
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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

For the Good of All

Even as most of the fallout from the ethical lapses of companies such as Enron, Tyco and AIG recedes from the headlines, new stories appear, providing object lessons for meeting planners and fodder for ethical case studies. These days, the IRS is in the news for alleged lavish spending and questionable behavior at training events, which were held before more stringent federal guidelines were enacted. These sometimes sensational reports tend to tarnish the role of the professional meeting planner and also demonstrate that too few journalists really take the time to fully understand the workings of the meeting and event industry. Thus, it is incumbent upon professional planners to be aware of and uphold their company's ethics policies and to continually learn what's new in the field from their associations such as MPI, PCMA and CIC, among others.



The cover story in this issue on page 14 — “Freebies, Perks and Points, Oh My! Beware the Ethical Pitfalls of Planning” — is a treasure trove of information and insight from planners and experts in the field. “The feedback has been generally positive or neutral after we announced our updated ethics policies,” says Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP, the CEO of the CIC (Convention Industry Council). “We see more attention paid to the optics of certain practices like FAM trips, because our industry as well as all businesses, including the government, are under greater scrutiny. As a meeting industry trend, we are hearing more talk about CSR, ethics and good business practice. CIC member organizations have introduced and are enforcing their own codes of conduct or ethics and provide sessions at their annual meetings on the topic.”

Highly respected, veteran meeting planner Sharon Marsh, CMP, CMM, meetings group manager for Medtronic Inc., doesn't mince words as she warns meeting planners that “going on a FAM trip when you know you most probably won't use the destination/property is like stealing”; and also as she cautions suppliers “to say no when a planner asks them for something, such as free rooms, for considering the use of the property.”

For the good of all, become aware of ethical pitfalls and strive to do your best to stay above the fray. As Marsh concludes, “I won't do anything that I am ashamed to let anyone know. This should be the rule we all use.”

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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The New Tropicana Las Vegas Expanding Meeting Facilities

LAS VEGAS, NV — The new Tropicana Las Vegas – a DoubleTree by Hilton announced plans to significantly expand its meeting and convention facilities from 60,000 sf to more than 100,000 sf. The hotel will build five 650-sf breakout rooms on the second floor of the Club Tower, adding to its three ballrooms. All of the new breakout rooms will have natural light and private his-and-her restrooms. The resort also 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. All of the meeting facilities are complemented by customizable catering services, a dedicated audio-visual department, separate conference services registration desk, business center and easy parking access, among other benefits. www.tropiv.com



The Church Hill Meeting Room at Tropicana Las Vegas.

The Hyatt Times Square NY to Debut in October

NEW YORK, NY — Hyatt Times Square New York, Manhattan's largest new Hyatt hotel in more than 30 years, is expected to open in late October 2013. Services and amenities will include a rooftop lounge, trendy diner, state-of-the-art fitness center and iPad check-in, as well as the only hotel spa in the area. The 487-room Hyatt Times Square is in the heart of Times Square. The hotel's 54-story glass exterior adds a dramatic flourish to the theater district. With floor-to-ceiling windows and original art, the rooms are relaxing while still reflecting the thrill of city life. The hotel's 2,400 sf of flexible space and its 1,400-sf outdoor terrace can be tailored to provide the perfect setting for any occasion. Plus, its central location provides easy access from Manhattan's main transportation hubs, and business and financial centers. www.timesquare.hyatt.com

MPI-WEC Aims to 'Revitalize Meeting Professionals'

DALLAS, TX — Meeting Professionals International (MPI) will address the rapid changes facing the meeting and event industry at the 2013 World Education Congress (WEC) July 20-23 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas.



VAN DEVENTER

The opening general session will explore the transformational power of meetings with leading business experts and keynote speaker Candy Chang, a TED senior fellow and urban space artist and designer. Accomplished speaker and former U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexis M. Herman will discuss transformational leadership and how to find purpose through social action at the closing session. "We recognize the meeting and event industry is changing rapidly, so MPI is also transforming to better serve our members. At WEC 2013, we will provide new tools, techniques and learning experiences to help meeting professionals evolve and succeed," said Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI. "Our goal with this year's conference is to revitalize meeting professionals so their meetings can revitalize others." MPI added a second Flash Point session, which is a distinctive, fast-paced platform of three, 15-minute presentations from diverse and innovative speakers. Other program highlights include a hosted buyer program; MarketSquare; RISE Awards Luncheon; Helping Hands Community Service Project; and a Dierks Bentley Performance. Fundraising events include the Players Golf Tournament; The Big Deal, an official World Series of Poker satellite tournament; and Rendezvous, the foundation's signature networking event. www.mpiweb.org/wec

Sheraton New York Times Square Unveils New Meeting Spaces

NEW YORK, NY — The Sheraton New York Times Square has revealed a \$20 million renovation of the hotel's 60,000 sf of meeting spaces and marks the final phase of the overall renovation to the hotel's 1,781 rooms and public spaces. New technology includes digital signage and client-controlled individual digital panels to customize lighting and temperature. The property offers the latest in audio-visual and high-tech communications including a Telepresence suite. Facilities include 43 meeting rooms, an Executive Conference Center, the Metropolitan Ballroom and the New York Ballroom. www.sheratonnewyork.com

MEETING VALUES

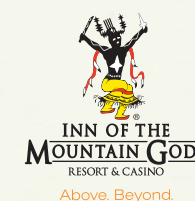


Hyatt Regency McCormick Place, Chicago, IL

The hotel will match or beat room rates from like four-diamond hotels for planners who book and hold new meetings July 1-September 4, 2013. Offer includes free meeting room rental for the general session, reduced self-parking of \$22 per day (\$12 value per night) and free guest room and general session Wi-Fi (\$9.99/room/day and \$500 for general session). Groups that actualize more than 250 guest rooms will receive a gift card valued at 3 percent of room revenue toward their next office supply or computer order. Email saleschime@hyatt.com or call 312-528-4180. www.mccormickplace.hyatt.com

■ **New Orleans Downtown Marriott at the Convention Center.** Meetings booked by December 24, 2013 and consumed during select 2013 dates receive incentives based on the size of the event. Groups of any size receive: comp meeting room Internet access; 10 percent off in-house AV; 10 percent off parking for attendees. 200 or more room nights: comp meeting room Internet and data projectors; 15 percent off in-house AV; 15 percent off parking for attendees. More than 250 room nights: comp meeting room Internet and data projectors; 20 percent off F&B; 20 percent off AV; 20 percent off parking for attendees; and more. 800-305-6342, www.neworleansmarriottconventioncenter.com

■ **Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, CA.** Bookings with 10 rooms or more for stays November 24-30, 2013 start at \$159; December 15, 2013-January 5, 2014, from \$128. Additional concessions, based on number of rooms booked, include: 1/40 comp room; comp meeting room rental; comp high-speed Internet in guest rooms; 10 percent off AV; comp one-hour reception; 5 percent discount on 2012 menu pricing; VIP welcome amenities; and more. Contact Marianne Milton, director of sales and marketing, 415-486-4415, marianne.milton@hyatt.com, www.fishermanswharf.hyatt.com.



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Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel & Convention Center Completes Renovation



The Waverly Garden Court.

ATLANTA, GA — The Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel & Convention Center recently completed renovations of all 522 guest rooms and suites,

including the Club Level. Contemporary treatments of traditional furnishings feature hardwood furniture complemented by deep tan and purple tones.

Touches include chic wall graphics and arched floor lamps.

The Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel & Convention Center, a centerpiece of northwest Atlanta's booming Galleria office and shopping complex, showcases 60,000 sf of flexible meeting space and a direct connection to an additional 320,000 sf of event space at the Cobb Galleria Convention Centre. The hotel features a dramatic 14-story atrium and 32 high-tech meeting rooms. The hotel is currently offering a Live Life Larger and "Maximize Your Meeting" special meeting value. www.waverlymeetings.com

DMAI 'Better Together' in Orlando This July

WASHINGTON, DC — Destination Marketing Association International expects more than 1,000 destination marketing professionals to convene in Orlando for its annual convention July 15–17 at The Peabody Orlando. The theme of this year's convention is "Better Together: Integrating Our Strengths." More than 40 education sessions include forming integrated teams, building collaborative partnerships within the community, creating integrated marketing and sales, and positioning and strengthening the DMO industry as a channel. "Here at DMAI, we have long realized destination marketing as a serious engine to drive job creation and economic growth through travel and tourism," said Michael Gehrisch, president and CEO of DMAI. He added, "We equally realize the challenging environment for destination marketing executives, and are committed to improving the effectiveness of these organizations and ensuring their success." Rachel Botsman, author, futurist and social innovator, will open the general session, and marketing and leadership strategist and author David Meerman Scott will close the meeting. Registration and more information is available at annual.destinationmarketing.org.

EVENTS CALENDAR

JULY 15–17, 2013
DMAI 99TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
The Peabody Orlando
Orlando, FL
202-296-7888
www.destinationmarketing.org

JULY 20–23, 2013
MPI 2013 WORLD EDUCATION CONGRESS
Mandalay Bay
Las Vegas, NV
972-702-3051
www.mpiweb.org/wec

AUGUST 4–7, 2013
GBTA CONVENTION 2013
San Diego Convention Center
San Diego, CA
703-684-0836
www.gbta.org

AUGUST 5–7, 2013
IAEE MIDYEAR MEETING
Omni CNN Center
Atlanta, GA
www.iaee.com

SEPTEMBER 4–5, 2013
HSMIA'S MEET NATIONAL 2013
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
Washington, DC
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www.hsmiameet.com

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1 IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom (at the podium) announced that the IMEX trade show in Frankfurt May 21–23 posted a 33 percent increase in business appointments with 3,900 hosted buyers from 75 countries, and an overall visitor total of 9,000. **2** Ray Bloom presented the 2013 IMEX Academy Award for Africa and the Middle East to Site President 2013 David Sand (left) who is CEO of Uwin Iwin Incentives, a company he founded in 1994 and today operates in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. **3** Site celebrated its 40th Anniversary at IMEX (l to r): Allison Summers, Site managing director; Olga Navarro, Site board member and executive director ITB DMC, Barcelona, Spain; David Sand, Site president 2013; Edward Chaillo, CMP, CMM. **4** The "Meetings Made in Germany" booth was awarded the 2013 Green Exhibitor Award at IMEX Frankfurt. Pictured with the award (l to r): Vanessa Schäfer, trade fairs/events, German Convention Bureau (GCB); Christine Koch, project manager, GCB; Matthias Schultze, managing director, GCB. **5** Representatives of the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau accept the Best Booth Award for Onsite Marketing at The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International's MEET West 2013 May 29–30 at the Anaheim Marriott. **6** Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide's signature global client event, Rendezvous, was held at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center May 28. Each year, Starwood invites 250 top clients from around the world to come together for meetings and collaboration.



By Matt Harvey

Got Bandwidth? Managing the Internet Needs of Your Events



If you read the Convention Industry Council's (CIC) recent white paper "Up to Speed: Event Bandwidth and High Speed Internet Access" and checked out their attendee bandwidth estimator (www.conventionindustry.org), you already know how important a great High-Speed Internet Access (HSIA) experience is to the success of your event. But how do you put that information to use to ensure your attendees have a successful Internet experience?

Before we get to how to manage a successful experience, it's important to understand the different methods facilities deploy to help manage bandwidth.

Bandwidth Management Techniques

Bandwidth management is a collection of techniques for managing Internet traffic priorities, which prevents a small number of "rogue" users from consuming more than their fair share. However, it's important to know what type of bandwidth management is in place for your event, not only to ensure that everyone has a positive experience, but also to make sure you have enough bandwidth to accommodate all your event objectives.

Traffic Shaping is a technique to slow down or even stop Internet traffic of a particular type. For example, to provide enough bandwidth for attendees to check their email, the facility might slow down or block streaming video. The challenge with Traffic Shaping is that it's not obvious to the end user what's been blocked, which can lead to frustration and complaints.

Device Bandwidth Limiting caps the amount of bandwidth each individual device can consume. It allows a guest to use the bandwidth they have been allotted for any purpose and prevents any one user from overloading the network. However, as different users have different bandwidth needs, it hinders those who require more.

Dynamic Group Bandwidth assigns a dedicated pool of bandwidth to a set of users. Those within the group equally share the pool, and as more users join, the pool adjusts to equally distribute the available bandwidth. Separate pools can be created for different users, so for example, presenters may have a dedicated pool separate from attendees.

Bandwidth management techniques vary by facility, so it's important to understand which are in use and how they can be tailored to meet your needs.

Estimating Bandwidth Needs

CIC's attendee bandwidth estimator, which was developed with the technical expertise of audio-visual services company PSAV, is great for calculating the Internet needs of your guests, but how do you estimate the HSIA needs for your entire event? Try breaking up the Internet needs of your event by your different constituents — attendees, presenters, exhibitors and show management — and consider the needs of each. Remember that if you are planning to use the Internet to distribute content, stream sessions or broadcast a presenter remotely, the bandwidth at the other end of the connection is

just as important as the main facility's.

You can also break down your Internet requirements by each room. In your room-set spreadsheet, add a column for bandwidth and note the sessions with presenters who are doing particularly Internet-centric tasks. This is especially important because if the venue utilizes Device Bandwidth Limiting, the presenters could require a higher limit than the attendees. For parallel track sessions with high-demand bandwidth, consider scheduling the presenters so that those with the greater bandwidth demands are staggered over the event.

Learn from your experience by requesting your bandwidth reports, which are a fantastic starting point for planning the



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PERSPECTIVE



bandwidth needs of your next event. But make sure you make the request before the event begins, to confirm the facility is tracking the information. When planning your next event, note that bandwidth consumption is rising faster than 30 percent per year, so be sure to adjust for growth.

Bandwidth Isn't Everything

A facility can have all the bandwidth in the world, but if the Wi-Fi infrastructure isn't equipped to handle the job, the bandwidth will never make it to your attendees. Wireless access points (WAPs) can accommodate a limited number of devices, which varies with age and manufacturer, so it's just as important to understand this aspect as it is to understand the bandwidth itself. Find out how many WAPs serve the event space and what their

capacities are. Remember that attendees are often using more than one device, so it's important that the overall Wi-Fi capacity meets or exceeds the expected number of wireless devices estimated to be in use at one time. Wireless device count reporting is also becoming available at more and more venues and is another great event planning tool.

Let's Plan Together

Don't worry — we're not suggesting event planners become Internet experts. After all, you don't need to be a chef to plan a great food and beverage package. However, it is important to add a thorough discussion about Internet service and its intended use in the planning stage. The more you know, the better you can explain and plan your HSIA needs with the facility.

Top 10 Do's and Don'ts for Managing Event Bandwidth

1. **Do** request bandwidth and devices reporting in advance of the event (and remember to get the reports afterwards).
2. **Do** maintain detailed notes on the Internet requirements of each session.
3. **Do** consider the Wi-Fi capacity of the facility and bandwidth available.
4. **Do** ask what bandwidth management techniques are in place and if they can be customized for your specific needs.
5. **Do** engage in detailed discussion about the Internet experience you need so the facility can build a tailored package that suits your event. In-house audio-visual and IT teams are a great starting point since they have the most experience of the facility.
6. **Don't** forget to include an event profile in your RFPs. To accurately plan for your HSIA needs, the facility will need to understand everything you plan to do that requires the Internet.
7. **Don't** assume the performance of the network during a site survey (i.e. an empty building) is comparable to its performance on event day.
8. **Don't** rely on bandwidth testing apps as an accurate reflection of the facility's capabilities. These apps only show the bandwidth delivered to a single device at that moment. If the facility is using Device Bandwidth Limiting, the speed test will never show the facility's full potential bandwidth.
9. **Don't** ignore the HSIA needs of remote presenters on the other end of the connection.
10. **Don't** negotiate the HSIA price until you are certain of the product (bandwidth, Wi-Fi capacity, reporting and support). *C&IT*

“When planning your next event, note that **bandwidth consumption** is rising faster than 30 percent per year.”



Matt Harvey

oversees Network Services for audio-visual services company PSAV. Internally known as Client Network Services, the department designs, installs, and manages High Speed Internet Access (HSIA) networks in more than 150 hotels and convention centers. Harvey is responsible for all aspects of new HSIA location sales and installation, event support and business strategy. Harvey began his career with PSAV in 2003 and has held a variety of successive roles before promotion to his current role as V.P., Client Network Services in early 2012. He is an active participant in Hotel Technology Next Generation's (HTNG) Infrastructure Resource Team. www.psav.com



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Freebies, Perks and Points, Oh My! Beware the Ethical Pitfalls of Planning

By Timothy Herrick

The theory of ethics may have been conceived by Aristotle, but defining what constitutes ethical planning behavior has never been more complex, and the potential impact on a career rarely so dire. Meeting planners have long worked under a code of ethics, but those lines defining ethics are not as clear they were a decade ago.

Repercussions for unintended ethics violations can be as severe as those for willful misconduct. “More and more planners are losing their jobs because of an ethical violation, and usually they were unaware it was a violation,” says Joan L. Eisenstodt, Eisenstodt Associates LLC, Meetings & Hospitality. “There have been so many cutbacks, especially with governmental organizations and their meetings, that scrutiny has intensified about all spending. There is a greater awareness about ethics at all levels.”

A consultant, facilitator and trainer specializing in planner ethical awareness issues, Eisenstodt says that in the 21st century, ethics awareness has exploded throughout the profession. “There is a real anxiety about ethical issues in the hospitality and meetings industry. I have been doing more work on the local level, speaking with and conducting training for state and regional chapters of the national organizations. For corporations, it’s become part of their yearly training, and many do it online where one must take an ethics test at the end.”

Ethics Guidance

All the leading meeting and event

planner associations, such as the Convention Industry Council (CIC), MPI and PCMA, have ethics policies — codes of conduct — that outline the proper behavior, explicating what constitutes professionalism. But the rise in planner anxiety over what is ethical behavior in today’s business climate became more evident in 2011, when the CIC implemented the strongest code of ethics and guidelines in the meetings profession. CIC also instituted a system of disciplinary procedures to investigate and enforce this code of ethics.

“The feedback has been generally positive or neutral after we announced

our updated ethics policies,” says Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP, who is CEO of the Convention Industry Council. “We see more attention paid to the optics of certain practices like FAM trips, because our industry as well as all businesses, including the government, are under greater scrutiny. As a meeting industry trend, we are hearing more talk about CSR, ethics and good business practice. CIC member organizations have introduced and are enforcing their own codes of conduct or ethics and provide sessions at their annual meetings on the topic.

“We’ve always had policies and procedures that CMPs agree to abide by, and in 2011 we established new oversight to address what happens if they aren’t followed,” says Kotowski.

Kotowski points out that no ethics-related complaints have been received by the CIC, nor was a rising number of ethics violations the motivating factor for putting “teeth” into the code. Instead, the new codes answer the need for stronger and more explicit codes of ethics. “Having a code of professional conduct is a requirement by the National Center for Credibility Assessment (NCCA) for accredited certification programs,” says Kotowski. “While not an NCCA-accredited program, the CMP follows NCCA best practices. A code of ethics is a set of principles and rules used by organizations or individuals to govern their decision-making in choosing between right and wrong. Some may include the recourse or disciplinary process within them. The procedures are available on our website (www.conventionindustry.org) for anyone to view, and it explains who can bring allegations and how.”

org) for anyone to view, and it explains who can bring allegations and how.”

Ethics Awareness Grows

The catalyst for renewed emphasis by the profession about ethics seems to have originated outside the meetings industry. “One of the reasons is that there are more ethics crises in the news related to large corporations,” says Elizabeth Henderson, M.E.Des. “Enron and WorldCom were both ethical lapses (of ‘creative accounting’) that brought down the corporation. The global financial collapse in 2008 also spawned events-related incidents, such as the AIG effect, that raised awareness of ethics.”

Henderson is co-author with Mariela McIlwraith, CMP, CMM, MBA, of *Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Meetings and Events Industry* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2012). She also is the chief sustainability expert for Meeting Change, a meeting consultation company. (McIlwraith is president of Meeting Change).

Henderson points out that since planners interact with individuals from an array of other professions, the unscrupulous behavior of the latter has a guilty-by-association impact on the former. “The ethical lapse here is related to the lack of transparency and the resulting lack of trust involved in the financial collapse. The tie to meetings was that days after receiving a massive federal taxpayer funded bailout, AIG held an expensive incentive trip at a five-star resort costing \$443,000. This led to meetings being classified as ‘excessive’ or ‘luxury expenditures.’ This focused attention on the meetings industry and on the ethics of the industry.”

“Ethical issues have received heightened attention based on the economic news in the last few years as well as the increased training in the industry,” agrees Lisa Laubgross, CMP, a meetings industry expert and consultant. “Most certifications include ethics awareness as part of their training as well as signing a document to act in an ethical manner to uphold the designation. Meeting planners should initiate conversations regarding ethics with their upper man-

agement/client to discuss best practices and behavior before an issue comes up.”

Corporate Codes of Conduct

Even with policies in place, the uniqueness of the planning profession can present sticky issues. “Most ethical areas are gray and dependent on the policies of one’s employer and one’s industry,” says Eisenstodt. “Surprisingly, many companies and organizations do not have ethics policies, and if



Sharon Marsh, CMP, CMM
Meetings Group Manager
Medtronic Inc.
Santa Rosa, CA

“Going on a FAM trip when you know you most probably won’t use the destination/property is like stealing.”

they do, do not have specifics for different departments who might face ethical dilemmas. Often these specifics will not cover scenarios that a planner experiences, and I have known of planners who have lost their jobs because they did not understand how their company’s ethical policy related to their jobs as planner.”

Often a corporation’s code of conduct insufficiently addresses realities faced by planners, whose job description can include what appears to be an abundance of perks. “Employees are made aware of ethics at an orientation or in the employee handbook, but that is usually the end of it, until a problem occurs, and it occurs often for planners,” says Eisenstodt. “Planners are in the position of accepting lunch, dinners, flights, and some of that is part of doing the job. But if that isn’t clear from the beginning, the appearance of a conflict of interest can be career-damaging.”

FAM Trip Abuse

Ethics experts agree that the most common breach is FAM trip abuse.

FAM trips are expense-paid trips to a venue and/or destination to “familiarize” the planner with the meeting setting. For many planners, taking a FAM trip to a destination they have no intention of booking is tantamount to a free vacation, but for the destination, promotion can be paramount. “FAM trips are always being offered, and they really want meeting planners to attend,” says Sharon Marsh, CMP, CMM, meetings group manager, Medtronic Inc. “When I tell them that the destination is not one we will use because of internal corporate policy and/or regulatory guidelines, they still want me to attend as I may change industries in the future. Going on a FAM trip when you know you most probably won’t use the destination/property is like stealing.”

A tarnished reputation, job dismissal and the loss of a CMP credential are the potential consequences of FAM trip abuse. “The suppliers have a responsibility in this unethical behavior,” says Marsh. “They push meeting planners to attend when they are not a properly qualified lead for the FAM. And suppliers continued to invite meeting planners who are known to take advantage of FAM trips over and over again. Suppliers need to say no when a planner asks them for something, such as free rooms, for considering the use of the property.”

Potential for FAM trip abuse exists even on legitimate junkets. “Taking FAM trips, especially where they are staying at multiple hotels, is a major ethical issue with planners,” says Eisenstodt. “Also, if a planner is taking free spa visits or other amenities that she knows will not be used at the meeting being planned, that is an ethical violation. The hotel of course is eager to give away this perk to get the business, but if there is no intention of using it, that’s a problem. I know of a planner fired specifically for this sort of violation.”

A simple spa visit leading to job termination? “A site visit is hard work, all

planners know that,” says Eisenstodt. “There’s a lot to investigate and evaluate. But to everybody else in the company, it looks like fun and not work at all. It is very easy for a planner to appear to be abusing the site visit, especially by people who are over them in the company and have never had to go on a site visit. It’s best to err on the side of caution.”

Rewards Points

Hotel rewards points are another ethical pitfall planners are now more aware of avoiding. “Most of the time, frequent flyer miles and stayer points in a hotel go to the individual, but not always,” says Eisenstodt. “Those programs have been around long enough for the companies to have developed guidelines. But points of the hotels are often not covered, because they are for room blocks, and (because) only the planner is involved with these vendors, it has to be known who has ownership of the points. It’s probably better to have them be collective for the company and not the individual planner, to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. The

point policy should also be clearly stated with the hotel, prior to any contract.”

Eisenstodt adds, “That policy must also take into account all possible contingencies: whose points are they; whose names are on the accounts they go into; and what happens to those points if that person is terminated.”

Laubgross warns, “It is not ethical for the staff to accept planner points on an individual basis offered by various chains. Any points accrued had to be used to benefit the group being served by the accumulation of points.”

This is another conflict of interest issue, where the point accumulation by an individual can be seen — regardless of the planner’s actual intentions — as an incentive for selecting one venue over another. This same dilemma becomes magnified when planners utilize a third party when contracting for different components of a meeting.

For some corporate planners, the entire process is implemented in-house by his or her staff, while others contract third-party planners for the event. Employing contractors, however, does

not eliminate your ethical responsibilities. “Failure to disclose commission, particularly by a third-party planner, is a problem I see rising more and more,” says McIlwraith.

While mainly with hotel bookings — although other relationships with other vendors can fall into this pattern — third-party planners also will receive a commission for the sale from the hotel, depending on the hotel and the number of hotel rooms utilized. “The planner is the one ultimately responsible and has to answer to employers,” says McIlwraith. “Everything has to be spelled out in the contract, including any commissions paid out or other economic benefits for all participants in the contract.”

Intellectual Property Rights

Other, newer areas of concern include intellectual property rights and social media, causing ethical, legal and even moral turmoil.

The pressure to make corporate meetings unique and memorable has never been higher. To that end, planners of-

ten contract with third-party event organizers, a process that includes reading through proposals. “If the planner then takes the idea as her own, bypassing the third-party planner who submitted the idea to them, that is breach of ethics,” says McIlwraith.

Of course the problem with intellectual property issues is that ideas cannot be copyrighted, only the expression of the idea. The scenario of intellectual property theft from a proposal may not be one where a planner is intentionally unscrupulous. “It is pretty hard to remember where you got an idea from,” says McIlwraith, pointing out that research for an event can include trade publications, websites, industry seminars as well as reviewing new and old RFPs. “Planners have to ask themselves, would you have been able to construct the plan without that plan, and if the answer is no, you have crossed a line.”

While proving intellectual property theft can be one of the most difficult forms of litigation, other career consequences will be more immediate. “Planners are a small community, and it

will ruin your reputation, and make getting other jobs harder,” warns McIlwraith.

Social Media Scenarios

The use of social media by your meeting attendees is an evolving ethics issue.

“I am especially concerned with the potential impact of social media on ethical behavior,” says Henderson. “While meeting professionals have been very quick to adopt social media, and many classes are taught on how to use it more effectively, I haven’t yet seen a session on what not to do. It is a bit of a Wild West when it comes to social media right now.”

What are the potential ethical breaches of social media? “Many corporations have policies that do not allow people to take and/or post photographs of employees, because this could violate privacy,” says Henderson. “At events, meeting professionals should be notifying people what that policy is so they do not inadvertently contravene it. I suspect that most meeting professionals and their attendees haven’t even considered this issue in depth.”

In addition to violating company

policies, social media has a potential for other legal ramifications. “A number of lawsuits have been filed for defamation, related to the use of social media,” says Henderson. “You are responsible for anything, however innocuous you think it might be, that you post on Twitter or a blog and are, in addition, liable for comments on your blogs, moderated or not.”

Shades of Gray

Today’s ethics controversies can be ambiguous, with possible outcomes far from certain. Says Henderson, “In ethics, perception is reality. If you are believed to have acted unethically, that perception can live on even if you have in reality done nothing unethical.”

Of course, the challenge is getting rid of the gray areas. According to Marsh, if something is questionable or causes even the potential of ethical unease, than the behavior is best avoided. “If I don’t want anyone to know what I have asked for and/or received, then it is probably unethical. I won’t do anything that I am ashamed to let anyone know. This should be the rule we all use.” **C&IT**

10 Slippery Slopes

When it comes to meeting planner ethics, one basic recommendation is to stay updated on the industry’s professional codes of conduct as well as being familiar with the details of your company’s ethics regulations. According to meeting professionals, here are the most common ethical lapses among planners and suppliers.

- 1. FAM trips.** Planners should restrict FAM trips to those sites they’re likely to book. And venues and destinations should place similar limits on their offerings. Defining likely and potential site selection can be a gray area, but FAM trip abuse is a leading ethical issue.
- 2. Amenity abuse.** Was that meal you accepted a legitimate part of a site visit? Did you receive a free spa day while you know your group will only play golf? Easily overlooked or taken for granted as just the way business is done, accepting free amenities that you know will not be part of the meeting being planned is considered by many to be unethical.
- 3. Hotel points.** Most corporations have a frequent flyer policy in place stating who owns miles acquired during company time. Sometimes hotel points are decided

under a similar policy — for the individual. But who, ethically, should own those points? The answer to that question is not as important as having a company policy specifying ownership of those points and the planner conforming to that policy.

- 4. Third-party planners.** When contracting with third-party planners, all commissions and other economic benefits (such as hotel points) the contractor receives from the hotel and other vendors must be clearly stated in the contract. The decision to use a venue must clearly be on the basis of the property, and not any incentives received by anyone involved with the contracting process. The ethical conduct of third-party planners and other contractors is the responsibility of the corporate planner in charge of the overall event.
- 5. Intellectual property theft.** How original is your idea for a meeting? If it resembles a meeting or other event contained in a proposal you have read, and not hired or otherwise compensated the individual submitting that proposal to you, then you are potentially guilty of plagiarism and other ethical violations.
- 6. Social media.** Have you outlined social media restrictions on your meeting attendees? What happens if a picture appears on Facebook, Twitter or other platform showing an attendee in an unflattering light,

or that might reveal a company secret? An unapproved video of a speaker’s copyrighted material appears on YouTube that was filmed at your event. Before you have to send your lawyer an emergency text, sit down with your stakeholders, presenters and others involved and devise a sensible social media code of conduct for your meeting, then make sure these rules are followed, posted on your website and available at the meeting site.

- 7. Gifts.** In gratitude for your last meeting held there, the general manager of the hotel sends you a gift basket that by the looks of the champagne and caviar, cost hundreds of dollars. Can you ethically accept this well-intentioned gift? Some corporate codes of conduct specify an amount gifts cannot exceed; if larger amounts are needed, they are often calculated annually. But if this doesn’t exist, sit down with your employer and in-house counsel and devise a sensible gift acceptance policy. Then make the venue, destination or other supplier aware of the policy at the outset of a negotiation to avoid conflicts of interest.
- 8. Trade show raffles.** One of the most egregious ethical lapses is the trade show raffle. At an industry event, planners put their business cards in a fish bowl; winners are drawn at the show’s conclusions, with the

prize often being an all-expense trip to the venue and/or destination. Ironically, the winners are often the very clients the venue and/or destination are soliciting business from. While this “news” may not shock many industry members, accepting this prize often violates the gift provisions of the company’s code of conduct.

- 9. International incidents.** Business customs of other cultures may unintentionally conflict with your company’s code of ethics. For example, refusing offered gifts, implying that it is considered bribery, can be offensive. Being upfront about policies before an incident occurs is the best practice. Political concerns, such as a country with lax pollution laws, weak workers’ rights, etc., can cast the entire event in a bad light and cause a planner’s actions to appear unethical. During the site selection process, it’s up to the planner to fully research any potential conflicts a foreign destination may present to their company’s code of conduct.
- 10. Suitcasing the show.** More applicable to trade shows, suitcasing is when a non-exhibitor attempts to conduct or otherwise promote their business without purchasing booth space. Not only can this potentially annoy attendees, and will be seen negatively by those who’ve purchased exhibit space, a planner who allows this can be held ethically liable for the infraction. — **TH**

Airline Mergers, Rising Costs and Extra Fees

What Does It All Mean?

By John Buchanan

As the meeting industry continues its return to the robust glory days of early 2008, a new challenge looms — rising airfare costs and ongoing mergers that stifle competition and potentially limit practical options for planners. And those factors have been further exacerbated by the pending marriage of American Airlines and US Airways. The nearly \$11 billion deal, which is expected to occur in the third quarter of 2013 if it is approved by the Justice Department's antitrust division, will produce the world's largest airline.

Continued on page 35



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a large white sun hat and white-rimmed sunglasses, is sitting on a beach. She is holding a green coconut with both hands and drinking from it through a straw. She is wearing a blue off-the-shoulder top. The background shows a sandy beach, the ocean, and a lifeguard stand under a blue sky with white clouds.

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Meet differently in this vibrant, diverse destination on the move — with international appeal, easy access and oh-so-inspirational places and spaces.

By Susan Gregg

The perfect meeting — one that is transformational, inspirational, illuminating, energizing, even exciting — needs a special setting. A true original that's vibrant, innovative and cutting-edge — ideally with a tropical twist to keep things cool. It's So Miami — a city with a distinctive, multicultural vibe, blending urban chic with old Florida beauty and laidback charm. Miami's skyline, rising above the sparkling blue waters of Biscayne Bay, claims one of the country's most diverse populations, plus world-class arts, culture, dining and 24/7 entertainment. It's a city with an air of intrigue, one that arouses creativity and a sense of new possibilities.

And just like the most innovative and successful companies, Greater Miami continually reinvents itself, from chichi South Beach and the Art Deco District to the business-driven downtown to the sophisticated suburbs of Coral Gables and Coconut Grove.

Spectacular beaches, sparkling new performing arts centers, major sports venues, world-class boutiques, hotels, clubs and restaurants (5,000 of them!), two national parks and impressive meeting facilities beckon millions year-round. The numbers prove it: In 2012, Miami welcomed a record-breaking 13.9 million overnight visitors — nearly 20 percent of whom traveled for meetings, conventions and business — with a record \$21.8 billion in visitor spending. A hub for international visitors and meetings, Miami set more high marks with 6.8 million international visitors in 2012, including record international attendance at major citywide conventions.

A MEETINGS PARADISE

Miami offers meeting planners nearly 50,000 hotel guest rooms: Downtown, Bayside, the Gables, Brickell, the Grove, Doral, Aventura and Miami Beach boast an extensive, diverse array of accommodations and meeting spaces, while South Beach remains home to the world's largest collection of restored art deco, art nouveau and intimate boutique hotels. Our grande dames remain forever young thanks to billions of dollars in renovations, and in recent years they've been joined by notable brand new hotels flying famous flags from around the globe. And the improving economy is fueling a new surge in hotel growth and development at the beach as well as downtown.

Planners will find first-rate indoor meeting spaces, as well as captivating outdoor event venues that are tailor-made for our warm, breezy, subtropical days and nights. Choose from rooftop pool decks, lush, tropically landscaped patios, expansive event lawns overlooking prestigious golf courses, or palm tree-lined courtyards and terraces with views of sun-drenched beaches and the blue-green ocean and bay.



Brickell

Major meeting facilities include the Art Deco-inspired Miami Beach Convention Center, just steps from the South Beach District and Atlantic surf and sand, that features 502,000 square feet of exhibit space, 70 flexible meeting rooms, and 100,000 square feet of pre-function space. Next door is the iconic 2,700-seat Fillmore Miami Beach at the Jackie Gleason Theater, which offers space for special events, meetings and receptions. Also nearby on Convention Center Drive is the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens with added options for indoor and outdoor event spaces.

In the heart of downtown adjacent to Brickell Avenue and the international financial district, the Miami Convention Center has a 444-seat auditorium, 117-seat lecture hall and 34 meeting rooms. The center, which overlooks the Miami River, can accommodate from 20 to 5,000 attendees. The James L. Knight Center auditorium seats 5,000 and features advanced sound and lighting systems.

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and cigar-rolling lessons? Or take over one of South Beach's trendiest nightclubs — yes, it's possible before the late-night scene kicks in after midnight — for a gala dinner and event night, complete with high-end audio-visual production for entertainment: Check out Mansion, Opium and Bamboo for starters. Always popular are event venues of the floating kind — private dinner cruises on luxury yachts that ply local waterways past homes of the rich and famous. Better yet, allow your attendees to feel like one of the rich and famous during an evening gala at Villa Woodbine, a private Mediterranean Revival mansion built in the 1920s with lush gardens and an open-air design suited to the tropics. It's situated on what was known as Millionaire's Row in Coconut Grove.

There are countless venues available for groups to create one-of-a-kind events. Here are more great options:

Two new performing arts centers take center stage with plenty of spaces for private gatherings: The New World Center, home to the New World Symphony and world-class performing arts on South Beach, was designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry. The center features SoundScape Park, where audiences can watch films and performances shown on the 7,000-sf projection wall. In downtown Miami, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts is Florida's largest performing arts center, which houses the Florida Grand Opera and Miami City Ballet.

Bicentennial Park, located in downtown Miami on Biscayne Bay, is currently being redeveloped into the 29-acre Museum Park, which will be home to two new museums: The Perez Art Museum Miami and the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science. The Perez Art Museum, the park's centerpiece, will open in December 2013. It will be three times the size of the museum's current facility on West Flagler, and will feature expanded exhibition space for new collections, an educational complex, public gardens and sculpture installations. Planners will want to investigate the museum's indoor spaces for meetings and events, as well as its spacious outdoor plazas on the waterfront that will offer sweeping views of Biscayne Bay for a variety of group events such as receptions and dinner parties. The 250,000-square-foot Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science, which replaces the Miami Science Museum, is scheduled to open in 2015. It will feature the Gulf Stream Aquarium, River of Grass exhibit and high-tech digital planetarium. Unique spaces will be available for events and meetings.

Marlins Park, home of Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins, debuted in April 2012 in Little Havana, two miles west of downtown, sporting a state-of-the-art retractable roof, signature Miami cuisine, the Cleveland South Beach experience with swimming pool at field level, and breathtaking vistas of downtown Miami. A variety of meeting and function spaces are available for concerts, trade shows and any size corporate event. Also in downtown, attendees will enjoy exploring the



The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science

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Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts

Bayside Marketplace for waterfront dining, shopping and cruising excursions. Bayfront Park on Biscayne Bay provides another picturesque location for outdoor events. While in South Beach, planners can check out 1111 Lincoln Road, a 7th floor event space accommodating 700 attendees and featuring 34-foot ceilings and city, ocean and bay views. The tony and trendy Lincoln Road entertainment and shopping district is a great leisure diversion for attendees.

South of downtown is Coconut Grove, a one-time arts colony that is now a tourist magnet for its quaint boutiques, art galleries, cafes and restaurants. It's also home to the historic Vizcaya Museum and Gardens on Biscayne Bay. Vizcaya, built in 1916, is an Italian Renaissance-style mansion with formal gardens that can be used to host elegant indoor and outdoor receptions and events.

Coral Gables is another sophisticated must-see neighborhood and tourist destination with renowned eateries, galleries and upscale boutiques. Its winding waterways, Mediterranean-style homes and dense tropical foliage really showcase Miami's special beauty. And planners can showcase their own tropically themed events at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden — featuring the only outdoor rainforest in the continental U.S. — where special events for up to 500 attendees can take place.

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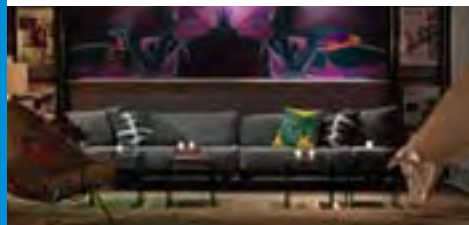
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Continued from page 18

The ongoing changes in the airline industry over the last several years have dramatically impacted the meeting industry, says Caren Bigelow, CRP, director of travel at USMotivation in Atlanta, an independent planner of meetings, conventions and incentive programs.

"Number one is the reduction in the availability of seats," Bigelow says. "That has been the biggest factor, along with cost. The consolidation of hubs as a result of the various mergers in recent years means there aren't as many flights from secondary or rural destinations. And all of that is based on the fact that the airlines have basically changed how they operate based on the economics of that industry."

The net result has been a more complicated and less enjoyable experience for both planners and attendees. Virtually every flight goes out full now, with a standby list, and that often makes flying merely tolerable at best.

As a result, Bigelow says, the meeting planning process has been changed, too. "When you start talking today about having a meeting or incentive program and you're discussing destinations, airlift is now your No. 1 consideration or question," she says. "So, as a matter of basic practice, what we do now with a client is that we will offer a list of potential destinations and then clearly define whether you can get your entire group in by your welcome reception, or if you want to have a meeting start at noon, whether that is even possible."

A Relationship Gap

Gregorio Palomino, CBMP, CEP, CWP, creative executive officer at San Antonio-based meeting and incentive planning company CRE8AD8, cites a related issue that is contributing to the increasing difficulty of managing airlift and costs. Many companies and meeting planners, he points out, now have preferred vendor pacts with hotel vendors. But nowhere near as many have preferred vendor pacts with airlines, which creates a "relationship gap" between the two key supplier categories.

Gregorio Palomino CBMP, CEP, CWP

Creative Executive Officer
CRE8AD8
San Antonio, TX



"The hotels have really worked to make things easy for meeting planners and vice versa. But airlines have not really done the same thing. It's generally much more complicated to do business with the airlines."

"The hotels have really worked to make things easy for meeting planners and vice versa," Palomino says. "But airlines have not really done the same thing. It's generally much more complicated to do business with the airlines. And some airlines, to this day, do not have a real program specifically designed for meeting planners who are putting events together. So for a lot of large companies that do a lot of meetings, that means they are looking more to third-party service providers like us that have the expertise and experience in dealing with the airlines. As the airline industry has continued to consolidate and cut capacity since 2008, we've seen a sharp increase in our corporate business. And our new clients typically

say, 'We don't really understand the airline side of the business, so we want you to take care of it for now. Now it's your problem to deal with, not ours.'"

Part of the problem, Palomino says, is that airlines could have — and should have — done a better job of communicating directly and clearly with meeting planners in the run-up to each of the major mergers, such as United and Continental. "There was very little information that went out," he says. "And that just led to a lot of the confusion and concern about what was happening."

Among the kinds of information that would have been helpful, Palomino says, would have been clear guidance on how to consolidate and manage frequent flier miles and various kinds of rewards points. "United and Continental could have been more helpful in telling us how to protect our miles or points or whatever it was," he says. "But they didn't do that. And that lack of communication from the various airlines caused a lot of confusion. And it worried a lot of planners."

Now the same concerns are surfacing again with the American-US Airways merger. And, Palomino says, it remains to be seen how those concerns will play out.

Spiking Airfares and Fees

Of even more concern to most planners is the sharply rising cost of airfares — a trend that is likely to become even more pronounced with the American-US Airways merger.

"Costs are going to go up," Palomino says. "I think we'll see additional fare increases of 10 to 15 percent. And now that the remaining major airlines have even more of a monopoly, it's going to be even easier for them to control pricing and drive up fares. And the reality is that they have to do that to cover their increasing operating costs like fuel, which is going to continue to go up."

Michael Patton, CMM, president and CEO of San Diego-based POTHOS, a meeting planning company that has the additional distinction of being a full-service corporate travel manage-

ment provider, agrees that further fare increases are inevitable.

“Without having done a more detailed analysis,” Patton says, “I would say in general that we have seen very significant price increases lately on behalf of our clients. And those increases have been across the board, not just for the most in-demand destinations. Europe, for instance, has been very expensive for the last couple of years, not so much because of fare increases, but because of the taxes.”

Now, in the wake of the American-US Airways merger and the resulting further airline industry consolidation, fares will continue to rise. “And that’s because the costs of fuel and labor will continue to go up,” Patton says. “It’s as simple as that.”

At the same time, Patton, Palomino and Bigelow concur, it’s also likely that the trend toward new fees will continue to drive up the total cost of air travel.

Because the airline industry is so brutally competitive, Bigelow says, it’s hard to unilaterally raise fares. The clever trick a number of airlines have now mastered is to create a new fee, which essentially represents pure profit, then watch happily as other airlines follow.

United Airlines recently upped its change fee to \$200, and some airlines may follow. It also has been widely reported that the airlines most likely collected more than \$6 billion in baggage, cancellation and change fees in 2012.

“There was a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* about how the airlines are working to come up with ideas on how they can charge even more new fees,” Bigelow says. “And one example was that if you want, United Airlines will deliver your luggage to your home for a fee. Another example is the idea that you can get preferential boarding with first class passengers if you pay a fee. So it looks like when it comes to fees, there is no end in sight.”

Spirit Airlines last year went so far as to charge a fee for carry-on bags, Patton notes. “And what business traveler doesn’t have carry-on bags?” he says, adding that fortunately, no other airline has followed suit,

Michael Patton CMM

President and CEO
POTHOS
San Diego, CA



“Clients are cutting back on hosted air for the meeting. They are capping the amount and saying attendees can’t just run wild in booking their flights. And that is particularly true for people such as speakers or other presenters.”

primarily as a result of the PR backlash suffered by Spirit.

On the other hand, Patton says, at least one of the newest fees is even more outrageous than charging for carry-on bags. “Ryanair is now charging for access to the rest rooms on the plane,” he says. “I think that is ridiculous. And you have other airlines that are not charging onboard, but they have hostesses in the gate area who go around inviting customers to go to the rest room before they board. I also think that is ridiculous.”

The good news, Patton says, is that he thinks the addition of new fees might have reached its end. “I don’t really see at this point,” he says, “how they can come up with any more fees than the ones they’re already charging.”

Budget Impact

The practical question raised for many planners by rising air travel costs is how those increases will be absorbed into budgets. The basic issue is whether they will be addressed with incremental budget increases that cover them, or will be subtracted from what’s left of the budget, such as F&B expenditures.

“Based on what I’m hearing, I think most companies will cut back somewhere else to deal with increased air fares,” Palomino says. “I’d guess that less than 20 percent of companies are going to increase their budgets because airfares are going up. But it also depends on the kind of program, or the destination selection. For example, we just had a client that was planning to go to New York for a meeting. But when they saw the cost of getting there and the impact that would have on their planned budget, they decided to go to Destin, Florida, which saved them a lot of money.”

Patton does not believe most clients will cut back on things such as F&B to accommodate higher air costs. “But what I do see in some cases,” he says, “is that clients are cutting back on hosted air for the meeting. They are capping the amount and saying attendees can’t just run wild in booking their flights. And that is particularly true for people such as speakers or other presenters.”

Bigelow has seen both approaches recently. “And it depends on the type of meeting or event,” she says. “For example, there might be a difference, even within the same company, between a typical business meeting and an incentive program, particularly if it is a high-end program.”

The underlying factor, Bigelow says, is that budgets remain tight and nowhere near 2008 peak levels before the recession. And based on that reality, she says, when push comes to shove she thinks companies will cut back elsewhere to accommodate increased airfares rather than increase budgets. “But one thing I do see companies doing to deal with those issues is that they are now planning meetings further in advance to lock in the lowest possible airfares,” she says.

Getting From Point A to Point B

The final piece of the puzzle, especially in light of the American-US Airways merger, is the changes in hub systems, routing and the number of flights available to a particular destination as airline industry consolidation continues unabated.

“Changes in hubs and the routing of certain flights is an ongoing concern,” Bigelow says. “And that concern is increased by the merger of American and US Air.”

Palomino expects that one result of the latest merger will be that more and more flights originating from southern states such as Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma will be routed through Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston and Charlotte, NC. And those routing changes could wreak havoc with some itineraries, he says. The net result is that it will likely become more difficult to get some large groups from point A to point B.

“And for most of us who do business in those parts of the country, you can’t really determine yet what the impact is going to be,” he says. “But there are going to be hassles and some confusion. I just hope it will be temporary and that within a year or year and a half, the airlines will have it figured out.”

Of particular concern, Palomino says, will be getting large groups from the West Coast to the East Coast. “There just aren’t going to be as many flights,” Palomino says. “And if you’re used to flying on US Airways, but now you’re on an American flight, you might find you have to make a stopover to get where you’re going.”

The net result of those kinds of issues for planners, Bigelow predicts, will be more work, including more time-consuming research, unless they have a full-service travel management department or outside travel management company. “More and more planners are now having to rely on their travel management departments or travel management companies to deal with these issues,” she says. “But I also think most planners are very aware of these issues now, too, so I think

they understand the risks of presenting a destination that they can’t deliver.”

And it’s possible, Bigelow says, that the Caribbean — a perennially popular choice for incentive programs and some meetings — could be negatively impacted by the American-US Airways merger.

“American Airlines basically owns the Caribbean,” she says. “So that is a major concern of ours and also of a lot of other planners. We’re waiting to see what is actually going to happen. I have heard that when it’s all said and done and all figured out, that Delta is trying to take over some of American’s Caribbean routes because they are not very strong down there. And we don’t really care who ultimately owns those routes. We just want to make sure that the lift to the most popular destinations doesn’t go away. The concern is based on the fact that lift

“In the current climate, planners need to use professional buyers and not just rely on the Internet for what they consider a commodity service,” he says. “Corporate travel agents who have the resources to do the job are still the best resource for moving people. But many planners continue to go to the Internet and treat air travel like a commodity. I don’t think you can do that effectively any more. You can go into court and represent yourself as your attorney. But the judge will tell you that’s not a very smart thing to do. And the same is true today when it comes to booking your air. The typical corporate meeting planner just doesn’t have the same experience and resources, so it’s not a smart thing to do.”

There also are simple, practical considerations, given the increasing complexity of booking air for a meeting.



Photo courtesy of JetBlue

to the Caribbean was significantly reduced during the recession, and it hasn’t really come back yet.”

Planners concerned about lift to a particular destination should take advantage of tools such as *GroupAnalyzer.com*, Bigelow says. “It performs live air searches against real-time airline inventory,” she says. “It’s similar to Kayak, but it’s built to help you get 300 people to a particular place on a particular date.”

Patton goes further and recommends that planners consider the option of a third-party vendor, particularly one that has extensive travel management experience in addition to its meeting planning credentials.

For example, Patton says, researching the availability and cost of flights for a major meeting to a high-demand destination could take a typical planner three hours. “We can do the same thing in 15 minutes,” he says. “So it also comes down to a question of the value of your time.”

Despite all of the new challenges presented by the rapid and ongoing changes in the airline industry, planners will prevail in the end, Bigelow says. “No matter what ever happens with airlines,” she says, “we’ll always figure out a way to get the job done, because meetings and incentive programs are just too important. So that means we have to.” **C&IT**



Beltone Electronics kicked off their meeting at The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa in Tucson, AZ, with a golf tournament to encourage networking and promote camaraderie and team spirit among their attendees.

The legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice once said, “Golf gives you an insight into human nature, your own as well as your opponent’s.” Attendees who love golf would undoubtedly agree with Rice. The nature of the game, especially its casual pace, allows business people to bond while sharing the fun and joyous frustration of a very trying game.

That’s why golf is often a centerpiece of meetings and incentives. Many attendees need golf to make their experience feel complete or special. Even attendees who aren’t avid golfers want to participate if only to network and advance their careers.

Simply including golf on the agenda doesn’t guarantee that a meeting will be memorable. What’s the key to success? Create a golf outing that is fun, drives home meeting objectives and goals, and strengthens business relationships.

Great Networking Tool

Golf is the planner’s ultimate net-

working tool. “People like to do business with people they like,” says Donna Collins, senior account executive for Total Event Resources, a meeting and event planning firm located in the greater Chicago area. “When people do things they like together, opportunities surface. A golf outing brings the boardroom to the fairway, greens and 19th hole. Competition, fresh air, good food and drinks work together to break down barriers to reinforcing relationships, making the sale and mining new opportunities.”

Planners always want golf to be an ideal mix of networking, fun and enjoyable competition. But the mix can differ according to meeting goals and the makeup of groups.

Networking and fun were primary considerations for a three-day meeting in April for 325 executives, staff and distributors of Glenview, IL-based Beltone, a leader in patient-focused hearing technology for more than 70 years. Grace Defilippis, trade show and business meetings manager, planned the golf tour-

nament before the business meetings started at The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa, Tucson, AZ. “Golf is a good way for us to kick off the meeting and allow our people from around the U.S. and world to get reacquainted and learn from each other,” says Defilippis. “Golf develops camaraderie and team spirit. For example, our Canadian attendees all wore the same pants and polo shirts. People from the Northeast all wore the same color shorts.”

Defilippis says the resort’s improvements enhanced the attendees’ ability to network as well as their overall enjoyment of the event. The Westin La Paloma recently rejuvenated all of its 487 guest rooms and suites as well as its 60,000 sf of ballroom and function space. In addition, the 27-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course was upgraded with new bunkers and greens.

Defilippis undertook several efforts to make the tournament memorable and run on time. “We developed a flier that we sent to attendees. We told them we would pay for shoe rental and greens

fees,” she says. “We told them what type of shoes and attire to wear and to bring sunscreen. Attendees were told to arrive at the club by 7 a.m. for a shotgun start at 8 a.m. About 70 golfers showed up. We used a shotgun start because we had a big group. It keeps everything moving because everybody tees off at the same time at different holes and finishes at roughly the same time.”

Players competed for prizes such as closest to the pin, longest drive and longest putt. They also enjoyed box lunches and beverages, and a professional photographer snapped photographs. After the meeting, Defilippis sent photos of the foursomes and award winners to the players.

Beltone also took several steps to connect its brand with the enjoyable experience of golf. “We gave away shirts to every golfer with our logo and that of a sponsor. We put logos on golf balls, tees and tee packs. We wanted to keep our name in front of them,” says Defilippis.

Some groups focus more on competition and challenging golf courses when planning golf programs, such as Oasis Outsourcing, a West Palm Beach, FL-based PEO — professional employer organization. The company held its annual national sales conference for 180 attendees in May at the 379-room PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, FL. It was the meeting’s fifth consecutive year at the AAA Four Diamond property.

Oasis chose PGA National partly because attendees were impressed by the resort’s many amenities, including a 40,000-sf European spa, 19 tennis courts, nine restaurants and lounges, and 39,000 sf of meeting space. However, it is the resort’s five championship golf courses that keep the group returning. Oasis encourages attendees to hit the fairways on their own starting the day before the meeting begins.

Larry Doiron, director of sales training and meeting planner for Oasis, says attendees take golf to heart and constantly want to sharpen their games. As a matter of fact, Doiron says the group is composed of avid golfers. “We have a lot of golfers around the country with four and five handicaps among our salesforce,”

says Doiron. “These people are very serious about their golf, so when they get here they want to take advantage of the PGA. That’s one reason why we moved to the resort. We can also keep the golf and everything else on property without paying to shuttle people.”

In addition, Doiron is very satisfied with the value he receives from PGA National. “We now have a two-year contract that we signed a year ago. I’m the one who negotiates the contracts, and we got a good deal. It’s an absolutely gorgeous facility. It has been a first-class experience, and I don’t ever intend to leave,” says Doiron.

Where the Pros Play

Kiawah Island Golf Resort in South Carolina, the site of the 2012 PGA Championship, was selected as the site for a technology company’s three-day sales incentive because it hosted the PGA Tour event. “That was a huge selling point for us to take our guests where the pros played,” says the event planner. “It’s an exciting and challenging course that was a treat for them. Location was also a factor, and the fact that the resort pays such attention to detail from the salesperson and valet to the housekeeper. Some people who don’t golf hadn’t heard of it, but they were impressed upon arriving. It has that Old South feel that everyone loves.”

The 280 attendees found the golf experience to be memorable, partly because of exclusivity. “We did a buyout and had the course to ourselves. You don’t want other people starting ahead of you or in the middle of your group. You want the experience to be pretty exclusive. That’s typical of most group golf outings,” says the planner.

No matter which resort a planner chooses, a key to making golf memorable involves knowing attendees’ golf skills and pairing them according to ability and other factors.

That’s exactly what the technology company planner did. “We handled the pairings within the company,” he says.

“We paired according to ability and people wanting to make connections and network. Some people were paired with spouses, others with friends. It ran the gamut. We turned the list over to the course when we were done, and they helped us facilitate everything. They were great to work with and very knowledgeable about pairings.”

Beltone took a similar approach. The company’s sales director handled the pairings, sometimes with input from regional sales managers, who wanted to put certain salespeople together with clients in the same region. The pairings were then turned over to The Westin La Paloma’s golf pro.

Know Your Group

Golf experts say that some groups aren’t paired well because planners, or



“Golf is a good way for us to kick off the meeting and allow our people from around the U.S. and world to get reacquainted.”

Grace Defilippis
Trade Show & Business Meetings Manager
Beltone
Glenview, IL

whomever in the company does the pairings, aren’t familiar enough with the group’s golfing abilities. “You have to know your group, first and foremost,” says Kent Instefjord, general manager of La Paloma Country Club. “You tailor the pairings generally around ability and remember that the goal is to have fun.”

Instefjord suggests that planners determine attendees’ skills by sending a golf questionnaire to attendees prior to the meeting. He advises asking the following questions:

Do you play golf? How often do you play? What do you usually shoot? Are you left- or right-handed? Do you need rental clubs and shoes? What size? Also offer a reminder of the golf course’s dress code. “It’s helpful to planners if

“These people are very serious about their golf, so when they get here they want to take advantage of the PGA Resort.”



Larry Doiron
Director of Sales Training
Oasis Outsourcing
West Palm Beach, FL

they turn over the results to the facility and let them do the pairings with input from the planner,” says Instefjord.

Pairings also depend on meeting goals and the preferences of executives and attendees. “If the goal is for everyone to have fun, then ability may not be as important,” says Instefjord. “Or it may be more important for networking or friendships to pair certain people with others, and abilities have nothing to do with it. You may want to pair certain salespeople and clients. But you don’t want to pair your best clients with salespeople if there is big difference in their golf abilities.”

A great golf experience also depends on providing pairings to the resort on time. “Sometimes facilities get pairings or rental club information an hour beforehand, and you have 30 people who need them, which makes the resort have to scramble,” says Instefjord.

“The more info the facility can get to set things up, the better the experience will be. There are always last-minute changes and cancellations, but they are easier to deal with if the information comes a day or two before the event.”

Select the Best Format

Play format is another key to a successful golf outing. A scramble is one of the most popular formats, especially for larger groups.

In a scramble, each foursome consists of players with four different skill levels — A, B, C and D. Every player tees off but members of each team play their second shots from where the longest drive lands. A scramble may fit a group with mixed golf abilities because it awards one score for each foursome. The format also

moves play along to help planners keep attendees on schedule, says Instefjord.

A scramble also helps attendees with limited golf abilities feel more comfortable. “If you aren’t a golfer but willing to have fun and be part of a team, the scramble is very attractive because if you mess up most of your shots it doesn’t matter. Sometimes, if you don’t use that format, you lose a lot of players, or some may play but get frustrated and have a bad experience,” says Instefjord.

Conversely, skilled groups may find a scramble less enjoyable. “Let’s say you are a really good golfer, you are going to a course you’ve always dreamed of, and you are playing a scramble. Memory of that experience might be less than it could be because you aren’t playing your own ball,” says Instefjord.

Groups with many advanced golfers may benefit from a best ball format. In this setup, all foursome members play their own balls. However, the best score for each hole is the team score. This format appeals to highly competitive golfers. Using more than one format is also an option. Instefjord has worked with groups that used two dif-

ferent formats — one for competitive groups who want to play their own ball and another that will use a scramble or another easier arrangement.

Site Selection Tips

Attendees’ golf skills and level of passion for the game are among several factors planners should consider in choosing a golf resort and planning golf events. Planners and golf experts offer the following tips.

- Identify the golf event’s goals and objectives, including the desired return on investment. Keeping within the budget, “create the experience from the moment they drive up in their car to when they depart. There are endless opportunities to customize the golf experience,” says Collins.
- Consider a course’s size and level of difficulty because they impact the pace of play. Usually, planners want to challenge players without making play too difficult.
- Provide amenities during play. Collins suggests “neck massages at one hole, strawberries and champagne at the next, cigar rolling

at the next, and soothing music at the next to calm the nervous golfer.” Also, ask the golf pro to give pointers to golfers who may be waiting for the group ahead of them.

- Is the course on-property or is transportation required? Paying to shuttle employees to and from a course increases meeting costs as well as the time it takes to complete a tournament.

Location and reputation are key factors, too. Take for instance one of the golf capitals of the world: Myrtle Beach, SC. The area boasts 14 million visitors annually who come for the beautiful beaches, challenging golf courses and fresh local seafood. As leisure-only vacation areas cater more and more to business travelers and groups — a trend that some call ‘bleisure’ travel — planners are quickly learning that the destination is ideally suited for meetings and events. The Southern charm and hospitality of the area blends with modern amenities to provide the best of both worlds. For example, the expanded and renovated Myrtle Beach Convention Center features the 100,000-sf Exhibit Hall; the



The pool area of the G Spa & Salon at MGM Foxwoods Resort & Spa.

Photo courtesy of Foxwoods Resort & Spa

Set Up a Super Spa Experience

Over the years, Charisse Duroure, the spa director at the award-winning G Spa & Salon at MGM, has developed a keen interest in all things that promote well-

ness for the body and mind. A 30-year fitness veteran, Duroure started her career managing athletic clubs and spas. All told, including the four years under her belt leading spa activities at G Spa at Connecticut’s Foxwoods Resort & Casino, Duroure has witnessed firsthand the evolution of the spa/wellness field. No longer just a pampering luxury, spa treatments can be an integral part of a corporate meeting and event. As companies began to retreat from the ubiquitous cocktail party and search out more fitness and wellness-related activities, especially non-alcoholic ones, the resort spa took on a new life and mission. And as Duroure points out, spa activities are held primarily indoors, whereas golf programs are subject to Mother Nature’s fickleness. When rain spoils the

day, Duroure and her staff get to work and move schedules around to accommodate the deluge of additional attendees.

Even during the economic woes of the last few years, Duroure notes that those client companies that never ceased rewarding and incentivizing their employees with spa treatments continue to thrive. After all, spa treatments are designed to reduce stress, improve productivity and bolster positive outlooks.

Duroure works very closely with resort sales teams to coordinate the appropriate spa treatments to meet the company’s objective. The spa menu includes chair massages post-meeting or on the golf course, modern hydra facials, a session in the rejuvenating private waterfall room, steam room and relaxation time in the beautiful and spacious setting. Also, customized massages from among a menu of more than a dozen offerings such as sports massage are available. Corporate attendees are assured that fellow patrons will be of the same ilk — only those 21 and over may use the G Spa; families are welcome at their sister spa — Norwood Spa at Foxwoods.

Duroure fondly remembers an event she staged for 20 spouses of attendees (19 women and one man).

After a healthful breakfast hosted in the pool area, Duroure presented an educational talk on wellness and an engaging demonstration of a hydra facial. Participants also received a Foxwoods gift bag as a token of appreciation. Duroure received an outpouring of positive feedback, and the planner already booked a similar program on their next visit. By the way, Duroure notes that men are so enthusiastic about spa programs that many of them nowadays choose spa services instead of an afternoon on the links — unheard of a decade ago!

Five Tips for a Successful Group Program

Duroure and her staff aim to please their corporate clients. They also want to make the spa visit a memorable one; thus, they advise planners and attendees to consider these five important tips, one or more of which can transform a GOOD experience into a GREAT experience for a corporate group.

1. Book early so spa management can get all their ducks in order and have the appropriate staff on board for your event.
2. Document all changes in plans and services in writing via email.
3. It’s preferable to book services during the week to get the best service.
4. Arrive early! Encourage attendees to take the time to relax and prepare before their service, especially with a large group that tends to arrive at the same time. Extending a treatment is rarely an option for a late client.
5. Planners should always remember to exchange cellphone numbers with the spa director. Duroure says this little detail can make or break a spa program.

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Donna Collins
Senior Account Executive
Total Event Resources
Schaumburg, IL

hired a DMC to bring in three Harleys, and biker apparel such as helmets and leather jackets,” says Defilippis. “We gave out Harley t-shirts. Folks could sit on a Harley and take pictures and get (temporary) tattoos. The room was themed with Route 66 signs and old tires. People also could play

pool, foosball and electronic darts. We also had dinner and a live band.”

Golf & Spa News

The 316-room Cheyenne Mountain Resort, located in Colorado Springs, CO, recently completed a major \$3.8 million renovation of its Pete Dye-designed 18-hole championship golf course. The slightly longer course is now more challenging as all of the bunkers were rebuilt and tee boxes were elevated in keeping with the original Pete Dye-style of design. The driving range also was updated. Of particular note, the course is more eco-friendly as a new state-of-the-art irrigation system has been installed and approximately 15 acres of irrigated turf have been eliminated and replaced with native grasslands.

Also, 125 non-indigenous, low-water-use trees have been planted throughout the course, and more are planned for the future. It is anticipated that the combined impact of these conservation initiatives will result in a 30-40 percent reduction in water use. Located alongside a private, 35-acre lake, Cheyenne Mountain Resort also offers 18 tennis courts, racquetball and squash courts, a fitness center and an Aquatics Center, all of which are available to country club members and resort guests.

The 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, located near Orlando, FL, opened a new 55,000-sf conference center that brings the facility’s total indoor meeting space to more than 128,000 sf. The conference center includes a 28,000-sf ballroom divisible into eight flexible meeting rooms, an event lawn and open prefunction area. The AAA four-diamond, 15-acre property features two championship golf courses, the world headquarters of the David

Leadbetter Golf Academy and the full-service Mokara spa.

The 598-room Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, located in Destin, FL, and well known for its four championship golf courses and The Dunes, a putting course, renovated its 32,000 sf of meeting space, accommodations and fine-dining restaurant.

The hotel’s Serenity by the Sea spa was recently recognized as one of the “Top 270 Spas in North America, Caribbean, Mexico and at Sea” in the *Condé Nast Traveler* 2013 Readers’ Poll.

The 508-room Westin La Cantera Hill Country Resort in San Antonio, TX, recently completed its new Westin Workout Fitness Studio. One of the studio’s innovative features is its blue-light technology that uses energizing fluorescent lighting to positively impact guests’ workouts.

The 998-room Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa, Hollywood, FL, just debuted its Heavenly Spa by Westin. Measuring 14,000 sf, the new spa includes 10 treatment rooms and offers a Halotherapy salt steam room, a Vichy shower, a relaxation area featuring a “Wall-of-Rain” and a spa café.

The 1,500-room Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando offers a wide range of golf-related services to help groups plan successful golf tournaments and outings. The resort’s onsite 18-hole course at Shingle Creek Golf Club offers five sets of tees to allow players to adapt their play to the appropriate level of difficulty, and a customized website can be created to help organize and keep track of the tournament. The course also has a state-of-the-art GPS system that makes it easy for organizations to recognize hole sponsors and distribute tournament notes.

Meeting planners continue to meet the challenge of planning memorable golf events, even for attendees who have “seen and done it all” when it comes to golf and spa resorts. While many resort activities and amenities shape the attendees’ experiences, it is usually golf that leaves the most lasting memory, says Defilippis.

When asked what attendees remember the most about golf resort experiences, she says, “Probably the shots they should have made.” **C&IT**



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Director of Golf

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Asia-Pacific

The Marina Bay Sands, with its three towers topped by the Sands SkyPark, overlooks the South China Sea, Marina Bay and the Singapore skyline.

Photo courtesy of Timothy Hursley ©

Where Exotic Experiences Await By Karen Brost

The Asia-Pacific region is renowned for its wide choice of exotic and culturally diverse destinations for meetings and incentives. Todd Black, president of Fishers, IN-based First Incentive Travel International, believes it's an especially good fit for experienced travelers. "For people who do Europe currently," he notes, "I think there's about 20 percent of that group that we can entice them with 'Have you thought about Asia?' because they're already committing to more than four nights, and I think that's what it takes to do Asia, just for the flight alone."

"We have some good experience over there, and we have some really good partners, as well," explains Kevin Devanney, president and founder of Incentive Travel Solutions in Charlotte, NC. "We stay abreast of (the region) because we present it often. The quality of the resorts is fantastic. They really have come a long way in the last couple of years. The number of resorts and hotels that we can use with our incentive trips that have popped up in Asia and especially in Australia and New Zealand and China in the last five to 10 years is amazing."

Devanney explains that traveling to Asia is a new experience for many people. "When attendees are traveling to Asia for the very first time, I think there's a little bit of apprehension and a little bit more handholding than we typically have with our groups that we take to Paris or Rome. At first, we operate a city tour and introduce people to the culture right away, and they feel comfortable after the first couple of days."

Singapore

An appealing combination of easy access, excellent meeting facilities, perpetually sunny weather and a reputation for safety

make Singapore a top Asian meeting destination. One planner described why their company chose Singapore for an informational international conference for 150 attendees. "We needed a new venue to hold an Asian event, which is an expansion of our current annual conferences held in Europe and the U.S. Singapore was a desirable location, as we knew that language would not be an issue (as everyone spoke English) and many companies that attend our conferences have offices or are doing some business in Singapore as an Asian hub."

As the site of its meeting, the company chose the upscale Shangri-La Hotel, which is located in the heart of the city and offers 747 rooms and suites. The hotel's amenities include CHI, The Spa at Shangri-La, which offers a tranquil setting amid 15 acres of landscaped gardens and a waterfall.

"The best features of the hotel were the staff," the planner notes. "It was a five-star location as far as décor and service. When comparing other hotels, our local liaison said that the Shangri-La was the 'best of the best.' The prices were higher than our regular events, but our attendees left feeling they attended a quality event, and much of that was due to the venue and their courteous and responsive staff."

"I love the whole Shangri-La chain," Devanney notes. "When guests walk in, they feel at home. They're very comfortable."

For planners searching for a hotel that has that kind of jaw-dropping architecture that attendees will want to write home about, it would be hard to top the Marina Bay Sands Hotel — literally. The 2,561-room hotel, which is located in the central business district and overlooks the South China Sea, Marina Bay and the Singapore skyline, has three towers, each 55 stories tall, that are topped with a unique architectural feature called the Sands

SkyPark. This lushly landscaped tropical oasis is the size of three football fields and contains restaurants, lounges and a massive infinity-edge pool that offers panoramic views of the city. Across from the towers on Marina Bay are three performance theaters, the ArtScience Museum, and the Sands Expo and Convention Center, Singapore's largest exhibition and meeting venue, which features more than 1.2 million sf of MICE space across six expo halls, 250 meeting rooms and the largest ballroom in Southeast Asia accommodating up to 11,000 attendees. The center received the 2012 "Best Business Event Venue Experience" award from the Singapore Tourism Board.

There are 300 shops and restaurants at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands including rooftop and waterfront dining and celebrity chef establishments. Sandwiched between the theaters and the Sands Expo and Convention Center is the four-level Marina Bay Sands Casino, which offers its own varied dining experiences and one of the worlds largest Swarovski crystal chandeliers (weighing in at 7 tons!).

The Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore, a five-star property located on Marina Bay, offers groups a unique option for meeting space. Last year, the hotel introduced three floating "event pods." Located on the water, the pods were designed to be reminiscent of trading boats. Each of the pods, which are named Compass, Voyage and Port of Call, is equipped with a balcony and rooftop area, and the wallpaper on the ceiling of the pods is finished with crystal beads to reflect the shimmering water below.

South Korea

Despite the threats recently made by the North Korean government, travel officials maintain that South Korea is safe for travel. Sejoon You, executive director of the Korean Tourism

Organization in New York, issued an announcement to the travel industry stating, "North Korea has a long history of making confrontational rhetoric and empty threats to South Korea, the United States and other nations as well. All the experts in this matter, both international and based in the U.S., agree that there is no real or present danger that North Korea would act on its threats."

The Seoul office of the destination management company Ovation simplifies the meeting planning process by offering sample itineraries for South Korea. For a two-night meeting in Seoul, which the company describes as a "sophisticated city with a distinctive Asian spirit," the company suggests hosting a welcome event at Korea House where attendees can sample authentic dishes based on the royal cuisine of the Joseon Dynasty and enjoy a traditional dance performance. For day two, they recommend that attendees discover the "soul of Seoul" with a trip to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the Freedom Bridge where more than 12,000 Korean War prisoners walked to freedom in 1953. For an evening event in Seoul, the company recommends a dinner cruise on the Han River.

South Korea also offers scenic and culturally rich destinations for incentive trips. For a five-night incentive, Ovation's sample itinerary includes Jeju Island, known as "The Island of the Gods," which has been compared to Hawaii and Bali for its scenic beauty. The itinerary also includes a tour of Seoul and a stop in Gyeongju, listed by UNESCO as one of the world's 10 most historically significant sites. It includes treasures such as the Bulguska Temple which was constructed in 528, and the Seokguram Grotto, which dates back to the eighth century and contains a monumental statue of Buddha that's more than 10 feet tall.

Facilities on three artificial islets of the world's largest floating island in Seoul, South Korea, are available for performances, conventions and exhibitions.



Photo courtesy of Korean Tourism Organization

China

The destination management company Pacific World operates in China as well as in nine other Asian destinations: Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. John Lee Yung Chun, regional marketing manager, Pacific World Asia, describes China's appeal as a meeting destination. "China has developed a 21st century infrastructure for meetings and events, including an extensive network of modern airports, as well as state-of-the-art facilities, world-class hotels, convention centers and resorts, a cosmopolitan dining scene, and unique sites that lend themselves to outstanding gala dinner venues."

He notes that some of those gala venues include world heritage sites. "Event organizers can stage very large and impressive galas while experiencing history alive at such venues as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, which can be put to equally impressive impact for smaller groups and incentives. Exploring China's rich history and delving into its vibrant imperial and local cultural practices are enriching experiences for delegates, with lots of fun and great memories to be had."

Black notes, "In mainland China you can see (historic sites such as) the Temple of Heaven and stand in Tiananmen Square, which is one of those cool experiences like standing in Red Square in Russia. It's a must-do."

"China is a bit more for a savvy group," he continues. "If they're young pharma reps winning an incentive for the first time, I don't think China is the most motivating for them. For groups with guys that have already won 10 trips, then you start looking at China."

Hong Kong

The cosmopolitan city of Hong Kong, with its dazzling skyline and spectacular views of Victoria Harbour, is another popular meeting and incentive destination in Asia. "It's a dynamic city which truly offers the experience of a lifetime," Chun notes. "It is built with the infrastructure and services required to welcome and support large groups of visitors and offers unique experiences to attract meetings, exhibitions and incentive programs. It is incredibly safe, with a super-efficient transport system, and all signs are in English." The city also is a global hub that offers direct flights between more than 155 destinations a week.

"It's got high-end shopping, high-end restaurants and five-star hotels," Black explains. "It's very modern. In my experience taking groups there, they've always loved it." He adds that

Hong Kong has more competition in the region than it has had in the past. "Fifteen years ago, Hong Kong was so far ahead of mainland China, meaning that it was much more sophisticated and the infrastructure was better. Hong Kong was like the New York of Asia. That's not the case anymore. Beijing, Shanghai, and certainly other destinations in China have come up to the level of Hong Kong."

The first Hotel Indigo in Hong Kong recently opened in the city's historic Wan Chai neighborhood. One of the most unique features of the 138-room, 29-story hotel is the glass-bottomed infinity pool that juts out from the building's rooftop.

Macau

This special administrative region of China, which is located across the Pearl River estuary from Hong Kong, is probably best known as "the Las Vegas of Asia," but it also is known for its European style of architecture that dates back to the region's history as a Portuguese colony.

Located on the Cotai Strip, the Sands Cotai Macao complex features five international brand hotels with a combined 9,000 guest rooms and 1.3 million sf of versatile meeting space including 274 breakout rooms: The Venetian Macao; Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central; Conrad Macao, Cotai Central; Holiday Inn Macao, Cotai Central; and Four Seasons Hotel Macao.

Like its renowned sister property in Las Vegas, the 3,000-unit, all-suite The Venetian Macao features stunningly realistic replicas of the architectural icons and canals of Venice, Italy. The sprawling resort complex includes more than 1 million sf of meeting and exhibit space, including the 15,000-seat CotaiArena and 1,800-seat Venetian Theatre. Its acclaimed amenities include more than 30 world-class restaurants, 330 retailers at Shoppes Grand Canal and a Mayo Clinic Health & Wellness facility.

The CotaiExpo at the Venetian Macao features more than 800,000 sf of exhibition space, and is one of the largest exhibition centers in Asia. It is complemented by more than 75,000 sf of pillar-free ballroom space and 108 meeting rooms with nearly 270,000 sf of flexible meeting space.

The Sheraton Macao Hotel recently completed its 2,067-room Earth Tower, which brings the hotel's total room count to 3,896, making it the largest hotel in Macau and in Starwood's global portfolio. The hotel apparently does everything in a big way — it offers more than 160,000 sf of meeting space, including a main ballroom the size of more than 11 basketball courts. The hotel also offers guests easy access to The Plaza Macao and The Venetian Macao and The Shoppes. The Cotai Strip also offers 100 international restaurants, lounges and dining outlets.



A unique way for groups to experience China is onboard a Yangtze River cruise with culturally themed entertainment.

Photo courtesy of Viking River Cruises

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The Sands Cotai Macao on the Cotai Strip encompasses five hotel brands including The Venetian, Sheraton, Conrad, Four Seasons and Holiday Inn.

Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands Corporation

Australia

"I think Australia is in everyone's top five of 'wow,'" notes Black. "Forget dollars. When a client says I want a destination that's going to motivate, Australia is one of them. For the ultimate 'get out there and sell and you're going to win this trip,' Australia is definitely there."

"Down in Sydney," explains Devanney, "I stick to our old standbys like the Park Hyatt Sydney or the InterContinental or the Four Seasons." After an extensive multimillion-dollar renovation, the luxurious Park Hyatt

Sydney reopened last year. The 155-room harborfront hotel delivers stunning views of the city's iconic opera house.

"If you venture out into the wild, into the bush, then that's where I really see a lot of great options for people," Devanney continues. "We've used the Sheraton Mirage on the Gold Coast many times, and it's been fantastic. There are great trips out to the Great Barrier Reef for our groups there."

New Zealand

Whether they're attending a business meeting or enjoying the rewards of an incentive trip they've earned, attendees naturally like to feel welcomed by the destination they're visiting. According to the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013 released by the World Economic Forum, New Zealand is one of the friendliest countries in the world.

This popular Southern Hemisphere destination, which encompasses two major islands, also is legendary for its incredible scenery. Actor Martin Freeman, who starred as the title character in the recent movie "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" was obviously taken by the country's scenic beauty. "The backdrop is so beautiful, people will think it's CGI (computer-generated imagery)," he notes. "It looks too perfect."

Devanney likes to use some of New Zealand's lodges for his programs. "When we go to New Zealand, we tend to have smaller groups — 25 couples or something like that," he says. In the Northland, one property he likes to use is Kauri Cliffs lodge. Set on 6,000 acres overlooking Matakauri Bay, the lodge offers 22 guest suites and a two-bedroom owner's cottage along with golf, tennis, a spa and secluded beaches. On New Zealand's South Island, he has used the Matakauri Lodge, which is set on the banks of Lake Wakatipu in the Queenstown area and offers spectacular views of the accurately named Remarkables mountain range.

Getting There

Devanney made an interesting observation about the amount of flying time it takes for attendees to travel to Asia. "It always amazes me that (flying time) is the biggest conversation before the trip, but after the trip it is very rarely mentioned. After the trip, they talk about the destination." Obviously, the attendees decide that their trip to Asia or the Pacific was well worth the time it took to get there. **C&IT**

Malaysia

The year 2012 was a very good one for the country of Malaysia because it welcomed a record 25 million tourists. "Malaysia is one of the most affordable destinations in the world and in Asia," Pacific World's Chun says, "with unbeatable hotel rates." The country's capital city is Kuala Lumpur, which offers an interesting contrast between modern skyscrapers and heritage buildings from the British era. Malaysia's beach destinations, such as Borneo, Langkawi and Penang, are ideal for incentive programs or pre- and post-meeting tours.

Thailand

Hyatt is expanding its presence in Thailand with the anticipated opening of the Park Hyatt Bangkok in 2014. The new hotel, which will feature a dramatic "twisting coil" architectural design, will contain 222 rooms and be connected to a 150-store retail complex via skybridge. Hyatt's other Thailand properties include the five-star Grand Hyatt Erawan in Bangkok and the beachfront Hyatt Regency Hua Hin located 140 miles south-west of the capital city.

Japan

The Ritz-Carlton, Okinawa, which opened last year, is surrounded on three sides by an 18-hole championship golf course that overlooks the ocean. The hotel also is known as "Gusuku," which means "castle" in the local dialect. The property offers 97 guest rooms and suites.

While Tokyo is Japan's largest city, Kyoto is consistently ranked as the country's second most popular city for meetings, conferences and events. Kyoto served as the nation's capital for 1,000 years, and is now home to 17 UNESCO world heritage sites, many of which can be used for events. The city is located in close proximity to Kansai International Airport, and Tokyo is just over two hours away via the fastest bullet train in Japan.

Philippines

The five-star Fairmont Makati opened late last year in the central business district of Manila. It contains 280 guest rooms and suites offering beautiful views of the Makati skyline. The hotel's tower also is home to Raffles Makati, a 32-room all-suite hotel and Raffles Residences, which offer 237 one- to four-bedroom suites available for short- and long-term stays.

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HUGHES



TUCKER

Sarah Cardenas was promoted to group sales manager for The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club, Naples, FL. She most recently served as catering and conference services manager at the resort.

VisitPittsburgh has named **Robert Leff** as national sales director, responsible for the corporate market as well as the Northeast and Southwest national association accounts and territories. He most recently was director, national accounts, for Gaylord Hotels.

Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, Destin, FL, has promoted **Nancy Wilkerson** to director of group sales. She most recently served as director of regional sales based out of

Atlanta. **Dan Keyser** was named executive director of resort sales. With more than 30 years of hospitality experience, Keyser most recently was the regional director of sales and marketing for the BF Saul Company's hospitality division out of Bethesda, MD.

The Fontainebleau Miami Beach 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 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.

Jennifer Tucker was named group sales manager for Hawks Cay Resort in the Florida Keys. She was national sales manager at Gaylord Palms Resort, Kissimmee, FL.

L'Auberge Del Mar, Del Mar, CA, has promoted **Robert Harter** to director of sales and marketing. He was the hotel's director of sales. **Jeffrey Livingston** was promoted to director of sales. He was associate director of sales. **Jamie Clave** was named sales manager responsible for the San Diego and Southwest markets. She was sales manager at Estancia La Jolla Hotel, La Jolla, CA. **C&IT**

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