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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS



High Stakes Meetings

Gaming Resorts Offer the Biggest Payoff
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Las Vegas Entertains

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Photo by Isaac Brekken/Getty Images

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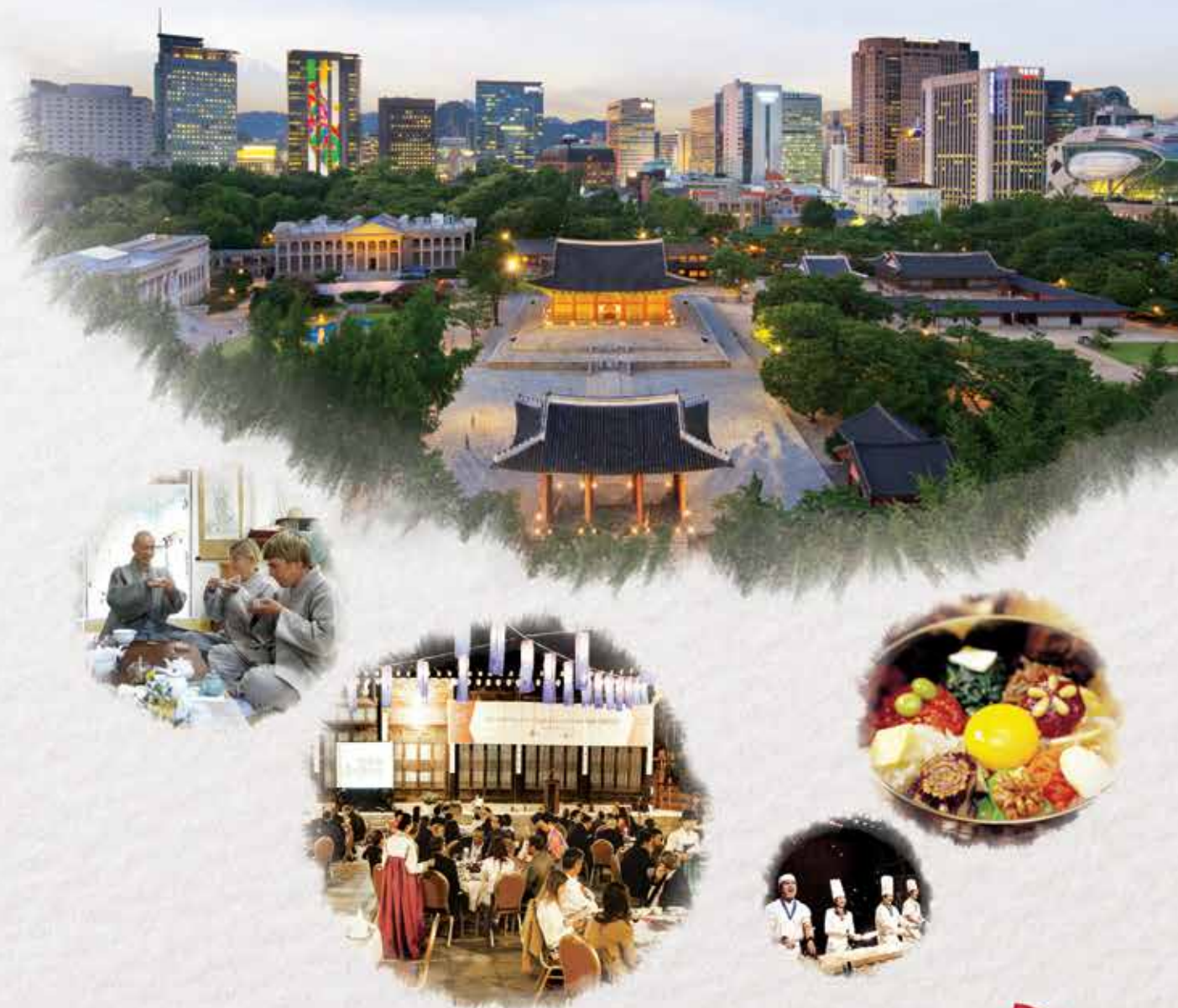


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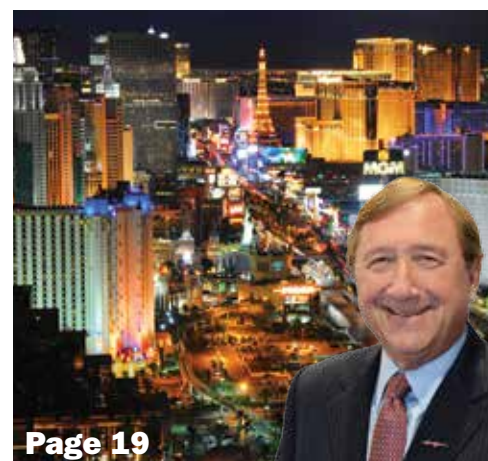
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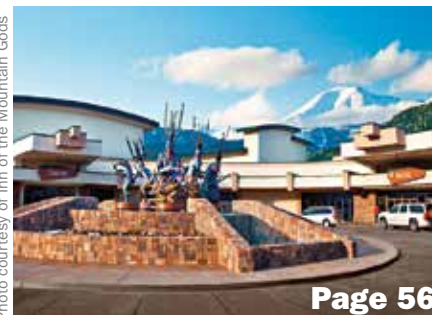
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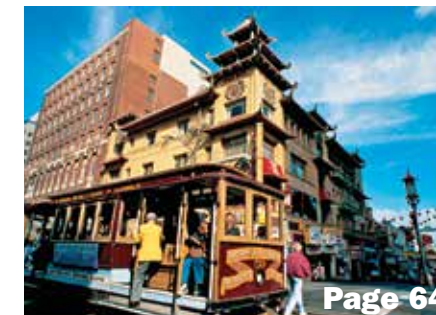
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The Inn of the Mountain Gods in Mescalero, NM, offers an abundance of activities for attendees beyond the casino.



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Two landmarks in San Francisco's Chinatown — the circa 1908 Sing Chong Building and a cable car headed for the waterfront.

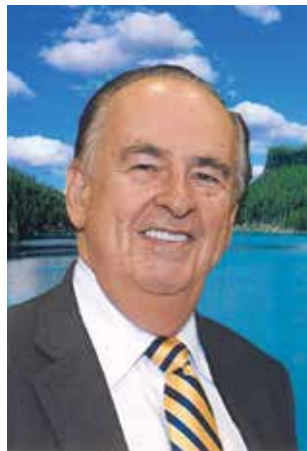
Photo by Seth Affoumado/San Francisco Travel

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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

Shifting Shapes

The shape and content of meetings nowadays is changing. The days of a packed auditorium with a highly paid speaker pontificating at a podium are few and far between. Most likely, current and future events may resemble lively rock concerts, be staged in a pub with attendees milling about in free-flowing dialogue or be conducted virtually via telepresence videoconferencing. The possibilities are limitless as the emphasis shifts to interactive collabora-



tion and engagement among groups of attendees instead of passive lectures. In fact, in "Changing Spaces: Designing the Conference Experience" by Derrell Jackson, a strategic education consultant for Herman Miller where he oversees the Learning Spaces Research Program, statistics show that the old ways of learning just don't work. For example, he cites recent studies by the National Training and Learning Institute that reveal learners retain 75 percent of the information heard in interactive settings, whereas only 5 percent retain what is heard in lecture-style presentations. In his column on page 10, Jackson also describes how to foster engagement, enhance collaboration, and

make new space designs and technology work for you at your next conference.

Now that meeting attendees are beginning to *drive the bus* at meetings, the "unconference" also known as a "participant-driven event" is gaining greater acceptance as a valid and popular way to meet, network and exchange ideas. We explore the ideas behind these types of events and how to accomplish them in "The Unconference" on page 12. Misha Glouberman, a Toronto-based meeting designer, says an unconference "breaks people out of their silos. You get people talking across silos, and what happens pretty quickly is that people see that they have common concerns they want to talk about. And that gets people thinking about the bigger picture within the organization, which is great."

Gaming resorts (page 56) all around the country and in Las Vegas (see 36-page planning guide starting on page 19) are ideal places to explore different meeting concepts and designs, and to stage meetings and events of all types and sizes. With an abundance of unique spaces and settings, particularly entertainment and club venues, professional meeting planners can easily pinpoint the perfect environment for an open space event, an unconference or a traditional meeting format.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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The Carnival Dream.

Carnival Announces New Ship Deployments

MIAMI, FL — Carnival Cruise Lines announced new ship deployments for 2014. Carnival Sunshine, which recently completed a massive \$155 million transformation, will be repositioned from New Orleans to Port Canaveral

beginning in April 2014. This move marks the first time the line will have a ship in Central Florida featuring Fun Ship 2.0 bar, dining and entertainment innovations.

In turn, Carnival Dream will reposition from Port Canaveral to New Orleans to operate year-round seven-day Caribbean cruises beginning in April 2014. The 130,000-ton Carnival Dream is from the line's newest and largest class of ships and offers an array of on-board facilities and features. Carnival is the only cruise line to operate two year-round ships from New Orleans and will carry more than 400,000 guests annually from this important Gulf Coast homeport.

Carnival will increase capacity in Port Canaveral by 30 percent when Carnival Liberty launches year-round five- to eight-day Caribbean cruises in May 2014, adding a second Fun Ship 2.0-equipped vessel to Florida's Space Coast. Guests will now have the widest variety of cruise vacations available from Port Canaveral including five cruise durations — from three to eight days — offering seven different itinerary options and the chance to visit 14 destinations throughout The Bahamas and Caribbean. www.carnival.com

Planners With CMP Designation Earn Higher Salaries

CHICAGO, IL — According to PCMA Convene's Annual Salary Survey, the average salary for meeting professionals who earned their CMP is \$14,308 more than for those without the designation. The results of this year's survey — completed by 328 association, corporate and independent meeting professionals in March — reveal that they earn nearly 10 percent more than last year. The average salary for all respondents in 2013 is \$77,711, up from an average 2012 salary of \$71,038 as reported last year's survey. More than three-quarters of respondents have earned the CMP designation and bring home an average salary of \$84,865 — compared to \$70,557 for those without the designation. Nearly half of respondents say they are satisfied with their current salary and 86 percent expressed satisfaction with the meetings profession as a whole. www.pcma.org

Aerial Dining Experience Breaks Ground in Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS, NV — The new aerial dining experience Dinner in the Sky Las Vegas, an open-air gourmet dinner served 180 feet above the ground, began construction June 12 and will open later this summer on an 8.8-acre site. The ultimate pop-up restaurant will give new meaning to "dining out" with 360-degree views of the city from two tables accommodating 22 guests each. Guests will be strapped in by six-point harnesses for safety while enjoying dinner by executive chefs Ward Martin and Ivan Sanchez. Dinner in the Sky will offer eight nightly seatings on tables weighing in at seven tons when fully loaded, which will be permanently attached to a 200-foot-high steel tower. The attraction will have a spacious reception area on the ground for large-scale events with banquet facilities accommodating up to 1,000 guests for corporate events. The attraction also is planning to offer "Meeting in the Sky" and "Teambuilding in the Sky." www.dinnerintheskylv.com

New Management Group to Update Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa



Aerial view of the Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa.

GALENA, IL — Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa is now under the management of The Bricton Group and will be updated, according to Edward Doherty, president of the Bricton Group. Eagle Ridge has been a Midwest destination for corporate groups for more than 30 years. Set on 6,800 acres in northwest Illinois, Eagle Ridge is well known for its award-winning golf courses and its accommodations. To manage the resort and golf course, Bricton partnered with Touchstone Golf LLC to form a joint venture — Brickstone. Bricton will manage the hotel and spa, and executives from Touchstone will manage the championship golf courses. Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa is located 150 miles west of Chicago and includes 63 holes on four award-winning golf courses, and accommodations that range from quaint inn rooms to more than 250 villas and distinctive homes. Eagle Ridge has 15,000 sf of state-of-the-art meeting space, and beautiful conference homes, which regularly accommodate corporate groups. www.eagleridge.com



Photo credits: 1. Site, 2.-3. Convention Industry Council, 4.-6. AIBTM, 7. German Convention Bureau



1 The Site International Board of Directors recently approved a change in the bylaws of the Site Florida Chapter to expand its region to incorporate Site members in the Caribbean. The Site Florida Chapter will now be officially known as the Site Florida & Caribbean Chapter. Pictured in the purple jacket is Chapter President and Executive Director of Cayman Islands Tourism Association Jane van der Bol. The Chapter and Visit Orlando will host the Site Global Conference 2013 at the Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando Resort. **2,3** It wasn't all business at the 2013 CMP

Conclave, held at the Spokane Convention Center in Spokane, WA. A Roaring '20s-themed event was a highlight. **4** The show floor officially opened June 11 at AIBTM, The Americas Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition in Chicago. **5-6** AIBTM attracted close to 1,000 hosted buyers, a 31 percent increase over 2012. With more than 50 new exhibitors included in a total of 707 main stand holders and exhibiting partners, the show was the largest to date. The pre-scheduled appointment system also hit new highs, with approximately 15,000 business meetings taking place with hosted buyers who had budgets of more than \$10.7 billion. **7** The General Assembly of the GCB German Convention Bureau convened in June in Messe Essen's Congress Center South. Pictured l to r: Matthias Schultze, managing director, GCB; Egon Galinnis, managing director, Messe Essen; Petra Hedorfer, CEO, German National Tourist Board and chair, GCB Board of Directors; Essen Mayor Rudolf Jelinek; Axel Biermann, managing director, Ruhr Tourismus.



By Brooke Sommers

Incentives: Why Do Them Wrong When You Can Do Them Right?

According to Wikipedia, an incentive is something that motivates an individual to perform an action. In the case of our industry, that is fairly true. Typically we want to incent a group of people to perform at the very top of their performance structure. We want them to be the over-achievers, sales drivers, leaders of the pack.

I believe that an incentive should be a trip of a lifetime, something that you wouldn't do on your own, going somewhere that you may not go on your own. It should also be with a group of your peers. Direct peers. Never a cash award — that is what a bonus is for.

Most sales organizations have quota-bearing individuals who have some sort of incentive built into their sales goals. If they achieve a certain percentage of their quota, whether it is over a certain threshold or the top designated percentage of the sales organization, then they are invited to an annual trip.

OR the organization may put together spiff programs that are created to accelerate sales over a given time period or quarter(s). These programs can be geared at internal salespeople or their external channel sales partners.

I am a strong believer of a few key points, which are presented strictly from my own personal perspective:

- Sales incentives should be small groups, no more than 500 winners plus their guest, ideally even smaller. My opinion is that global organizations should regionalize their incentives.
- Sales incentives should have regional opportunities for networking among peers.
- You should never qualify for a sales incentive if you did not achieve at least 110 percent of your quota; I would recommend at least 120 percent. Not that I'm the expert, but if you are at 100 percent, then you are doing your job. Collect your paycheck.
- It isn't required that C level executives attend the incentive. It is nice, but truly, the C suite does not impact the drive of the salesperson. Direct management drives the salesperson because they are the key

personnel who can impact that salesperson financially or in job growth.

- Pick a destination that will intrigue the potential winners, somewhere that they may not go on their own or could not afford on their own. That will set the drive to achieve that much higher.
- Always add some sort of CSR (corporate social responsibility) to the event. Make the attendee feel that they are not only being rewarded but also giving back to the local community.
- And lastly, don't pigeonhole yourself into picking a hotel

based on room rate alone; that is a very small piece of the entire program cost.

In the 20+ years that I have been managing incentives, I have been lucky enough to host programs for groups ranging from 30 winners to 1,100 winners. I can absolutely, without a doubt, tell you that the smaller incentives get the

most ROI. ABSOLUTELY! And here are the reasons why:

- The C suite does not judge salespeople. Salespeople are judged by their direct managers, and smaller incentives give them face-to-face time with management.
- Salespeople learn from their peers. If the program is too large, and there are not plentiful opportunities to network with their direct peers, then they will not be able to learn from the wins of their peers.
- Salespeople love to talk about their accomplishments to their friends and family. If the destination is ho-hum, then why would they want to push for it or "brag" about it?
- There are very few large hotels in resort destinations; smaller groups allow for much better "draw" or "carrot" destinations.
- There will be less sandbagging going on if the salesperson really wants to make the trip because of the right destination/hotel venue.
- A sales incentive can pay for itself by one or two large deals. If the carrot is not enough to drive the sale in the incentive closing quarter, then the revenue will be lost until the next quarter when it may not be as valuable to the corporation.



When it comes to great incentive destinations, don't forget to think out of the box. Surf and sand are amazing, but so are mountains and adventures, unexplored territories and unique artsy small towns. Here are the next destinations/venues on my list:

- Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica (again)
- Charleston Place, Charleston, South Carolina
- The Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch, Saratoga, Wyoming (shown)
- Montage, Laguna Beach, California
- Bacara Resort & Spa, Santa Barbara, California
- Cheeca Lodge & Spa, Islamorada, Florida
- Snake River Lodge & Spa, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

- Regional incentives can save you a *ton* on airfare, money that can go into the many other elements of the program.

I spoke with a sales friend of mine who attended more than 10 incentives that we hosted during my years with StorageTek. Of these incentives, there were two that were top 150 percent and above qualifiers and the other eight+ that were 110 percent–120 percent+ qualifiers. He without hesitation told me that No. 1 incentive he ever went to was the small 150 percent+ qualifier program hosted at Miraval Resort and Spa in Tucson. And that was true not because the resort was phenomenal (which it is) but because the relationships he built with those other 40 winners were career-lasting relationships. Relationships that helped him grow additional sales and learn new selling techniques. Relationships that he looked forward to rekindling year after year at *exactly* that type of program. He also told me that one of the most important things for a salesperson is to be recognized in front of his peers — it drives him to sell harder.

Every other year at StorageTek we implemented family programs. Salespeople are away from their families so often

every year that why wouldn't we want to give them an opportunity to share their success with them. How proud is a person when they can stand up and win an award in front of their spouse and even their families. How proud are they when their direct manager comes up to tell them by the pool how well they did throughout the year in front of the people that sacrifice the most.

And, just a quick note on budget: There are many destinations/venues that are overlooked because you may be afraid you can't afford the hotel. Think of the money you could save by cutting back on décor and production because the venue already has a beautiful natural backdrop. You do not have to offer daily activities; one activity selection is enough. People are on these trips to relax, let them. Think about the overall financial picture before you say no to the "wow" destination.

Sales incentives need to be first and foremost for the winner, the achiever, the president's club member. Not for the C suite — they should be humbled and thankful that they have such a stellar salesforce that they get to be there to congratulate their top salespeople.

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“I can absolutely, without a doubt, tell you that the smaller incentives **get the most ROI.** ABSOLUTELY!”



Brooke Sommers, CMP, CMM,

owner of Strategic Conferences & Events LLC, has been planning meetings for more than 20 years and is currently focusing on Strategic Meetings Management and the value of meetings and events for corporations. Brooke left Sun Microsystems after more than 12 years, nine of which were with StorageTek prior to their acquisition by Sun. The events team at StorageTek managed 300 meetings and events per year. At Sun, Brooke project-managed the sales events for North America. www.strategicconferences.net



By Derrell Jackson

Changing Spaces: Designing the Conference Experience

The “Sage on the Stage” model of presentation is alive and thriving at conference centers and meeting venues across the country: rows of chairs face the main stage, where “sages” impart their knowledge to an audience of eager listeners. This lecture-style of space design — still prevalent throughout academia and has been since medieval times — makes sense for keynote sessions where hundreds of attendees pack a room for high-profile speakers such as General Colin Powell (who, by the way, is quite entertaining). But it’s increasingly less relevant as events become smaller and more intimate (100 or less), and attendees and presenters alike seek more collaborative engagement.

Statistics justify this shift in settings and style. According to a recent study from the National Training and Learning Institute, learners only retain half (50 percent) of the information heard when discussing a particular topic among peers. The number increases considerably (to 75 percent) in interactive settings, where people are given the opportunity to put learning into practice. Lectures round out the bottom, indicating that just 5 percent of what is heard in lecture-style presentations remains in attendees’ memories once they walk out the door. Thousands of hours and millions of dollars are invested every year with the goal of designing impactful conference experiences. And as executive leadership continues to demand more measurable returns for all facets of business, clearly something needs to change.

Learning in Action

As a speaker at the 2013 International Association of Conference Centers (IACC) annual event, I opted to experiment with space design during my talk. Influenced by my work with academic institutions and corporate organizations

across the U.S., we set up a conference room in the standard, forward-facing configuration, but also incorporated a variety of additional furniture elements: tables and chairs on wheels, café-height tables with stools and soft lounge seating. As attendees gathered in the room, some were a bit surprised; others were puzzled at this unfamiliar environment.

I began the presentation talking about how meeting environments must become more flexible to support a growing desire and need for collaboration, and showed examples from experimental college classrooms that reflect this new era of space design. Attendees then broke into groups to discuss how they would redesign meeting spaces to be more collaborative, and I walked around to each, listening, contributing to the conversation and providing insights as appropriate. The session wrapped up with each group sharing top takeaways, with some drawing innovative floor-plan concepts on mobile whiteboards.

This experience highlighted — and corroborated — several emerging key trends that must be considered for conference and meeting environments:

Enhance Collaboration

Spaces should enable and encourage interaction, not limit it, which traditional classroom design often can. Upon transitioning to the collaborative phase of the IACC session, for example, attendees were able to put ideas into practice, reconfiguring the space from lecture layout into group configurations to support free-flowing dialogue.

Foster Engagement

Learning is a social activity. Environments that encourage engagement remove barriers, move presenters from behind

the lectern or from the front of the room, and allow them to move freely as they speak. Achieving balance between space capacity requirements and a collaborative presentation style enabled me to easily interact with the attendees, as well as enable them to seamlessly work in groups.

Flex to Meet More (Varied) Needs

Adaptable spaces support collaboration. Furnishings selected with flexibility in mind support a variety of needs. Consider a simple kit of furniture parts that allows for multiple layouts and space options. For IACC, we purposely chose tables and chairs on wheels so that groups of four, six or eight could be accommodated.

Provide Supportive Choices

Healthful spaces incorporate ergonomic principles, and sustain our mental and physical well being. Learning space design must offer options that support both, for presenters and audience members alike. Café-height tables and stools in

the IACC session not only served as a fun option for seating, but also helped ensure clear lines of sight for all attendees. Lounge chairs were also placed in the room to address the basic human need for comfort.

Make Technology Work for You

Educational institutions are leading the way in exploring the possibilities of mobile technology in response to the multitude of devices students bring to the classroom (increasingly the case with conferences and meetings). While this offers new challenges from an IT perspective, it also provides more opportunities to free up those in the meeting space to engage in more impact ways.

As the design and demands of meetings and conferences evolve, so will the venues that host them. Effective space design and smart, knowledge-based choices of furnishings will positively impact the interactions that take place within, making the experiences more meaningful and memorable. (See related story on page 12.)

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“Spaces should enable and encourage **interaction**, not limit it, which traditional classroom design often can.”

Derrell Jackson

is a strategic education consultant for Herman Miller where he oversees the Learning Spaces Research Program, which assists educational and corporate institutions with informing the design of their future learning environments.



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The Unconference

Why the Participant-Driven Event Is Popular and Effective

By Mike Bassett

As far as conference designer and facilitator Adrian Segar is concerned, everything having to do with traditional meetings has changed over the last decade or so.

For example, potential meeting attendees don't need to fly across the country to listen to someone speak — they can watch that speaker online. Add in the fact that conferences have never been very good at encouraging or supporting networking, Segar says, and the question becomes, "Why go at all?"

But, what conference attendees are interested in, he says, is talking to and learning from their peers. And that's the value of an unconference, also known as a participant-driven event, which is designed to take advantage of the collec-

tive expertise of the attendees to create meeting content in order to encourage discussion and collaboration.

Segar, founder of Conferences That Work, based in Marlboro, VT, actually has a problem with the term unconference — or at least the way it's used now. According to Segar, the problem with the term is that it's come to mean "any kind of conference that's not a traditional conference."

Lisa Heft, a consultant, facilitator and educator for her Berkeley, CA-based company Opening Space, specializing in open space meetings, agrees that the term "unconference" has been corrupted over the years. "Unconference is a word used by a lot of different people, and it means a lot of different things," says

Heft. "It can mean something as simple as deciding not to use PowerPoint. So you get planners who are walking away from (what they think is an unconference), and they're upset that it's not very productive."

Segar prefers the term, "participant-driven event," which simply means that the meeting becomes what attendees want and need it to be. The process he uses involves setting up a peer-driven event in which the attendees essentially create the content and then decide what sessions they'd like to participate in.

Whatever term is used, it's one that meeting planners should be aware of, says Misha Glouberman, an unconference designer from Toronto, Ontario who presented a session on "Unconferences and Open Spaces: Designing Participatory

Events to Create Real Connections" at last summer's Meeting Professionals International World Education Conference in St. Louis.

"It was a micro version of what I do when we run conferences," he says. "And it was very popular." So popular, in fact, that he repeated the same session a day later.

But, what he found rather surprising was the degree to which those planners attending the session were unfamiliar with the concept of unconferences or participatory events. "The people obviously know about meetings," he says. "So you would think they'd be familiar with this, because it's really been going on for a while."

The concept of Open Space Technology was developed in the mid-1980s by an organizational consultant named Harrison Owen. And, according to Glouberman, unconferences started to become popular around the turn of the millennium, particularly in the technology sector.

"People see them and say it's exactly what they need," he says. "Yet, it hasn't spread like wildfire." He speculates that, like most people, meeting planners are creatures of habit.

"People usually have a certain way of doing things," he says. "So, if you run a big annual conference and lots of people are involved in running it, many people

attend it, so making any kind of change is going to be difficult even if it's one that 98 percent of the people think is a change for the better."

Glouberman also believes that if planners really thought about why their events were being held in the first place, there would be more interest in participant-driven events. "A lot of times people run conferences simply because they've run them year after year," he says. "But you can't really get them to articulate why

Cramer-Krasselt, an advertising agency headquartered in Chicago, says that what most impressed him about the format, "was how involved everyone got. It wasn't a meeting where everyone went, sat in a room and listened to a speaker," he says. "Everyone had some kind of a role. And they were contributing ideas and leading discussions, and they were able to go from session to session, and leave a session after 10 minutes if it just didn't suit them, and there was nothing wrong with



"That's what I try to do — get them to articulate what their conference is really about, and usually they end up telling me that the reason for the conference is to get people to meet and learn from each other."

Misha Glouberman, Unconference Designer
Toronto, Ontario

they're holding the conference. That's what I try to do — get them to articulate what their conference is really about, and usually they end up telling me that the reason for the conference is to get people to meet and learn from each other."

Innovative and Cutting Edge

Attending technology conferences was how Steve Radick, formerly a lead associate with the strategy and technology consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, was first exposed to the idea of unconferences. Radick, who is now vice president at

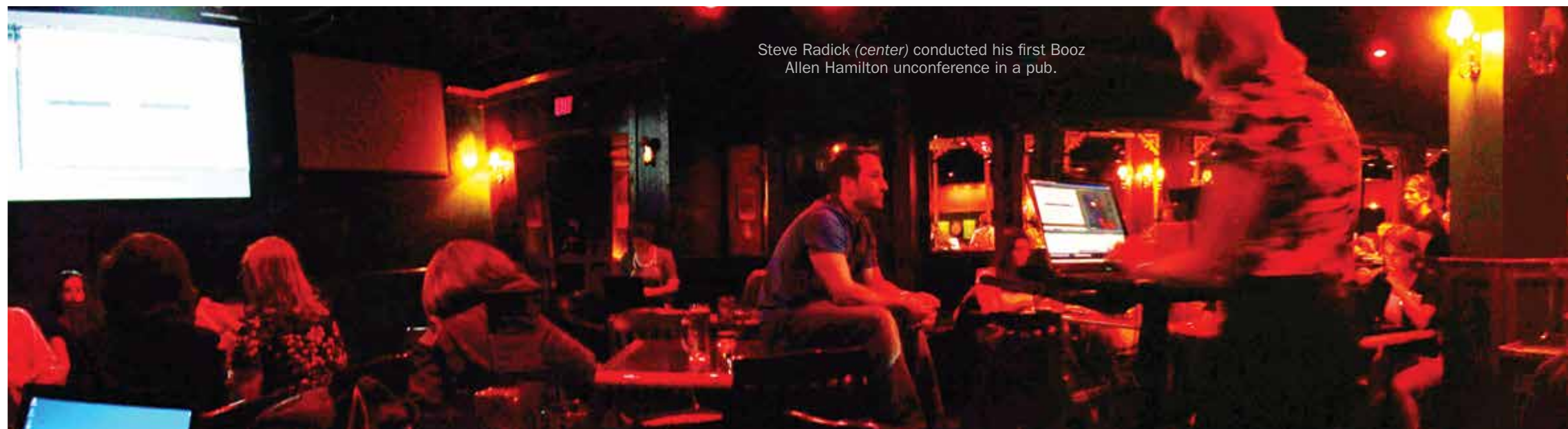
that — it was just the way (the event) worked. So, I wondered why we couldn't do something like this at Booz Allen."

After deciding this kind of format was something that could work at Booz Allen Hamilton, Radick began engaging in some internal education to explain to his team colleagues and leaders what an unconference is all about. He started by posting some blog posts on his company's intranet and "generated some groundswell around the idea."

Since Booz Allen Hamilton is a consulting company, some PowerPoint



Photo courtesy of Jacob Zimmer



Steve Radick (center) conducted his first Booz Allen Hamilton unconference in a pub.

Photo courtesy of Steve Radick

presentations to the leadership team were necessary to explain the rationale behind the idea, as well as its benefits. Radick pitched the idea to his leadership team as a low-cost, low-resource opportunity to network with, learn from and collaborate with other members of the team.

"The question I asked was, 'Why shouldn't we do this?'" he says. "We were always saying we're innovative and cutting edge, and we used these words in proposals and new business development, but were we living it? This was a chance to demonstrate it."

For the location Radick and his colleagues chose a pub because it was big enough for the 100 or so attendees, had space for breakouts, had free Wi-Fi and was informal enough to express the idea that this was not the normal Booz Allen Hamilton hands-on meeting.

The results of a post-event survey indicated that attendees liked the informal nature of the unconference, and the leadership team liked the ideas and discussion that resulted from the event and agreed that the format should be used again. An unconference was the perfect kind of format for this event, Radick says, because it was "all about innova-



"Everyone had some kind of a role... contributing ideas and leading discussions, and they were able to go from session to session, and leave a session after 10 minutes if it just didn't suit them."

Steve Radick, Vice President
Cramer-Krasselt, Chicago, IL

he says. "But it certainly can work, and it has worked when I've done them — people loved them."

One problem, he says, is getting corporate leaders to sign off on something that is so untraditional. "I've had meetings with corporations, and the meeting planners and vice presidents and other executives have been totally gung-ho, but then the president or CEO turns the idea down," Segar says. "And you can understand why — they're hesitant about losing control."

With those kinds of concerns in mind, Glouberman says, it should be remembered that an unconference is "not some crazy free-for-all." It's actually a very fixed structure, he points out, with a very broad range of things that can happen within it. "If you think about it, in a lot of ways it's like a wiki," he says. "Wikipedia has a very strict structure, but within it there are millions of different pages describing millions of different things."

Glouberman says the format works

unconference does well is that it breaks people out of their silos," he says. "You get people talking across silos and what happens pretty quickly is that people see that they have common concerns they want to talk about. And that gets people thinking about the bigger picture within the organization, which is great."

Big Environment for Big Ideas

Robert Hendrickson, managing director of The Garden Center Group in Ellicott City, MD, went with an open space event for the group's 2011 annual fall event at the Copper Mountain Resort in Copper Mountain, CO.

Hendrickson had previously attended a session Adrian Segar had put on for meeting planners in Chicago and realized that what Segar advocated jibed with his thinking about The Garden City Group, which is an alliance of about 130 garden centers from around the United States.

"I had been concerned that we needed to start tapping into our own talent, and needed to talk about their own problems, rather than just listening to a series of speakers over and over again," Hendrickson says. "We're in an industry with a lot of concerns, and we ought to stop, take a break, and spend some time addressing those concerns. As a workshop planner, I'm

always guessing what the most popular topics at a meeting should be, and I thought that instead of taking on that responsibility again, I'd have my clients tell me what they wanted to talk about."

The decision to book Copper Mountain was a big change for the group, since previous events had always taken place at fairly large city hotels. "But I think this kind of event required a place with a big environment to have big thoughts," he says. "And it requires an environment out

of the norm." It also helped that the group booked Copper Mountain during the resort's shoulder season, so that the attendees basically had the place to themselves.

Hendrickson says the response from the 140 attendees was "wonderful. I had people who've been in the industry for a long time, and they said it was the most valuable conference they've ever attended."

The Garden Center Group followed up the 2011 event with a more traditional one in 2012, though it did include a half-day session led by Segar. As for the future, Hendrickson says a full open space meeting is probably something that wouldn't work every year, but that the group will probably use the format for every third event.

Radick says that at Booz Allen Hamilton the unconference was used several more times after the original event. "We didn't necessarily repeat it with that particular team," he adds. "But we did keep components of it where we would have a typical all hands meeting, and where the participants would filter out of the conference room or ballroom into the bar area and would continue meeting there. We picked up the pieces that worked and hybridized it."

Radick recently left Booz Allen Hamilton for his current position at Cramer-Krasselt, where the environment may not be as conducive to an unconference. An advertising agency like Cramer-Krasselt doesn't have the same kind of meeting culture, Radick says. Instead employees are already working in small collaborative groups, and he suspects the unconference approach won't work as well with 10 or 12 participants compared to 100 or so.

Still, "I think an unconference would work spectacularly here, because we have a lot of creative people here," he says. "It's an ad agency, so you have people coming up with the most creative, original, fun stuff you could imagine, so I really think it would work well here."

Heft says that it's important that once meeting planners commit to using open space or some kind of participant-driven event, that they remain open to it in the future. Too many times, she says, plan-

ners or clients will choose to use open space because they want to "try something new" and then never use it again.

But, she adds, the planner should really examine the objectives of future meetings, because if those objectives can be met by using something like open space, "then it doesn't make sense to throw this tool out if it will help you deliver on your objectives and desired outcomes."

A meeting planner who rejects a

participant-driven format because he or she has used it before, and wants something different, "is not connecting process with objectives and outcomes," says Heft.

"I don't do icebreakers and warm-ups that aren't going to be directly related to content. I'm not the person you would bring in to do something fun for you. What I do is really about creative thinking and knowledge sharing. But it still can be done in a lively way." **C&IT**

"It depends on the company culture. But it (an unconference) certainly can work, and it has worked when I've done them — people loved them."

Adrian Segar, Conference Designer and Facilitator
Conferences That Work, Marlboro, VT



tion and things that we could be doing better." But, he added, a typical all-hands meeting in which employees are called in to hear the latest quarterly updates, "probably won't work as well."

Who Should Use It?

Segar says the format should work anywhere, including a corporate setting, even though he doesn't count too many corporations among his clients.

"It depends on the company culture,"

best "in organizations where people have to talk to each other — and that's really all organizations. One thing I hear from virtually every organization I work with is that it's not going to work with their people, that their group is different. But, it always works, because people want to talk to each other."

In addition, organizations — particularly corporations — want their employees to see the big picture when it comes to organizational goals. "So one thing an

Pharma Update

A Positive Outlook and New Facilities Help Ease the Pain of Tough New Regulations

By Timothy Herrick

Medical meetings may have survived the economic downturn, but 2013 brings additional challenges to pharma meetings in the name of the Affordable Care Act. The most sweeping federal health care legislation since Medicare in the 1960s, this controversial law has dominated political debates ever since its 2009 passage. Because most provisions of the law go into full effect in 2014, for medical meeting planners, the challenge of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is now.

“Pharma meetings are healthy. The number of medical meetings has been increasing over the past four years.”



Pat Schaumann, CMP, CSEP, DMCP
Founder, International Medical Meeting Professionals Association (IMMPA)
President, Meeting IQ, St. Louis, MO

On one hand, the legislation opens up an opportunity for planners to educate meeting attendees about this array of new regulations. However, a provision in the law called the National Physician Payment Transparency Program imposes strict guidelines regarding the reporting of company payments and transfers of value made to physicians — which of course includes spend data related to physician-attended meetings. “I see it

— and have heard meeting professionals and the industry overall see it — as a burden, i.e., understanding requirements, building processes and systems, monitoring data,” says Lisa Keilty, CMP, vice president of PMC², a health care consultancy firm specializing in planning meetings and other events for health care providers. “But I also see it as a positive in understanding how the health care industry needs the expertise and innovation of physicians and other health care professionals to continue improving and investing in medical breakthroughs.”

Impacts on Meetings

“I would say that these restrictions are probably affecting the health care association niche the most as sponsored events are under scrutiny,” says Pat Schaumann, CMP, CSEP, DMCP, president of Meeting IQ and founder of the International Medical Meeting Professionals Association (IMMPA). “The Physician Payments Sunshine Act, now renamed the National Physician Payment Transparency Program: Open Payments, has affected the health care meeting industry significantly. The way planners manage their meetings (requires) a new skill set.” Schaumann adds that the complicated regulations are made more difficult by misinformation in the industry.

Schaumann points out that the extent to which the new regulations will affect medical meetings is still being dis-

covered. “My prediction is that compliance in meeting management will begin to seep in all segments of our industry,” says Schaumann. “Increased transparency and accountability will be required.”

Schaumann emphasizes that because the “transfers of value” from manufacturers to physicians will be under tighter regulation and higher scrutiny, spending on pharma meetings will be reduced. “Certain new rules are in place, such as meal caps, honoraria and other reportable items,” she says. “With the adherence to health care compliance laws and regulations, budgets are changing,” says Schaumann. “You will definitely not see the lavish spend on physicians that existed in the past.”

In terms of the new regulations, a wait-and-see attitude persists. “The jury is still out as to how the physicians are going to respond to the reporting of the receipt of goods and in-kind services,” says Deborah Hinson, partner/brand manager, The Hinson Group, and newly named president of the International Medical Meeting Professionals Association. “Until then, we’ve adapted to the increased guidelines. We’ve had to increase staff to manage the reporting aspects of the Affordable Care Act. It will increase the cost of doing business for most pharmaceutical companies, third-party planners and CME (Continuing Medical Education) educators.”

The Hinson Group specializes in planning CME-oriented and other events for smaller groups (fewer than 100 attendees) of health care professionals. While

the full impact of the new regulations is still to be determined, there has already been some erosion around the edges of this meeting industry sector due to other economic factors. “We’ve seen a dramatic increase in video teleconference events within this sector,” says Hinson, who was recently named planner of the year by the MPI Gulf States Chapter. And while the number of medical meetings does not seem to be declining, Hinson says, “Generally, we are seeing a decrease in the number of attendees per event. Medical meetings would probably be considered ‘B’ tier business by vendors at this point.” She adds, “Budgets seem to be static.”

Healthy Growth Despite Flat Spending

In spite of flat spending trends, these smaller, more corporate-driven events, are seen as healthy, compared to other segments of the meetings industry. “Overall the pharma meeting market is strong,” says Bonnie Weiss, director, global pharmaceutical sales-Americas, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, but she points out that there have been some noticeable effects of flat spending trends. “I think larger meetings are a bit smaller than they had been; I’m seeing more airport meetings, which reduces transportation costs.”

In addition, Weiss notes there’s been an increase in regional meetings, with some of the larger pharma meetings splintering into smaller events. “Instead of the national meetings, they are breaking them down to regional meetings, which saves costs in airfare and travel. Also, there’s less time out of the office for participants, which is a factor.”

While a more austere environment permeates pharma meetings, Weiss notes that cutbacks are not exclusive to pharma. “It’s really just the attitude proliferating in corporate America — pharmaceutical companies are responding to those trends broadly affecting all businesses. The higher scrutiny is nothing new to this segment, I think they’ve already adapted to most of those regulations.”

According to the Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association (HCEA),

attendance in the health care industry’s top 50 largest medical conferences increased 2.2 percent from 2010 to 2011, noting that first-time attendance at the large industry events climbed back and surpassed pre-recession figures from 2007. Health care associations are only one segment of the vast health care meeting industry: Pharma meetings span the spectrum of events, ranging from training for hundreds of sale reps by a single pharmaceutical manufacturer to events sponsored by that same company and attended by hundreds of health care providers.

“Pharma meetings are healthy,” says Schaumann. “The number of medical meetings has been increasing over the past four years. Anticipated growth is expected in 2013. There were over 90,000 CME dinner meetings in the U.S. alone in 2012, up about 3 percent from 2011. Since 2007 approximately \$2 trillion a year is spent on health care in the U.S. In 2013, it is targeted for \$3 trillion. In the U.K., in 2012, \$186 million was spent on health care meetings, an increase from 2011.”

Schaumann adds, “As long as there are medical needs, new drugs, new medical devices, biologics, animal health, allied health, etc. there will always be investigator meetings, clinical trials, research and development meetings, advisory boards and CME.”

According to Keilty, pharma planners, in spite of budgetary cutbacks, stricter regulations and increased uncertainty, are upbeat: “The current attitude of the pharma planners is one of strength in numbers. Many health care professional meeting planners that work within this space realize that they need their service providers and suppliers more than ever.”

Pharma meetings involve a diverse array of events. For example, pharmaceutical companies will host events that in addition to informing practitioners about a newly introduced drug can also fulfill CME requirements. In addition, non-physicians, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, who also

can dispense prescription medications and have similar continuing medical education requirements to maintain licensure, in many cases do not attend the same events as doctors and require separate but equal meetings. To further complicate matters, there’s a greater use of meeting consultants and third-party planners for pharma events compared to other types of meetings.



The ACA “will increase the cost of doing business for most pharmaceutical companies, third-party planners and CME educators.”

Deborah Hinson
President, IMMPA
Partner/Brand Strategist
The Hinson Group LLC, New Orleans, LA

Regardless of this diversity, Keilty sees the positive outlook among pharma meeting planners going across the board. “I have worked with many meeting professionals both internally while I was in the corporate world and externally, i.e., third-party agencies,” she says. “I have seen an upbeat feeling in that the meeting professional is finally being recognized as a true business partner and formal function of a company. Many meeting professionals finally have the seat at the table to review spend, negotiate and leverage business globally as well as bridge the gaps between compliance, legal and operations.”

Site Selection

From the perspective of destinations, pharma and health care meetings have become a sought-after sector. For example, pharma meetings have been a growing portion of the meetings business for New Orleans, even though Nikki Moon, vice president of convention sales, New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau, has noticed the inevitable austerity in recent months. “The meetings seem a little smaller in size, and maybe for two days instead of three. The number

of pharma meetings is growing; we are getting more of them. Price is more of a factor than it may have been as well.”

Moon highlights the number of hotel properties and packages the Big Easy can offer as being a major reason why a robust pharma meetings industry continues in New Orleans: “The meetings tend to be very intensive, so right after, people want to have fun, a great meal, some great music. New Orleans is very walkable, and with the hotel packages we can offer, doctors can go right from the seminar to the French Quarter.”

For the meeting itself, the destination should understand the various idiosyncrasies of pharma and other medical meetings. “Once the clinical trials are completed and the pharmaceutical company makes the decision to get the product to the marketplace, they have to start getting classes started and training,” says Moon. “This decision happens very fast, and they are looking for destinations that have ease of doing business and are flexible, working short-term with a fast turn-around...so a destination and a facility have to meet those needs.”

“Short-term availability is a hot

topic,” agrees Susan Zeiri, director of pharmaceutical sales, Visit Orlando. “Pharmaceutical companies are looking for facilities that offer varied meeting space to fit the specific needs of their programs. Our hotels offer not only a wide variety of guest room product, but our hotels offer unique meeting space of all sizes that suit pharmaceutical district breakouts, regional meetings and of course larger general session space.”

In addition to the flexibility, austerity is also more of a factor for a destination. Schaumann cites the obvious suspects: “Less five-star properties, resorts, golf, etc.” According to Hinson, the facility and destination should be “One that meets the criteria: ‘modest’ by standards, not in a resort or spa destination; one that passes the ‘sniff’ test; and then one that will drive attendance,” she says, adding some of the specific criteria include: “Completely private rooms, high ceilings, AV capabilities, excellent food and service.”

Medical Meeting Destinations

Many destinations have created new or expanded medical complexes — such

as the New Orleans BioDistrict, the Global Center for Health Innovation in Cleveland and the Texas Medical Center in Houston — that are being promoted by CVBs and other hospitality/meeting professionals to further attract medical meetings (*see box below*).

These medical centers offer expertise related to the new regulations. “The management and staff of the Global Center for Health Innovation and the Cleveland Convention Center have undertaken education and training to fully understand and meet the needs and regulatory requirements of this industry,” says Tony Prusak, senior director of sales, Cleveland Convention Center. “We recognize that the health care meeting professionals need to work with service providers to provide concessions in the areas of specialty low-cost menus and other meal caps, attendee management concerns and tracking due to transparency reporting.”

The city is one example of an area that is building on existing business, not starting from scratch. “Cleveland is one of the nation’s medical capitals, making it a logical choice for health care industry

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5 Pharma Favorites

Here are five examples of new and/or expanded medical complexes drawing the attention of medical meeting planners, and the industries and professions for whom they organize events.

New Orleans BioDistrict. The \$3.3 billion New Orleans BioDistrict spans 1,500 acres in the downtown and mid-city areas of New Orleans. This vast complex is devoted to biosciences, medicine and health care, and includes the New Orleans BioInnovation Center, a 66,000-sf, state-of-the-art wet-lab, office and conference center, located near the Tulane and Louisiana State universities’ health science centers; the 1.6-million-sf U.S. Veterans Affairs Hospital, due to open in 2016; and the 34-acre University Medical Center, due to open by fourth quarter 2013. “It’s a huge district and already has made a tremendous impact on medical meetings here,” says Nikki Moon, vice president of convention sales, New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau. “It is a resource for meetings for speakers, seminars and tours.”

The Global Center for Health Innovation, Cleveland, OH. Scheduled to open in October 2013, the \$465 million Global Center for Health Innovation (formerly known as the Cleveland Medical Mart) and the adjacent, newly opened Cleveland Convention Center represents a 1-million-sf campus located in the heart of downtown Cleveland. The 235,000-sf Global Center

has four themed floors: Health and Home; People, Patients, and Caregivers; Clinical Spaces; and Health Care IT. Global Center spaces will highlight the latest innovations and feature vendor showrooms, with an emphasis on technology. “We have certainly experienced a huge jump in serious inquiries and interest since it became apparent that the facility was going to open three months ahead of schedule and under budget,” says Tony Prusak, senior director of sales, Cleveland Convention Center. “Meeting planners are very positive about Cleveland and the new facility, especially when we’re able to provide an onsite tour of our facility and the terrific amenities in downtown Cleveland.”

Texas Medical Center, Houston, TX. The 1,000-acre Texas Medical Center is the largest medical complex in the world, containing 50 medicine-related institutions, including 15 hospitals and two specialty institutions, three medical schools, four nursing schools, and schools of dentistry, public health, pharmacy and other health-related practices. The medical center is part of Houston’s downtown, which includes the George R. Brown Convention Center district, and will anchor two high-proliferate medical meetings in upcoming years: the Medical World Americas in 2014 and the Human Genome Meeting in 2016.

“For the past five years, Houston has been actively pursuing business that is international in scope,” says Jorge Franz, vice president of international group sales and tourism, Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. “Due to

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Las Vegas

MEETING PLANNER GUIDE

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meetings,” says Prusak. “This region is home to more than 700 biomedical companies, including billion-dollar industry leaders, and some of the nation’s premier health care providers, including the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic. While we will be attracting health care association trade shows, conferences and meetings, the pharma meeting industry is no different in its needs for successful events — a great, high-tech facility with access to major health care industry and health care providers. Pharma meetings are a critical part of the entire health care industry ecosystem.”

Moon emphasizes that the New Orleans BioDistrict complex is proving to be an effective enticement for all health care meetings, but for pharma events, success has come by building on an existing track record. “The New Orleans BioDistrict is a great asset,” says Moon. “We are using it to sell New Orleans as a destination to medical meeting planners. But we already have a reputation with them, so it is giving us something new to talk about, and we have representatives from the facilities traveling with

us to meeting industry events, so planners can work with them to create their events.”

Rob Adams, vice president, of the Lake Nona Medical City in Orlando points out that while the new complex does not host pharma meetings, “I think Orlando is interesting for medical meetings for a number of reasons. The facilities and convenience of the convention center are unmatched in the nation; it is home to one of the best airports in the country, not to mention its world-class attractions. When you combine those wonderful ‘meeting assets’ with some of the real world clinical, research and medical education work occurring in such unique manners here, it makes for a very compelling location for a medical meeting. The growing array of talented clinicians, researchers and medical educators who are calling Lake Nona Medical City home offers new opportunities for expert speakers for medical meetings in Orlando.”

When choosing a destination, Keilty



Lisa Keilty, CMP
Vice President
PMC²
Mystic, CT

When using a medical complex for a meeting, “any consideration of inappropriateness of venue or lavishness is not likely to be there.”

looks for “highly knowledgeable and pharma-trained staff to understand the nuances of this industry and why medical health care meetings have the requirements and timelines they do. In addition, flexibility.”

The new medical complexes not only potentially add a new dimension to the meeting, they do so within the new austerity demands of this segment. “I think it is a great option for meeting professionals to consider,” says Keilty. “You have everything you need in one place and any consideration of inappropriateness of venue or lavishness is not likely to be there.”

C&IT

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the partnership that we have with the Texas Medical Center, we can now tap into the vast resources available there to not only attract the meetings to Houston but to assist in the creation of programs for medical meetings, helping to identify expert speakers for conferences that come to Houston and even assist in sponsorship efforts.”

Lake Nona Medical City, Orlando, FL. The 650-acre Lake Nona Medical City, located near the Orlando International Airport and only 15–20 minutes from the Orange County Convention Center, serves as a home to the University of Central Florida Health Sciences Campus, University of Central Florida College of Medicine, Burnett Biomedical Sciences Building, Sanford-Burnham Institute for Medical Research, Nemours Children’s Hospital, Orlando Veterans Affairs Medical Center (2014), M.D. Anderson Orlando Cancer Research Institute, and the University of Florida Academic and Research Center.

“The technology available to see while touring at Lake Nona Medical City provides a very unique window of cutting-edge approaches to medical research, education and clinical care,” says Rob Adams, vice president, Lake Nona Medical City. “The

Cleveland’s Global Center for Health Innovation opens in October.



Photo courtesy of Cleveland Convention Center

of what can happen here with this collection of talent and facilities all in such close proximity.”

Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, Las Vegas, NV. Las Vegas’ medical meetings business was bolstered by the Lou Ruvo Center, which opened on May 21, 2010 and was designed by renowned architect, Frank Gehry. The state-of-the-art facility is a leader in current research and scientific information for the treatment of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, Huntington’s diseases, and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease) as well as focusing on prevention, early detection and education. While the impact on medical meetings remains to be measured, the center — and the medical community of Las Vegas — receives immeasurable publicity by hosting star-studded, fundraising extravaganzas that feature celebrities such as Teri Hatcher, Lorraine Bracco and Kevin Spacey, and are personally catered by Wolfgang Puck and Emeril Lagasse.

— TH

SITE SELECTION

High Stakes Meetings

By Derek Reveron



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

Gaming resorts are the ultimate self-contained meeting properties because they offer spacious meeting facilities, exciting entertainment, amenities galore and world-class gaming.

Planners know that gaming resorts result in higher meeting attendance and provide good value. That's important as planners operate on smaller budgets and companies increasingly demand financial justification for meetings and return on investment.

No wonder gaming resorts nationwide are as popular as ever. Las Vegas continues to be top of mind for planners seeking the largest and most diverse variety of gaming resorts. Kathy Miller, president of Schaumburg, IL-based Total Event Resources, chose Las Vegas for a three-day sales and product training meeting in January for a manufacturing company's 125 salespeople and execu-

tives. Miller decided on Las Vegas partly for practical reasons. "Although it was just a few days, they all really wanted to be in Las Vegas. We also had a number of executives in the Western region that

Why Gaming Resorts Offer the Biggest Payoff for Planners

could get in and out of Las Vegas easily. Sometimes things like that are driving forces in where you meet," says Miller.

Miller looked at several properties in Las Vegas before selecting Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, which together offer more than 4,700 guest rooms and suites as well as more than 260,000 sf of meeting space. "The Wynn's style suited our group," says Miller. "It has an intimate feel. Las Vegas and some hotels can be

overwhelming for some people, particularly when you have a smaller group. The Wynn is big, and there is a lot to it, but the way it is laid out doesn't make it feel overwhelming. And you don't have to walk through the casino to get to the meeting area."

Wynn's location on The Strip was a key reason Miller selected the hotel. In addition, they "felt welcomed and important as a small group. They were very attentive and thrilled to have us," she said.

"We also wanted the convenience of being on The Strip to go out at night. And the room rates were awesome."

Attendees enjoyed the Wynn's many amenities including the 35 fine and casual dining restaurants, 111,000-sf casino, two spas and 100,000 sf of retail space.

The group also created its own fun. "The meeting happened during the BCS National Championship Game," says Miller. "So we used one of the suites to

bring in large TV screens and have an event around the game. We had catering from the hotel. On the last day, we had a poolside cocktail reception. They had light food and a chance to regroup and network after full days of meetings before going out." Las Vegas properties will continue to be at the top of Miller's list for certain meetings, she says.

Las Vegas

Once again, the numbers tell the story about Las Vegas. In 2012, Las Vegas hosted 53 of the top 250 trade shows in the United States, according to Trade Show News Network, and the 19th consecutive year Las Vegas earned the No. 1 position. In addition, last year Las Vegas attracted a record 39.7 million visitors, up 2.1 percent over 2011, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA). The number of conventions and meetings increased 13.6 percent.

Amy Riley, LVCVA senior director, convention sales, cites several reasons why Las Vegas remains the mecca of gaming



Kathy Miller President
Total Event Resources
Schaumburg, IL

"They all really wanted to be in Las Vegas. We also had executives... that could get in and out of Las Vegas easily. Things like that are driving forces in where you meet."

destinations: "It's the value we offer, the size of the destination, meeting space, guest rooms and accessibility. And our hotels and resorts are constantly revising, upgrading, adding and reinventing themselves for both new and repeat visitors."

Las Vegas is further expanding its meetings infrastructure. One of the city's largest and most visionary projects is the Las Vegas Global Business District (LVGBD). The \$2.5 billion project will create an international complex that will include major renovations to the 54-year-old Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC).

Plans call for the LVCC to have more exhibit, general session and meeting space; technology upgrades; more food and beverage outlets; additional lobby space; a grand concourse connector; and outdoor public gathering spaces. "The LVCVA board has approved the project and it is still in the beginning stages," says Riley. "It will be completed in phases over the next 10 years or so. We still must go through the financing process, get the project management team established as



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well as the architecture. There is no timetable for starting construction yet.”

The LVCVA will use the LVGBD to leverage its status as an official World Trade Center site obtained through an agreement with the Consumer Electronics Association. The designation combined with the LVGBD will increase the LVCVA's ability to draw more meetings and trade shows from abroad, says Riley.

In other Las Vegas news, Malaysia-based Genting Group announced in March that it will build Resorts World Las Vegas, a multibillion-dollar Asian-themed resort. The property is expected to open in 2016 with 3,500 rooms, 500,000 sf of convention space and more than 300,000 sf of pool and water features.

Meanwhile, existing resorts are improving their properties to compete with the coming competition and each other. MGM Resorts International has been renovating several of its properties, including Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, Bellagio, The Mirage Hotel & Casino and the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino. The MGM has remodeled the 3,570 rooms and 642 suites in its main tower. More than 500,000 sf of flexible meeting space including the 92,000-sf Marquee Ballroom can accommodate meetings of all sizes. The 1,100-suite Delano Las Vegas will take the place of THEhotel in Mandalay Bay. The Delano, a partnership between MRI and Morgans Hotel Group, will open in 2014. In addition, MGM Resorts and AEG plan to build a 20,000-seat arena located between New York-New York Hotel & Casino and Monte Carlo Resort and Casino.

Another major player, Caesars Entertainment, plans to open Gansevoort Las Vegas on the former site of Bill's Gamblin' Hall & Saloon. The Gansevoort, scheduled to open in early 2014, is a partnership between Caesars, Gansevoort Hotel Group and nightlife promoter Victor Drai.

In other Caesars Entertainment news, the world's first Nobu Hotel opened at Caesars Palace Las Vegas and includes a 327-seat Nobu Hotel Restaurant and Lounge. The 181-room boutique hotel is a partnership between Caesars Palace, celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa, actor



Aria Resort & Casino earned the prestigious Forbes Five Star Award for its Sky Suites, a luxurious hotel-within-a-hotel with expansive views of Las Vegas.

Robert DeNiro, and Hollywood producer Meir Teper. Caesars Entertainment also continues to work on The Linq, a \$500 million dining, entertainment and shopping district that will be anchored by the Las Vegas High Roller, a 550-foot high observation wheel with 28 giant glass-enclosed cabins that can accommodate 40 attendees.

Also on The Strip, The Venetian/The Palazzo adjacent to the recently renovated Sands Expo and Convention Center offers more than 7,000 guest rooms and suites. More than 40,000 additional rooms are located within a 10-minute walk. Environmentally conscious groups are attracted to the Venetian/Palazzo because it is one of the largest LEED-certified meeting complexes in the world.

The Venetian/Palazzo is a complete meeting property. The Palazzo features more than 60 luxury boutiques and fine-dining restaurants that include CUT by Wolfgang Puck and Table 10 by Emeril Lagasse. The Venetian features the Grand Canal Shoppes — an indoor streetscape with gondolas and singing gondoliers, as well as several upscale dining and shopping options.

One of Las Vegas' most popular newer properties include the 4,004-room Aria Resort & Casino, located within CityCenter on The Strip. The 61-story AAA Five Diamond resort offers more than 300,000 sf of high-tech meeting and convention space that includes wireless touch panels operating videoconferencing, fiber optic cable, HD projection screens and plasma TVs.

Also new at Aria is “Zarkana”— the surreal acrobatic spectacle by Cirque du Soleil. The diverse cast of more than 75 international artists transports the au-

dience into a fantastical and suspenseful world, blurring the boundaries between the real and imaginary.

Opening in July, the menu at the new FIVE50 Pizza Bar, the first casual concept by James Beard award-winning chef Shawn McClain, will feature McClain's signature pizzas paired with a selection of craft beers along with small plates, handmade pastas and decadent desserts.

Also, Aria Buffet was updated and now has new culinary offerings as well. There are 11 buffet stations: Asian, Italian, Pizza, Mediterranean, Tandoori, Carvery, Diner, Salad Bar, the all-new Fish Market and Latin stations and Sweets.

Javier's, which opened last fall, features grilled seafood, steaks, chicken and vegetarian dishes as well as premium tequila and Javier's famous hand-shaken, made-to-order margaritas.

For culinary entertainment, attendees will enjoy Chef Masa Takayama's new Tetsu, located inside his Japanese restaurant barMASA. Highly skilled teppan chefs do all the prepping, cooking and plating orders specific to each guest.

Atlantic City

Despite minimal residual problems — both real and perceived — left in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Atlantic City continues to attract meetings from throughout the nation. Gary Musich, vice president of sales for the Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority, says 2012 ended up flat due to the storm but the prospects for 2013 and beyond are very positive. “We are projecting 12 percent growth in meetings for 2013.”

Behind that growth, says Musich, “is that we are evolving from a gaming destination to a balanced, mature destina-

tion appealing to all business segments. Our room inventory grew by over 20 percent in 2008 as the recession hit, but we have been able to absorb that. We have seen an evolution of the city as a tourism district that has been carved out in collaboration with the Atlantic City Alliance. We are aiming to lengthen the stay with attractions that are also important to planners. There has been a massive investment in retail like The Walk, a 10-square-block dining and retail center that connects the convention center and Boardwalk. And we recently got a commitment from Bass Pro Shops to build a 90,000-sf facility.”

Musich says the city's massive ‘Do AC’ campaign to get the word out to planners is paying off. “Attendance at meetings and conventions was up 65 percent and spend was up 43 percent in January, demonstrating that the rebound from the storm was quick,” he says.

According to Jeff Vasser, president of the Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority division of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, “Even through the national recession, superstorm Sandy and increased competition from surrounding states, Atlantic City has been able to maintain an extraordinarily high occupancy rate. Atlantic City is a strong and viable destination.”

In a statement, Vasser and tourism officials pointed to “recent additions such as Revel Casino-Hotel, Golden Nugget, the Margaritaville complex, art installations, roving ambassadors, an increased calendar of special events, the new ‘Do AC’ branding and other initiatives throughout the Tourism District as signs that the city will remain relevant and maintain its visitor base in 2013 and beyond.”

A spokesperson for Caesars in Atlantic City, says, “The ‘Do AC’ campaign is spending \$30 million over five years and that has been very helpful. They help to offset some costs in bringing planners to our properties. For Atlantic City, show is better than tell. Planners are always surprised at what Atlantic City has to offer as far as shopping, restaurants, etc.”

The top three reasons Atlantic City

remains such a viable destination for meetings, according to Musich, are:

- Convenience to major cities such as New York and Philadelphia;
- One-stop shopping because the CVB owns and operates the convention center; and
- Cost effectiveness.

Dubbed as “the most meeting-friendly hotel in the city,” the 2,079-suite Tropicana Casino & Resort recently com-

pleted a \$180 million renovation and offers more than 100,000 sf of meeting space including a 25,000-sf grand ballroom and a 25,000-sf exhibit hall.

Planners also sing the Tropicana's praises. Deborah Langdon, HR director, regional training for Rutherford, NJ-based SGS North America, an inspection, certification and verification company, has been a long-time Tropicana customer. “SGS is the third company I have worked

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Photo courtesy of Borgata

One of the guest rooms at the popular 2,000-room Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa that offers eCasino on the in-room televisions for in-room casino play.

for since 1996, and I have done meetings with the Tropicana for each employer since then,” says Langdon. “I have had a long-term relationship with the people who work there, and I have never had a bad meeting with them. If I say my CEO is flying in and I need certain things for him, they totally understand. They know my expectations and try to exceed them.”

Langdon has held a few SGS training and development sessions at the Tropicana every year since 2010. In January, the Tropicana hosted a three-day executive development session for 25 SGS vice presidents, directors and managing directors mostly from the U.S., Mexico, Canada, South America and Central America. Langdon chose the Tropicana partly because the property’s many self-contained offerings including 24 restaurants, 25 shops, 18 bars and a 148,000-sf casino matched the needs and goals of the meeting.

Attendees had to spend lots of time on-property because their agendas were packed with formal and informal sessions, breakouts and meetings, says Langdon. “During the day, they have the development piece of it. At night, they do fun networking dinners in some of the Tropicana’s restaurants like Fin and Carmine’s. We typically have the restaurants to ourselves. There are times when they are working through dinner and we have it catered in the meeting space. Almost all of our dinners are on-site,” she says.

Langdon continues to return to the Tropicana in no small part due to the property’s service. She cites two exam-

ples: “We had a meeting scheduled last year on the day of Hurricane Sandy. We had people flying in from all over the world. Four days before the meeting, we still hadn’t cancelled. A staff member gave me her personal number to call to keep in contact regarding the storm and cancellation. We did cancel. It’s also the little things like the person in charge of banquets always remembering that the group always wants yogurt during breakfast.”

The much anticipated Jimmy Buffett’s Margaritaville, located inside the Resorts Hotel Casino is now open. The restaurant features a stage for nightly live entertainment, a tiki bar and Buffett-inspired accent pieces. Attendees can gather on the exterior deck on the Boardwalk for alfresco networking and ocean breezes.

The popular 2,000-room Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, is a complete, self-contained meeting property with 70,000 sf of event space. The Borgata completed a \$50 million room redesign project, and introduced in-room gaming, a first for the hotel industry. Also, the hotel recently introduced a new look for one of its two nightclubs, mur mur. The Borgata features innovative and world-class dining experiences with a wide array of restaurants and world-renowned chefs under one roof, including the Old Homestead Steakhouse and legendary chefs such as Wolfgang Puck (Wolfgang Puck American Grille) and Bobby Flay (Bobby Flay Steak). A companion property, the elegant Water Club at Borgata, provides 800 guest rooms, 18,000 sf of meeting space, a 36,000-sf spa and five pools.

Planners return again and again to Caesars Atlantic City Hotel & Casino, a longtime lynchpin of Atlantic City, located along the Boardwalk just two blocks from the Atlantic City Convention Center. The famed 1,144-room hotel offers the 17,135-sf Palladium Ballroom, 24,000 sf of meeting space and the renovated 1,500-seat Circus Maximus Theater. Attendees can spend their spare time gaming and enjoying the Qua Baths & Spa. Caesars Atlantic City, like other properties owned by Caesars Entertainment, is part of its Total Rewards Meetings and Events pro-

gram, which offers reward credits to planners for their own use or to put toward future meetings.

Native American Resorts

Planners can choose from a range of top Native American-owned gaming resorts that are holding their own with competitors nationwide. The resorts typically are located in picturesque natural settings and feature décor based on Native American cultures.

Groups seeking a gaming resort graced with Southwest beauty may consider the 273-room Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino, located in Mescalero, NM, near Ruidoso. The Inn is owned by the Mescalero Apache Tribe, which also runs nearby Ski Apache, a ski resort. Planners and attendees can take advantage of the Inn’s 30,000 sf of flexible meeting space, four restaurants, 38,000-sf gaming floor and the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort Championship Golf Course.



Photo courtesy of Inn of the Mountain Gods

The Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort Championship Golf Course has a unique island fairway and fast-breaking greens.

The Seattle Fish Company of New Mexico Inc. selected the Inn as the first gaming resort to host winners of the firm’s annual incentive contest for distributors. “It was different for us. In the past years we took the group to places like Boston,” says regional vice president Darrin Amador, who plans at least three meetings a year for the Albuquerque, NM-based company. “I like that the Inn was close because we brought people in from a 500-mile radius. They also have a very nice property. It’s cool, literally, because it’s up in the mountains, and it’s a beautiful setting. There is a forest and gorgeous lake. The casino overlooks the golf course and its well-manicured greens.”



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Golf was among the activities that attendees enjoyed. “We had a contest for t-shirts and hats. I paired everybody up based on personality. I paired my partner with a company executive, and I paired with another executive. The golf was 99 percent pleasure and 1 percent business,” says Amador.

The group also enjoyed several other activities on- and off-property. “We had a dinner at the Inn’s fine-dining restaurant (Wendell’s Steak & Seafood Restaurant and Lounge),” says Amador. “We also had a dinner offsite. Some people who didn’t want to golf enjoyed a spa in Ruidoso. The group really liked the casino and had a good time in regard to that.”

Another Native American property, the AAA Four Diamond Talking Stick Resort, is located in Scottsdale, AZ, in a desert setting with views of the surrounding mountains. The 497-room resort is owned by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and displays of Native American culture are featured throughout the property. Located only a 20-minute drive from Phoenix’s Sky Harbor International Airport, the



The popular G Spa at MGM Grand at Foxwoods caters to adults 21 and over.

Photo courtesy of Foxwoods Resort Casino

Diamond property, operated by the Tulip Tribes, features several tribal touches including 25-foot house posts hand carved from a 1,000-year-old red cedar tree. Meeting space totals 30,000 sf and includes the 15,000-sf Orca Ballroom and several breakout spaces. All meeting rooms include Wi-Fi, LCD projectors and drop-down screens. The Oasis Pool is located next to the meeting areas and serves as a unique function space.

Connecticut

Connecticut is home to Foxwoods Resort Casino in Mashantucket and the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville. Both prop-

erties are easy to access by air and car from New York, Boston, Hartford and Providence. Recently, it was widely reported the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, which owns Foxwoods Resort Casino, completed the restructuring of \$2.3 billion in debt. As part of the restructuring, Foxwoods received \$25 million of new financing.

Foxwoods, a AAA Four Diamond property, is the largest resort casino in the U.S. The Foxwoods complex offers 2,200

guest rooms among four properties — the Grand Pequot Tower, MGM Grand at Foxwoods, Great Cedar Hotel and Two Trees Inn. Combined, the properties offer more than 150,000 sf of meeting space. The resort’s array of activities and amenities is impressive. These include the 1,400-seat Fox Theater and 4,000-seat Grand Theater, six casinos, two golf courses and the award-winning G Spa. Guests can dine at seven gourmet restaurants and enjoy friendly competition at the Rees Jones-designed championship golf course and a bowling alley. The Comix comedy venue provides laughs galore.

The Mohegan Sun is owned by the Mohegan Tribe and located along the scenic Thames River in the foothills of southeastern Connecticut. Planners will find everything they need for small and large meetings, including 1,200 rooms and suites, 100,000 sf of total meeting and function space, and the 38,000-sf Uncas Ballroom.

When it comes to activities and entertainment, Mohegan Sun offers the complete package. Following a day of meetings, groups can unwind in the 300,000 sf of gaming space and at the 20,000-sf Elemis Spa. Attendees can also hit the links at the Mohegan Sun Country Club at Pautipaug, which offers a newly renovated clubhouse and an 18-hole private course. The Mohegan Sun’s plentiful dining and shopping options include 45 restaurants, and food and beverage outlets, including Michael Jordan’s Steak House and Bobby Flay’s Bar Americain. In addition, the Mohegan Sun Arena features nightly big-name entertainment and is home to the WNBA’s Connecticut Sun pro basketball team.

C&IT



Scottsdale’s Talking Stick Resort features more than 100,000 sf of meeting space including the 25,000-sf Salt River Grand Ballroom (above) and 14 more meeting rooms.

Photo courtesy of Talking Stick Resort

resort features ample meeting space, including the 25,000-sf Salt River Grand Ballroom, 22 meeting rooms and 50,000 sf of outdoor function space. The casino spans 240,000 sf, and the 650-seat showroom features top live performances. Golfers will enjoy the resort’s two championship courses.

Prominent West Coast Native American resorts include the 370-room Tulip Resort Casino, located just a 30-minute drive from Seattle. The AAA Four

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DESTINATION

Northern California

By John Buchanan

Photo courtesy of San Francisco Travel

From the Bay Area and Big Sur to Silicon Valley and Wine Country

Northern California is not a single place. It is a collection of places, each of which is world famous for its unique appeal.

From the urban enclaves of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose, to the renowned wine regions of Napa Valley and Sonoma County, to the more rural eastern region known as Tri-Valley, and the iconic coastline through Monterey County along U.S. Highway 1, Northern California offers planners a diverse list of spectacular options.

San Francisco

It is often said by travel writers that there are only two truly unique cities in America: New Orleans and San Francisco. And both are beloved by meeting planners.

"I'm biased, because San Francisco is one of my favorite places on the planet," says Gayle Patterson Withers, CMP, coordinator of forums and meetings at the Newtown, PA-based Law School Admission Council, whose business is facilitating the law school admission process for students and administering the LSAT exam. Withers has used San Francisco eight times for her most important annual meeting, which draws about 600 attendees.

"I just love the energy of San Francisco and the experience of being there," Withers says. "When you get off the plane and leave the airport and you see those iconic views of the skyline on your way into the city, you just feel like you've arrived in

some place that is very special. And I also love the culture of the city. It's such a special, interesting place that any attendee can find something fun to do there. You just feel happy being in San Francisco."

Kathryn Horton, vice president, convention services and events at the San Francisco Travel Association, the city's convention and visitors bureau, elaborates on why the destination is perennially popular with meeting planners. "The appeal of San Francisco for meetings is based primarily on our cultural diversity and the amount of venues we have to offer," she says. "And our airlift is excellent, from all over the world. We're also a very green city that is very walkable. And that means that a lot of groups don't need to worry about transportation. They can walk everywhere they need to go."

The most obvious factors in the choice of San Francisco are its beauty and eclectic charm, Horton says. "Everyone in the world wants to come to San Francisco," she says. "It's a fantasy for most people, because we often get voted the No. 1 destination in the world or in the country for tourism. We also offer such a variety of hotels, restaurants, offsite venues and activities, that once a meeting planner decides to bring a group here, there is an almost endless list of options to build a program around."

Withers cites the unique hotels in San Francisco as one of its major appeals. In recent years, she has used the 532-room Hotel Nikko, located just steps from famous Union Square.

"It's just an amazing hotel," says Withers, who also likes the AAA Four Diamond Hilton San Francisco Union Square.

Horton notes that San Francisco offers a long list of unique, iconic hotels, including landmark Nob Hill properties such as The Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Westin St. Francis and The Fairmont. The last new hotel built in the city was the InterContinental San Francisco, which opened five years ago. Several major properties, including the Grand Hyatt San Francisco and Mandarin Oriental, have completed major renovations.

San Francisco also features a range of spectacular offsite venues. For large groups, up to 4,000 attendees, Horton recommends the new Exploratorium science museum, which opened at its new location at Pier 15 on the Embarcadero in April. It is available for buyouts, and also offers individual spaces for events and receptions.

For medium-sized groups, Horton likes City View at Metreon. "It's a very nice facility that is like a blank canvas a planner can paint on," she says. "It can be adapted to any kind of meeting for groups of 300 to 1,000."

The bayfront Fort Mason Center, administered by the U.S. National Park Service, offers a total of 28 venues accommodating from five to 20,000 people. For small groups of 30 to 250, Horton suggests The General's Residence, a historic landmark. "It offers magnificent views of San Francisco Bay," Horton says. The view also includes Aquatic Park and Alcatraz.

Oakland

Located just across San Francisco Bay from San Francisco is Oakland. Although not as well known as its world-famous neighbor as a meeting destination, Oakland offers a more laid-back, less expensive alternative that still features easy access to all the Bay Area has to offer.

For the last four years, including her event this June, Withers has hosted her annual meeting in Oakland. The key reason, she says, is its affordability, adding that she estimates that holding the meeting in Oakland is 30–40 percent less expensive than San Francisco. That is important because prospective student attendees do not pay to attend the meeting, which is funded by law school exhibitors and sponsors.

But, Withers says, Oakland also delivers other benefits.

"One of the things we like is that it's easy to get to for attendees from all over the Bay Area," she says. "That's important because although our 130 law school exhibitors are from all over the country, our attendees are local. So we also try to pick a location that people can get to easily. And Oakland is very easy because of the BART trains, and it's also easy to drive there and find parking."

Withers' hotel of choice last year and this year was the Oakland Marriott City Center, located near Jack London Square. "The hotel has a very small convention center, which is perfect for our meeting," she says. "But what I really like is the load-in. It's at street level, so we don't have to deal with freight elevators. The hotel is also very easy for attendees to get into and out of. So it is just convenient for everybody. It's just a very nice property

"It's such a special, interesting place that any attendee can find something fun to do there. You just feel happy being in San Francisco."

Gayle Patterson Withers, CMP, Coordinator of Forums and Meetings, Law School Admission Council, Newtown, PA

that works very well for our particular meeting." The Oakland Marriott completed a major renovation two years ago.

Withers also likes the fact that the hotel is surrounded by lots of good dining options. "We always make sure that our hotel has plenty of good local restaurants nearby, because that's important to our exhibitors, who tend to be foodies who do a lot of networking and entertaining during the meeting, and Oakland has an excellent local dining scene, especially in areas like Jack London Square," she says. "And there are a lot of small local restaurants that are excellent."



Wine Country

Located about an hour by car from downtown San Francisco are the world-famous vineyards of Napa Valley and Sonoma County. Although best known for their production of some of the world's finest wines, Napa and Sonoma are also acclaimed for their fine dining and arts scenes.

Napa Valley, featuring a Mediterranean climate and spectacular scenic beauty, is defined by the Mayacamas mountain range to its western and northern sides, and the Vaca Mountains on its eastern side.

Robin Wasserman, administrative assistant at San Francisco-based national law firm Gordon & Rees, has planned an annual partner retreat for about 175 attendees for the past three years. The firm has been taking the partners to Napa Valley every year over the last decade for the much-anticipated event. "Napa Valley is an exquisitely beautiful place," says Wasserman, who uses the Villagio Inn & Spa and Vintage Inn, its sister property next door, for her event. "They are the perfect match for our group," she says. "They have great meeting rooms. And their staff is extremely attentive to all of our needs. If we say 'Jump,' they say 'How high?' And we also get great rates that include a full breakfast buffet, and high tea and snacks in the afternoons. So we get very good value." Villagio Inn & Spa also features a fine wine shop, where Wasserman stages an afternoon wine-tasting with gourmet snacks.

"The hotels are also centrally located in Yountville," she says.

“There’s a nice little shopping plaza right next door. And across the street, there are several five-star restaurants. So our attendees can easily walk everywhere.”

There are also hiking and biking trails. “We have a lot of outdoorsy partners who like to take advantage of those things,” Wasserman says.

But of particular appeal to her well-heeled attendees are the critically celebrated local restaurants in downtown Yountville. Among their favorites are Redd, a five-star American bistro; Bistro Jeanty, which serves light French-California fare, and Bottega, located between the two hotels and serving fine Italian cuisine. “And there are a lot more superb restaurants within easy walking distance of the hotels,” Wasserman says.

Among popular activities are tours of some of Napa’s more noted local wineries and hot-air ballooning excursions.

Although not as well known as Napa Valley, Sonoma County is also popular because of its wineries and spectacular restaurants. Sue Klick, CMP, senior convention specialist at industry-leading medical device manufacturer Medtronic, which is headquartered in Sonoma County’s Santa Rosa, has regularly used her home turf for important physician immersion meetings for 15 years.

“Sonoma County is just a spectacular place visually,” she says. “The terrain is beautiful. The countryside is beautiful. The local people are very friendly and welcoming. And we also have fabulous weather. It’s just a great location for a meeting.”

As a local, Klick notes that Sonoma is not as developed or as crowded as its more famous neighbor. “That means it’s also fairly easy to get around. Napa Valley gets all of the press,” she says. “But we are Napa’s pretty sister.” Although, like Napa, Sonoma is best-known for its winemaking, it too boasts a robust arts community and upscale fine-dining scene.

“Sonoma County is just a spectacular place visually. ...It’s just a great location for meetings.”

Sue Klick, CMP, Senior Convention Specialist, Medtronic, Santa Rosa, CA



Although there are major-flag hotels from Hilton and Hyatt in Santa Rosa, Sonoma’s hotels tend to be smaller boutique-style properties, Klick says. Among the hotels she particularly likes is Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel & Spa in Santa Rosa. “It’s a great location, because it’s right at the heart of downtown,” she says. “If attendees want to go for a stroll, there are restaurants and shopping right out your front door.”

She also favors the intimate conference center at Vineyards Inn, a boutique property slightly north of Santa Rosa in Kenwood. “It’s a small hotel, with under 50 rooms, but they have very nice conference facilities for small groups,” she says.

One of Sonoma’s most popular small hotels is the exclusive

and intimate 29-room Kenwood Inn & Spa, which features one of the country’s most celebrated spas and is adjacent to Sonoma Golf Club and Kunde Family Estate winery, making it a convenient choice for small groups that want a lot of meeting infrastructure in a small footprint.

As a longtime user of Sonoma, Klick also has high praise for its restaurants. Two she particularly likes — both operated by the local Stark Reality Restaurants — are Stark’s Steakhouse, featuring certified Angus steaks and sustainable seafood, and Willi’s Wine Bar, both in downtown Santa Rosa.



Rendering of the San Jose Convention Center expansion.

Photo courtesy of San Jose CVB

San Jose

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and hailed worldwide as a hub for entrepreneurship and technological innovation, San Jose — now ranked as the 10th largest city in the U.S. — is a rising star as a meeting destination. Newly modernized San Jose International Airport is just four miles from downtown hotels.

The city’s modern, state-of-the-art meeting infrastructure includes the San Jose Convention Center with 425,000 sf of convention space, which features 165,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space, a 22,000-sf Executive Ballroom and 30 breakout rooms. The facility is now in the final stages of a renovation and expansion that, when completed this fall, will add 125,000 sf of new space, which includes 38,706 sf of new meeting space and a new 35,110-sf Grand Ballroom. Following the renovation, the San Jose Convention Center will feature a total of 550,000 sf of convention space and 305,000 sf of exhibition space.

San Jose also features a hotel inventory of 2,000 commitment rooms on peak downtown and 4,000 on peak citywide, with a broad assortment of major flag hotels within easy walking distance of the convention center.

There’s a wide array of unique offsite venues in San Jose that take advantage of the city’s 300 days of sunshine a year. For example, the San Jose Museum of Art can host an indoor-outdoor event for up to 3,000; and the San Pedro Square Market, half a mile from the convention center, offers indoor-outdoor space for receptions with up to 1,850 attendees. The Tech Museum offers a rooftop terrace for 150 and 132,000 sf of gallery and meeting space for up to 2,500. The upscale Silicon Valley Capitol Club offers indoor-outdoor space for 300 and 360-degree views of downtown. Planners looking for a mid-sized theater will be delighted with the historic 3,326-seat San Jose Civic, a 1936 city landmark that reopened last year after a four-year renovation.

But perhaps its most important attributes in today’s meeting market are that it has been voted one of America’s greenest

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“(The Villagio Inn and Vintage Inn) staff is extremely attentive to all of our needs. If we say ‘Jump,’ they say ‘How high?’”

Robin Wasserman, Administrative Assistant
Gordon & Rees, San Francisco, CA

cities by Green Tech Media, and features a walkable downtown with a campus feel. It is also among the country’s safest cities.

And among the city’s most important meeting industry innovations is its unique Team San Jose, a partnership of its convention center, convention and visitors bureau, and cultural attractions. Team San Jose delivers one-stop shopping for convention venue management services, food-and-beverage services, hotels, labor, offsite venues, arts organizations and local businesses.



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Monterey County

Monterey County is located about two hours south of San Francisco on the Pacific coast, along U.S. Highway 1, one of the most scenic drives in the world. The picture-postcard-perfect coastline features a trio of spectacular individual destinations: Big Sur, Monterey and Carmel.

Despite its sprawling, sparsely populated geography and breathtaking natural beauty, Monterey County features substantial meetings infrastructure, which includes nearly 12,000 hotel rooms in 200 hotels and resorts. Meeting facilities across the county can handle groups of 10–30,000 people. The Monterey Conference Center accommodates up to 1,700 attendees in 41,000 sf of meeting and banquet space, which includes a 19,600-sf exhibition hall, grand ballroom and 500-seat theater.

Monterey features major flag hotels such as the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa on Del Monte Golf Course, InterContinental The Clement Monterey, and Monterey Marriott, as well as smaller, more unique local hotels such as Portola Hotel & Spa and Casa Munras Hotel & Spa.

The area’s unique attractions include Cannery Row, immortalized in literature by John Steinbeck; Monterey Bay Aquarium, which offers multiple options for staging private events in the exhibit galleries for up to 2,500 attendees; and fabled Pebble Beach golf course. More adventurous groups can get an adrenaline rush at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca and take part in the Skip Barber Driving School.

There are nearly limitless opportunities for outdoor adventures including hiking, biking, mountain climbing, boating, kayaking, hang-gliding, whale-watching and scuba diving. Among its most popular outdoor attractions is its Recreation Trail. Planners looking for some serenity can find it at the Monarch Grove Butterfly Sanctuary.

Carmel-by-the-Sea is home to Clint Eastwood and unique landmark hotels such as Highlands Inn and Carmel Mission Inn, as well as major flag properties such as Hyatt Carmel Highlands. Eastwood operates and personally oversees the upscale and intimate Mission Ranch Resort, where he might just show up to play piano for your group. The 77-room Quail Lodge & Golf Club in Carmel Valley southeast of Monterey offers a variety of intimate meeting and event spaces for 20–300 attendees, plus a Land Rover Experience Driving School.

Monterey County also offers some of the most dramatic restaurant views to be found anywhere in the world, such as Nepenthe, overlooking the Pacific from atop the bluffs of Big Sur. Just up the road is one of the world’s most spectacular seaside hotels, Ventana Inn & Spa.

The Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau offers a wide range of planner services including complimentary visitor services and registration staff, starting with four hours for groups with 100–299 peak rooms and eight hours for groups with 300+ peak rooms. Delegate housing services are also available for groups with 450+ peak rooms per night for two or more nights utilizing four or more hotel properties. The CVB also provides planners with a dedicated personal assistant who will consult on and oversee every practical detail of a meeting.

Tri-Valley

Located 33 miles east of San Francisco and stretching from Mount Diablo to Lake Del Valle and the hills of Livermore Valley wine country is California’s Tri-Valley, known as East Bay. Comprised of the town of Danville and the cities of Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton and San Ramon, Tri-Valley is accessible through the San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose airports.

“Few places are as authentic, charming and unspoiled as Tri-Valley,” says Liz Sullivan, social media and public relations manager for Visit Tri-Valley California.

Tri-Valley is home to more than 300,000 sf of meeting space and more than 4,500 hotel rooms featuring major hotel brands such as DoubleTree, Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott and Sheraton. Its event facilities include Alameda County Fairgrounds, with 150,000 sf of space; Robert Livermore Center, 90,000 sf; San Ramon Conference Center, 55,000 sf; Hilton Pleasanton at the Club, 24,000 sf; San Ramon Marriott Conference Center, 19,000 sf; Palm Event Center, 8,000 sf; and Shannon Community Center in Dublin, 6,000 sf.

The area’s more than 300 restaurants feature diverse, authentic cuisines such as classic Californian, Italian, Mexican, Chinese and American mixed with ethnic influences such as Afghani, Sri Lankan, Korean and Thai. And Tri-Valley boasts 13 golf courses and 53 award-winning wineries — from boutique labels to historical wineries such as Concannon and Wente. **C&IT**

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ON THE MOVE

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

Rob Gebhardt was named director of sales and marketing for the B Resort in the Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, FL. A 25-year hospitality sales and marketing veteran, he most recently was director of sales and marketing for B Ocean Fort Lauderdale, FL.

The Hyatt Times Square, New York, NY, slated to open in October 2013, has named **Klair Johnston** as director of sales and marketing. She was director of sales and marketing for Hyatt Fairfax, Fairfax, VA.



WATSON



JOHNSTON

Fontainebleau Miami Beach, FL, has promoted **Kevin Bryant** to director of sales and revenue management. He most recently served as director of revenue management at the hotel.

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