



# Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

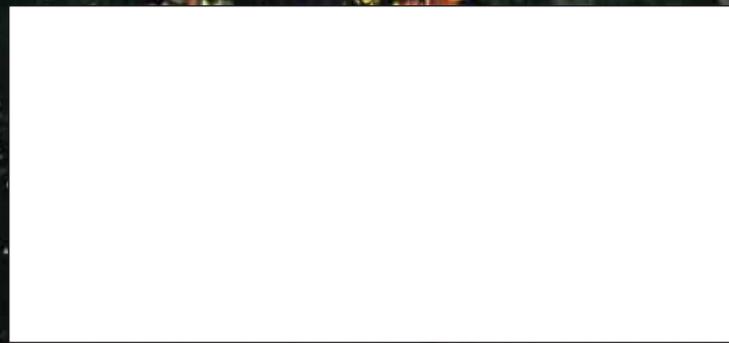
## Gaming Destinations

Las Vegas Leads the Way  
to Winning Events

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Entertainment!**  
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Replicas of New York City  
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Resorts International's  
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“There is one thing we agree on —  
New Orleans is a great place to hold an event!”

2013 New Orleans Super Bowl Host Committee Co-Chairs  
(and New Orleans locals), Mary Matalin and James Carville



For more information call 877-393-5828 or visit [neworleansmeetings.com](http://neworleansmeetings.com).

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Incentive Travel**  
THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION



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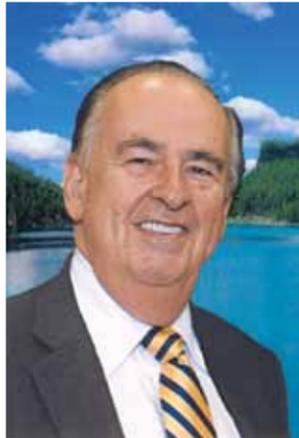
Attention-getting video badges by Video Tattoo are just one among many technology innovations planners can use to boost the effectiveness of meetings.

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# PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

## Just Do It — Today

‘Procrastination is the thief of time,’ said Charles Dickens who advised “to never do tomorrow what you can do today.” A familiar adage often heard at this time of year when New Year’s resolutions prevail. There is no better time than today to get started, advises Laura Stack, MBA, CSP, on page 12. Stack, a respected author, speaker and 20-year veteran in the field of employee productivity, shows us how to overcome the obstacles of fear, laziness, inertia and perfectionism and “get started already” toward defining new goals and strategies for 2013.



Even though the perilous ramifications of a fall off the “fiscal cliff” were averted for the time being, there’s more work to do, thus uncertainty is still top of mind. Fortunately, many indicators continue to point to an improving economy. In fact, cities from coast to coast are posting record-breaking tourism numbers.

New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and NYC & Company CEO George Fertitta announced that New York City welcomed a all-time high 52 million visitors in 2012. Fertitta said, “Our meetings and conventions segment also continues to perform well. In 2012, we had the most spending by our meetings and convention delegates ever. All this in a tough economy.”

Los Angeles, too, welcomed a record 40.4 million visitors from around the globe, and the second highest share of overseas visitors to the U.S. (13.1 percent). LA Tourism’s next goal is 41.3 million visitors.

This year, technology — especially mobile technology — will continue to transform the meetings industry, too. See “A Supercomputer in Your Pocket” on page 20 for how new tools will help you be more effective and productive this year.

According to many planners, selecting the most appropriate site is the No. 1 factor that can make or break a meeting. In our cover story “Gaming Destinations — Las Vegas Leads the Way to Winning Events” on page 34 we learn why gaming resorts fit the bill for meetings and incentives. For example, in addition to built-in entertainment and unparalleled amenities, Las Vegas is one of just a few U.S. destinations where a planner can find several thousand rooms under one roof. Event Alchemy Partner Katy Grant says, “It is very important to keep this meeting under one roof so it feels cohesive and there are lots of opportunities for face-to-face networking.”

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher



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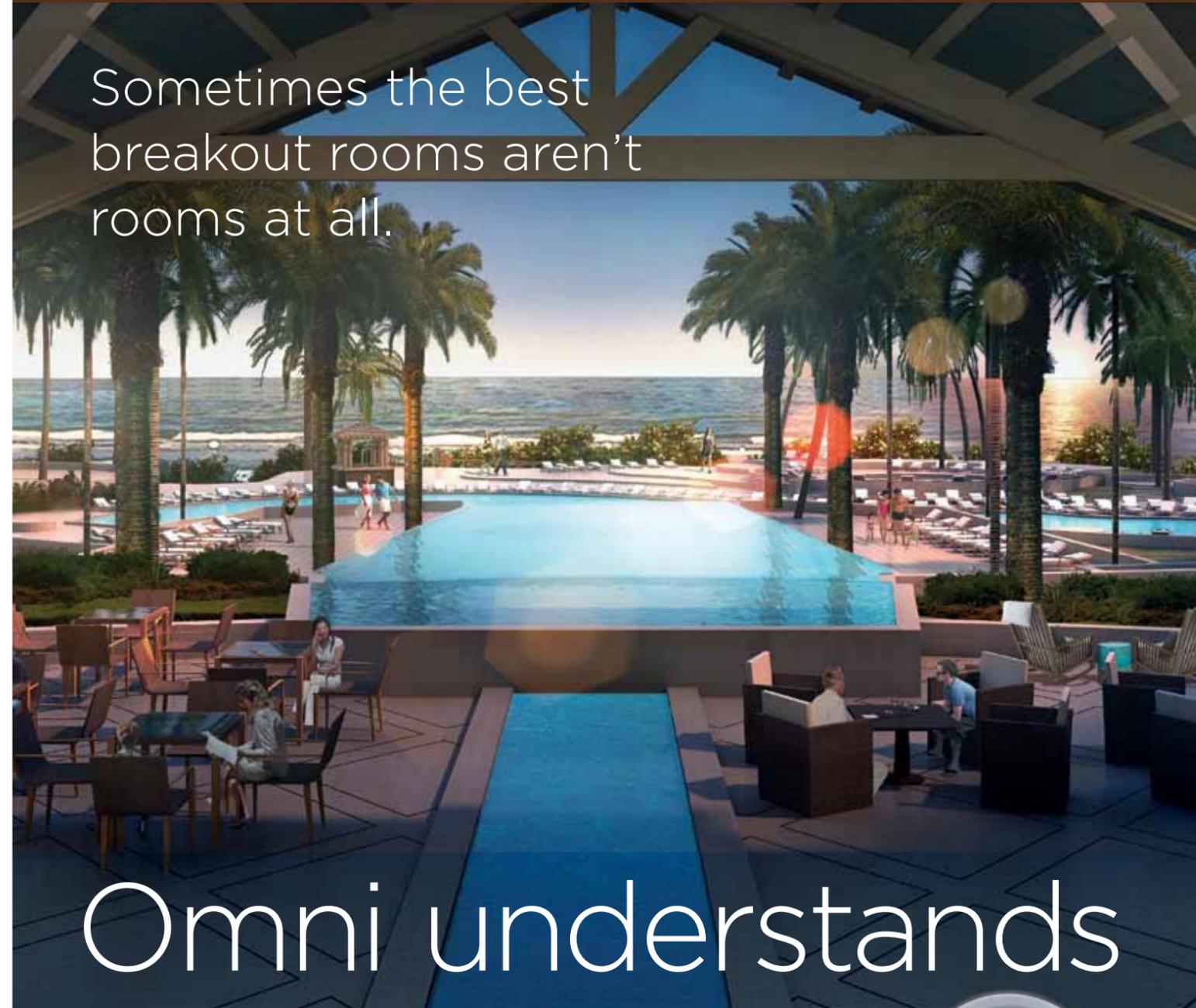
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Sometimes the best  
breakout rooms aren't  
rooms at all.



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Omni Hotels & Resorts received the highest numerical score among upper upscale hotels in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2012 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study<sup>SM</sup>. Study based on responses from 61,716 guests measuring 10 upper upscale hotels and measures opinions of guests who stayed in a hotel June 2011-May 2012. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed August 2011-May 2012. Your experiences may vary. Visit [jdpower.com](http://jdpower.com). ©2013 Omni Hotels & Resorts.



JAMESON

## Jameson Named Fort Worth CVB President and CEO

FORT WORTH, TX — The Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau (FWCVB) has named Bob Jameson as president and CEO, effective January 19. Jameson is responsible for the strategic development of FWCVB initiatives, including meeting and convention business, tourism development and destination promotion. Most recently, Jameson was general manager of the Worthington Renaissance Hotel, which has been managed by Marriott International since 1999. Under his leadership, the Worthington was twice named Hotel of the Year within the Marriott system of 500 full-service hotels. During his 27 years in the Fort Worth hotel industry, he twice served as chairman of the board of the FWCVB and has been on many volunteer boards in service to Fort Worth. "I'm thrilled to continue my association with the FWCVB, and take it to an exciting new level as president and CEO. The work we do on behalf of our world-class city is critically important to our growth and prosperity," Jameson said. "I look forward to the challenges of the position and working to ensure Fort Worth is known as a friendly, unique and historic place to visit." [www.fortworth.com](http://www.fortworth.com)

## Enchantment Resort Debuts \$25 Million Transformation

SEDONA, AZ — Enchantment Resort debuted the third and final phase of a \$25 million property-wide renovation with enhancements to heighten the resort's sense of place amid the red rock beauty of Boynton Canyon in Sedona, AZ. Closely following the completion of an \$11 million refurbishment of all 218 guest rooms and a \$4 million expansion of the resort's onsite Meeting Village, the resort now boasts a completely transformed clubhouse with new and reimagined restaurants; a larger pool area with 360-degree views of the canyon; new retail boutique and outdoor spaces. Within the redesigned clubhouse facilities, guests will encounter a totally new arrival experience, three distinct dining experiences and a larger main pool area. [www.enchantmentresort.com](http://www.enchantmentresort.com)

## Harrah's Rincon Casino and Resort Begins Expansion

LAS VEGAS, NV — Caesars Entertainment announced that their San Diego North property Harrah's Rincon Casino & Resort has begun a \$150 million expansion, adding a 21-story, 400-room hotel tower and 23,000-sf ballroom that will connect to an expansive outdoor patio. The new space will make the property's meeting facilities even more flexible and offer ideal solutions for groups of 20 to 2,200 attendees. It also will feature an outdoor public space for events and a new banquet bar. The tower will open in the spring in 2014, bringing the total number of guest rooms to 1,065. The expansion also includes doubling the poolside space, a new indoor/outdoor Mexican restaurant and larger casino floor. [www.harrahsrincon.com](http://www.harrahsrincon.com)

## Houston City Council Approves Developer for Marriott Marquis Hotel

HOUSTON, TX — The Houston City Council approved a proposal by RIDA Development Corporation and Houston First Corporation for a 1,000-room convention center hotel connected to the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston. The hotel will be a Marriott Marquis, which is a brand extension of Marriott International's signature Marriott Hotels & Resorts brand. The project will greatly increase the amount of hotel rooms at the convention center, making the city a more competitive destination for organizations looking to host large conferences, trade shows and events. Construction is slated to begin in 2014 and has a projected completion date of Spring 2016. The new convention center hotel, in addition to BBVA Compass Stadium, the recently announced Nau Center for Texas Cultural Heritage, and Metro's light rail expansion in the area, are all vital projects contributing to the transformation of Houston's convention center district into a tourist and business destination. "Everybody's eager to put a shovel in the ground," said Ric Campo, chairman of Houston First. "This project meets the needs cited by meeting planners for more hotel rooms and more activity near the GRB. We need almost 2,000 new hotel rooms to keep pace with our competitive cities, plus additional parking and retail options to strengthen our convention business." [www.houstonfirst.com](http://www.houstonfirst.com), [www.houstonconventionctr.com](http://www.houstonconventionctr.com)



Rendering of the Marriott Marquis in downtown Houston.

# MEETING VALUES

## Hyatt Resorts and Spas Hawaii.

The Hyatt More Meetings offer is valid for groups booking multiple meetings at Hyatt Resorts and Spas in Hawaii. Book two qualifying meetings and earn two rewards; three meetings, three rewards; and up to five meetings, five rewards customized based on needs, including: 100,000 Hyatt Gold Passport bonus points per meeting and Hyatt Gold Passport Diamond status for two years; 3 percent rebate off master bill; comp Internet in guest rooms; up to 50 percent attrition; 1/40 comp room; comp coffee break; and more. Participating Hawaii resorts include Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa, Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa (pictured) and Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa. 800-55-HYATT, [www.hyatt.com/hyatt/resorts/hawaii](http://www.hyatt.com/hyatt/resorts/hawaii)



■ **New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA.** Meetings booked by March 31, 2013 that take place April 1–September 30, 2013 receive perks based on number of rooms booked. 300–500 rooms: 3 percent credit to master account; free Wi-Fi in meeting rooms for up to 10 connections and 50 percent discount for each additional connection. 500–1,000 rooms: 4 percent credit; up to 20 Wi-Fi connections, 50 percent discount for each additional; 1/40 comp room. 1,000+ rooms: 5 percent credit; up to 40 Wi-Fi connections, 50 percent discount for each additional; 1/40 comp room; 25 percent allowable attrition. [www.neworleansmarriott.com](http://www.neworleansmarriott.com)

■ **Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, CA.** Through March 31, 2013, room rates for group bookings of 10 rooms or more start as follows: February 11–28, \$150; March 25–31, \$169. Value-added concession options are available based on size of group at booking. Examples include everything from complimentary guest rooms and meeting rooms to free Internet to F&B discounts and more. For details contact Director of Sales Marianne Milton, [marianne.milton@hyatt.com](mailto:marianne.milton@hyatt.com), 415-486-4415, [www.fishermanswharf.hyatt.com](http://www.fishermanswharf.hyatt.com).

## Adelson Eyes New York for Gambling Resort

NEW YORK, NY — According to an exclusive report in the *New York Post*, Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire chairman and CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation, is interested in building a gaming and convention resort in New York if the state passes legislation permitting Las Vegas-style casinos. "Our integrated resort properties have produced tremendous overall tourism and economic benefit in every location in which we operate, and under the right circumstances, we would be honored to bring our industry-leading, convention-based business model to New York," says Sands spokesman Ron Reese. "Our mix of hotel rooms, retail space, meeting and convention facilities, celebrity-chef restaurants, entertainment venues and more have redefined the hospitality industry, and there is no reason to believe it wouldn't be a powerful tourism force in the Empire State." [www.sands.com](http://www.sands.com)

## Benson and Mickey Team Up in New Meeting Solutions Venture



BENSON



MICKEY

ORLANDO, FL — Mark Benson and Todd Mickey, seasoned hospitality sales, marketing and operational executives, have teamed up to create Applied Meetings & Hospitality Solutions LLC (AM&HS), designed to provide full-service meeting planning, and sales and marketing services for the meetings and hospitality industries. AM&HS provides site selection, contract negotiation, cost analysis and planning services to planners whose objectives include cost savings, time reduction and maximum return on the company's investment. AM&HS also provides comprehensive, integrated hospitality sales and marketing solutions through specifically designed customized sales and marketing optimization programs for owners, asset management companies, and hoteliers who are focused on increasing market share in the group meeting, incentive (MICE) marketplace. AM&HS offices are located in Naples, FL and Orlando, FL with affiliates nationwide and internationally. [www.amhospitalitysolutions.com](http://www.amhospitalitysolutions.com)

## The Quad Resort & Casino Debuts on the Las Vegas Strip



The Quad Resort & Casino.

LAS VEGAS, NV — The Imperial Palace resort, located on The Strip in Las Vegas, officially began operating as The Quad Resort & Casino, effective December 21, 2012. Interior and exterior renovations to the 2,543-room property are underway. Scheduled to be completed in phases by late 2013, the renovations will bring improvements to the exterior façade, porte cochere, front desk, bell desk, hotel lobby, casino floor, retail promenade and dining levels. The Quad, one of eight Las Vegas Meetings by Caesars Entertainment hotels, is home to 21 meeting rooms, totaling more than 40,000 sf. Each meeting room is capable of accommodating 10 to 900 people. [www.thequadlv.com](http://www.thequadlv.com)

## Nashville Hotel Boom Expected

NASHVILLE, TN — As reported in *The Tennessean*, four new hotels are currently being built in and around downtown Nashville, and hotel developers are looking at a dozen more sites, according to Butch Spyridon, president of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau, who says one of those hotels could be a 350- to 450-room high-rise within three blocks of the new Music City Center. The \$585 million convention center will attract so many visitors when it opens in 2013 that the adjacent 600-room Omni Hotel, currently under construction, will not accommodate the demand, he says. Tourist traffic has surpassed expectations. From last July through November, tourism revenues increased 42 percent from the same period in 2010, and last October set a record for hotel-motel tax revenues for any month, said Spyridon. He hopes to book a million room nights by the time the Omni Hotel opens in 2014, and expects to pass the 600,000 mark by the end of March. A 255-room Hyatt Place hotel is expected to break ground in the next three months just east of the Music City Center. And the Hilton Garden Inn is adding a tower of rooms under a different name. [www.visitmusiccity.com](http://www.visitmusiccity.com)

## Ernest Wooden Jr. Named President and CEO of LA Tourism

LOS ANGELES, CA — Ernest (Ernie) Wooden Jr., a long-time senior hospitality industry executive was named



WOODEN JR.

president and CEO of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board (LA Tourism) as announced by Tom Mullen, LA Tourism's chairman of the board.

"Moving forward, we are very pleased to welcome someone with Ernie's depth of global hospitality branding and operations experience," said Mullen. "He is known in the industry for building relationships and driving business results, and we look forward to working with him to capitalize on the momentum our tourism industry is enjoying." Wooden spent more than a decade in senior leadership positions in both global brand management and operations with Hilton Hotels Corporation. As executive vice president, Global Brand Management for Hilton, based in Beverly Hills, CA, he led all worldwide branding initiatives. In addition, Wooden also worked with Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, Omni Hotels & Resorts, DoubleTree by Hilton and Promus Hotel Corporation. Currently, he is the CEO of Creative Consulting, a hotel consulting practice providing hotel operation, valuation and brand selection and analysis services. He will officially join LA Tourism in January 2013. Last year, Los Angeles welcomed a record 40.4 million visitors from around the globe, making it one of the most visited destinations in the U.S. and with the second highest share of overseas visitors to the U.S. (13.1 percent). LA Tourism expects to set another visitation record in 2012, with projected visitation exceeding 41.3 million. [www.latourism.org](http://www.latourism.org)

## Jay Burress to Lead Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

ANAHEIM, CA — The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau's (AOCVCB) board of directors has appointed Jay Burress as president, effective February 11, 2013. Burress, who was president and CEO of Experience



BURRESS

Arlington, the Arlington, Texas, convention and visitors bureau since 2008, replaces Charles Ahlers, who announced his retirement in February 2012 after serving the bureau for 20 years. Ahlers will remain in a transitional role until June 2013. Burress will oversee the day-to-day management of all convention, tourism and destination marketing programs. He also will play a key role in the Anaheim and Orange County visitor industry business development and future expansion plans for the Anaheim Convention Center. Previous to his stint at the Arlington CVB, Burress spent 20 years at the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau where he held executive-level positions in both convention sales and tourism sales. "We are confident that Anaheim and Orange County will move forward under Burress' leadership as a major leisure and convention destination. Our destination and partners will benefit substantially from his expertise, collaborative style and drive to succeed," said Steve Arnold, AOCVCB chairman of the board. [meetings.anaheimoc.org](http://meetings.anaheimoc.org)

## Horseshoe Cincinnati to Open March 4



Rendering of the Horseshoe Cincinnati.

CINCINNATI, OH — The Ohio Casino Control Commission announced that Horseshoe Cincinnati has been granted a public opening date of March 4, 2013. Construction at the site, which began in February 2011, is in its final stages. Located in the heart of the city, Horseshoe Cincinnati features 33,000 sf of flexible event space, including two large configurable venues divisible into as many as 11 individual rooms. The largest venue is the 19,000-sf Horseshoe Ballroom, which can accommodate nearly 2,000 guests. In addition, the River Room features glass exterior walls that provide spectacular city views for up to 450 participants. The banquet space includes access to the outdoor City View Terrace overlooking the Cincinnati skyline and the casino's urban plaza, which will host concerts and live shows. Dining options include Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville, a buffet and three additional restaurants, as well as several bar and lounge options. [meet@caesars.com](http://meet@caesars.com), [www.cetmeetings.com](http://www.cetmeetings.com), [www.horseshoecincinnati.com](http://www.horseshoecincinnati.com)

# EVENTS CALENDAR

**FEBRUARY 7-9, 2013**  
**ADME ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
 Sheraton Centre  
 Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
[www.adme.org](http://www.adme.org)

**MARCH 14, 2013**  
**DMAI DESTINATIONS SHOWCASE WASHINGTON**  
 Walter E. Washington Convention Center  
 Washington, DC  
[www.destinationsshowcase.com](http://www.destinationsshowcase.com)

**MARCH 19-22, 2013**  
**IACC-AMERICAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
 Eaglewood Resort & Spa  
 Itasca, IL (Chicago)  
[www.iaccconline.org](http://www.iaccconline.org)

**APRIL 7-10, 2013**  
**GREEN MEETINGS INDUSTRY COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE MEETINGS CONFERENCE**  
 Hyatt Regency McCormick Place and McCormick Place West  
 Chicago, IL  
[www.sustainablemeetingsconference.com](http://www.sustainablemeetingsconference.com)

**APRIL 21-23, 2013**  
**ACTE GLOBAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE**  
 New York Marriott Marquis  
 New York City, NY  
[www.acte.org](http://www.acte.org)

**MAY 21-23, 2013**  
**IMEX '13 WORLDWIDE EXHIBITION FOR INCENTIVE TRAVEL, MEETINGS & EVENTS**  
 Hall 8  
 Messe Frankfurt  
 Frankfurt, Germany  
[www.imex-frankfurt.com](http://www.imex-frankfurt.com)

**JUNE 11-13, 2013**  
**AIBTM - THE AMERICAS MEETINGS & EVENTS EXHIBITION**  
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 Chicago, IL  
[www.aibtm.com](http://www.aibtm.com)

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By Warren Strugatch

## What's the Difference Between a Gift and a Bribe?

**H**ave you ever helped organize an international event like this? Senior executives at an American company recently acquired a state-owned Asian company. They want to integrate the work forces of both companies spread across five continents, the sooner the better. The bosses call a meeting to introduce new colleagues to one another, create new work groups, and jump-start the integration process. For their location they pick an elegant hotel in California. The execs book a block of rooms from Friday through Thursday, slate a few casual programs for Saturday, and schedule the welcoming banquet for Sunday. Participants, including a coterie of government officials who used to run the company, begin arriving Friday anticipating complimentary spa treatments, golf games, onsite horseback riding and delightful cuisine. It's all waiting for them, courtesy of the American host.

Sound unexceptional? Business as usual? If you describe the above (fictitious) scenario that way, you're in good company.

### Attempted Bribery?

You also could be investigated by the U.S. government, had you participated. Under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), the American hosts — and their employees and contractors — would be subject to investigation on charges of attempted bribery. The fact that no business was scheduled until Monday in my scenario makes the gifted weekend stays suspect.

"But," I hear the meeting planner protest, "I never tried to bribe anyone! Nobody asked for a bribe! The company always pays T & E expenses at major meetings; why the fuss this time?"

Besides, the merger deal is signed! Who the dickens could I bribe?"

None of these arguments carries weight with the Department of Justice, which handles most FCPA investigations. The FCPA makes it a federal crime to buy or attempt to buy special treatment from foreign officials, or from family members of foreign officials; or to fail to put a system in place designed to identify and thwart corruption in foreign markets.

Federal enforcement of FCPA is on the rise. In 2010, the Department of Justice is believed to have conducted more than 150 investigations into U.S. companies on corruption charges, collecting \$2.1 billion in fines, including seized profits. This summer, newspaper headlines trumpeted federal investigations into Walmart and Pfizer. Dozens of other companies have been probed, from giants such as Walmart to micro-enterprises such as the film festival management company operated by a Hollywood couple Gerald and Patricia Green. (The Greens were convicted and served prison time last year.)

The law has its champions as well as its critics. Advocates call it a major advance in reducing global corruption. Who would argue in support of graft or bribery?

### It's Not a Black and White Situation

Unfortunately, gray areas abound. Federal prosecutors have never codified the actions that they now prosecute under FCPA. As a result, those involved in organizing international programs — whether it's a sit-down with a single trade minister to discuss foreign investment, or an enterprise-level meeting involving hundreds of professionals and managers — face the need

to proceed cautiously. Exacerbating the problem are thorny questions of cultural relativism. In many cultures, gift-giving is an essential business ritual. When exactly does a routine gift become a bribe? When does a friendly request between business people amount to attempted government coercion?

Good intentions offer no protection at all. Companies have been fined for paying fees they believed were both mandatory and standard; it turned out they were neither. Paying extra for a government service — say, certification — to be delivered quickly is generally acceptable; paying extra for a service not available to your competitors is not. Other potential overseas no-nos including renting space in a building owned by someone related to someone in government; helping an official's son or daughter overseas get a U.S. internship or job; or failing to report a vendor who submits a large unexplained invoice.

### Do the Right Thing

Compliance goes beyond official dealings. Anyone doing business overseas will routinely purchase services from any number of vendors, contractors and professional firms. Increasingly, U.S. organizations ask all overseas contractors to sign affidavits indicating familiarity with the statute and intention to comply. While adding

paperwork is somewhat onerous, taking this step sends the message to vendors you know what our government expects from you, and have already begun to comply. In the event of a probe, being able to cull such documents from your files demonstrates that you've emphasized compliance to your vendors.

Another important sphere of compliance is Accounts Payable. In years past, many companies entered new markets — especially industrializing states — seeking well-connected local partners. The ideal candidates "knew the territory," had "friends in high places," "knew who to shake hands with" and so on. The euphemisms added up to an elaborate wink and nod, the none-too-subtle message being one of willful ignorance.

I'm here to tell you those days are over. The invoices you pay had better be detailed and fully documented or you may be asked to explain why to prosecutors.

Learn more about how U.S. companies successfully comply with the FCPA; ask your corporate counsel for guidance; exercise caution when exchanging gifts or paying questionable fees; keep good records; scrutinize your payables and submitted invoices; and, especially, don't fear asking tough questions should doubts arise. No statute should deter you from doing business anywhere in the world. **C&IT**

“Good intentions offer no protection at all.”



### Warren Strugatch

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By Laura Stack, MBA, CSP

## It's 2013 and Time to Get Started Already

**N**o matter how grandiose your plans or how carefully laid your schemes, they're worthless if you never shift gears from meditation into motion. You may have heard the old platitude "Dreams are just goals without deadlines." Yes, it's true. We all need to keep ourselves motivated as we work our way through life, but eventually, you've got to get off your duff and get moving.

I'm not telling you to leap immediately into action without considering the consequences. I like to say: "Thoughtless action will benefit you no more than action-less thought." But once you've gathered your resources, considered each of your options from all the obvious angles and formulated a basic battle plan, why would you pick procrastination over forward motion?

### The FLIP Factors

I am not a psychologist, but after 20 years in the trenches teaching personal productivity, I believe that procrastination — like all human behavior — arises from very primitive roots. To drum up the gumption to take action, you have to flip an ancient, hardwired motivational switch...and that means overcoming obstacles. I call them the "FLIP" factors:

**F**ear. As one of the most basic human motivators, fear isn't all bad. If not for fear, we wouldn't be here today, because fear made our ancestors run away from threats like fires and sabertooths. But irrational fear can drive you to ill-considered action...or no action at all. It need not appear at an unconscious level. So instead of standing there undecided, ask yourself if fear — especially fear of failure — stands in your way. If so, what steps should you take to conquer it?

**L**aziness. Sometimes you just don't wanna. Well, hey, reality calling! You and your family need to eat, and you need to do something to stave off boredom. As long as you don't overdo it, work keeps your mind nimble, helps level out your emotions and enhances your self-esteem. So get off the fence. Too much laziness just dulls your edge.

**I**nertia. In scientific parlance, inertia represents an object's resistance to a change in speed and direction. The same goes for human behavior. "We've always done it this way." "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." "If it was good enough for Grandpa..." We've all heard these excuses for not changing. You may be dragging your heels because deep down you feel this way, too. Successful companies and successful people often resist change, because what got them there worked well. Well, reconsider your reasoning. What got you *here* won't necessarily get you *there*, so don't let your natural conservatism get in the way.

**P**erfectionism. If allowed free rein, perfectionism can kill a project as surely as budget cuts. Contingency plans beget more contingency plans, one draft leads to another, and suddenly time's up — and you've hardly moved beyond your starting point. Rather than waste time overthinking or falling prey to analysis paralysis, rough out the basics, break the project/task into workable chunks, put your head down and start moving. You can always make course corrections as you go. Exercise flexibility and agility, handling the hurdles as you come to them, and you'll eventually reach the finish line.

### This Means You!

Some of us find it easier to flip procrasti-

nation into action than others. But no matter how hesitant you are about something, you can learn to stop dragging your heels in the productivity arena. Buckle down and get over the FLIP factors, so you can flip your action switch and get started!

### Ring in the New Year

The future represents the original "undiscovered country," and one should be well prepared before blazing new trails. Take some time to consider and evaluate what you learned in 2012 and use that knowledge as you move forward. Not only will this exercise help in avoiding more procrastination, it also will help you avoid the stumbles of previous forays, and it will prove useful in defining new strategies and goals. So take the time to ponder this set of questions. It's also a good idea to write down your answers to the following set of questions so you can refer to them as you move into the exciting new year of 2013.

- What accomplishment(s) would make me happiest next year?
- What do I look forward to the most?

- What things (or people) should I avoid?
- What should I improve about myself?
- What can I do to enhance my professional value?
- How can I improve my financial position?
- What external changes are likely to affect me?
- Does my current professional path take me where I really want to go? If not, how can I start changing that?
- Should I make more of an effort to indulge myself in any particular areas...or did I overdo it last year?
- What do I most want to learn this year?
- What do I expect to be my biggest risk?
- What's my one-word theme for 2013?

### The Bottom Line

Viewed objectively, these questions have no right or wrong answers; the only answers that matter are those that feel right to you. My list of answers may not resemble yours. The point of this exercise is to learn from the recent past, so you have the proper ammunition and attitude as you charge forward into the future. Happy New Year! *C&IT*

“I believe that **procrastination** — like all human behavior — arises from very primitive roots.”



### Laura Stack, MBA, CSP

has consulted with Fortune 500 corporations for more than 20 years in the field of employee productivity. She advises leaders, teams and professionals on developing high-performance cultures and creating Maximum Results in Minimum Time. She is the president of The Productivity Pro Inc., which specializes in productivity improvement in high-stress organizations. An author and dynamic speaker, Stack's keynotes and seminars focus on increasing profitability by improving output, reducing inefficiency and saving time in today's workplaces. [www.theproductivitypro.com](http://www.theproductivitypro.com) © 2013 Laura Stack

## Family-Friendly Meetings

### Spell SUCCESS With a Capital S

By John Buchanan

Now that companies are again robustly using meetings and events to drive their bottom lines, many planners are looking for new weapons to add to their arsenals. One tactic that is quickly becoming more popular than ever before is the inclusion of children as attendees to make the meeting a family experience.

Garen Gouveia, founder and president of 13-year-old Corporate Kids Events, a Grass Valley, CA-based provider of onsite child care services and activity planning, has seen a healthy uptick in the inclusion of children as attendees over the past two years.

"It has been a recent trend, but it has also been a strong trend," Gouveia says. "Although the majority of our business was corporate when we started out back in 1999, that percentage really dropped during the recession. But now we're seeing a strong upward trend in the number of corporate meetings and incentive programs that include kids. That now represents about half of our total business."

However, he adds, one lingering



Photo courtesy of Corporate Kids Events

When kids are involved in an event, it "is perceived as being more successful and offering real benefits," says Garen Gouveia, president of Corporate Kids Events.

effect of the deep recession is tight budgets. "That means that many companies are again including children in their events and providing child care as a service, but they're doing it on a smaller scale than before the recession," Gouveia says. "For example, we're not seeing as many offsite trips or activities for the kids, or they aren't as extravagant as they were before."

The types of activities that clients ask for vary from group to group and by region of the country, Gouveia says. "But another trend that we're seeing now is younger families with younger children being involved in these meetings. For

example, we're seeing more and more toddlers, which pretty much negates the idea of any offsite activities."

For older children, popular activities include offsite excursions to local museums, zoos and amusement parks, as well as tours that exemplify local history or culture, according to Gouveia.

When the inclusion of children is properly incorporated into meetings and incentive programs, the practical effect is similar to a teambuilding exercise, Gouveia says. "The feedback we get from clients is that when kids are involved, when the whole family is involved, the event is perceived as being more success-

ful and offering real benefits. Families get to know each other better. Their children get to know each other. They then tend to have friendships and more communication with one another after that. And more and more, we see that companies come to understand the benefits of that. In some instances, there are companies we've been working with for 10 years, and they regularly tell us that they see the benefits of including families and kids in their events."

#### A Family-Based Corporate Culture

Based on her experience as a meeting planner and parent, Chandra Orme, event planner at Provo, UT-based Sawtooth Software, corroborates Gouveia's point.

"For us, the inclusion of families, including children, in our annual recognition programs is absolutely critical," says Orme, who hosted back-to-back eight-day employee appreciation trips for 80 and 30 attendees in August and



Photo courtesy of Disneyland Resort  
After one look, kids can't wait to change into their bathing suits and swish down the monorail water slide at the Disneyland Hotel at California's famed Disneyland Resort.

September at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, CA. "It's a very cohesive group. One of the reasons we do the recognition program is to create that feeling of unity within the company. That's one of the main goals of having the retreat. And including children in that so it's perceived as a family event

is very important to the overall culture of the company. We consider it critical to our well-being."

Sawtooth Software, a 30-year-old enterprise that has virtually no employee turnover, is extremely family-oriented. "For example, we are very, very cognizant of the time people have to take away

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Photo courtesy of Grand Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort  
Grand Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort, Grand Bahama Island, keeps the kids busy with scavenger hunts, soccer, pool games and chess on the resort's oversized chessboard.

from their families to go to meetings," says Orme, who has seven children. "We don't ask people to work overtime or work on weekends. So, because we are that kind of company, it's just important to us that we include families and children whenever it's appropriate."

Given its long history of including children in its employee appreciation trips, Orme says, company management has no doubt about the business benefits of the practice.

"Sawtooth is a very stable company," Orme says. "Our employees have been with us a long time. So, many of the kids know each other because they've grown up together. And they enjoy being together whenever that's possible. It's like an extended family in many ways. And including children in a program also makes the parents more comfortable. And, speaking as a parent, it's not always easy to find someone to take care of your kids if you're going to be out of town for eight days. So it's just really helpful to parents, from a practical point of view, to include children in this program."

For her recent programs, Orme took full advantage of what the sprawling Disneyland Resort complex has to offer. Attendees were given access to the concierge lounge at the hotel. She also staged a dinner at Ariel's Grotto, a themed "character dining" restaurant built around popular Disney princesses such as Snow White, Cinderella

and Sleeping Beauty. Attendees also got passes to Disney's World of Color show, and on another evening, Orme hosted an event at Fantasmic!, a musical and multimedia extravaganza starring Mickey Mouse and other famous Disney characters.

And it wasn't just the kids who were impressed by the experience. Orme, who plans meetings and events all over the world, says she was astonished by the level of service delivered by Disney.

"I have been planning meetings and events for 10 years," she says. "And there is no other company that I have ever found that provides the level of service that Disney does. Their standard of service is just far and away above anything I have ever experienced before. And I say that without even taking into consideration the family-friendly



***"And including children in that... is very important to the overall culture of the company. We consider it critical to our well-being."***

**Chandra Orme, Event Planner**  
Sawtooth Software, Provo, UT

ly aspect of it. The service is just unparalleled. And the food and the venues are equal to the service. Everything is immaculate, and the attention to detail is incredible."

### **An Annual Family Outing**

Jenny McCullough, director of train-

ing and events at KOA (Kampgrounds of America) in Billings, MT, is another longtime loyalist when it comes to including children in the annual, four-day owner-operator convention she hosts in family-friendly destinations such as Savannah, GA.

KOA held its 2011 event in Orlando at the kid-friendly Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center — and set a new record with 750 attendees, primarily because it was the company's 50th anniversary celebration.

Because KOA campgrounds are typically owned and run as family operations, the inclusion of children in the company's annual meeting has been a 40-year tradition.

"We picked Gaylord Palms partly because of the fact there were things for the kids to do, such as their new Splash Park and arcade, which meant we didn't have to take them offsite," McCullough says.

The new Cypress Springs Family Fun Water Park at 1,406-room Gaylord Palms — part of a \$50 million renovation and enhancement project — features a multilevel treehouse with 60 interactive toys, four waterslides, more than 35 pool game activities and a Splash 'n' Screen stage that shows Dreamworks movies.

As a much-anticipated offsite activity, KOA hosted an evening at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort.

"Once the news spread through our office that we were going to be doing

an event at Harry Potter, there was a lot of excitement, even before the meeting," McCullough says. "People were really pumped."

All of the children in attendance knew Harry Potter from the wildly popular books and movies, so they, too, were exceptionally excited about the event.

"A lot of people brought their families in partly for that evening, because everybody was so excited to be part of it," McCullough says. "And then they could also take advantage of the family attractions in Orlando."

For KOA, Orlando was particularly

family-friendliness is always something that we look for in the destination. And that was one of the great things about Orlando as a destination."

KOA also incorporates a half-day of community service in its annual meeting and includes children in that ac-

***"Participating in community service events and learning at a young age to give back to your community is another wonderful thing for kids to do. And that kind of activity really reflects the corporate values of KOA."***

**Jenny McCullough, Director of Training and Events**  
KOA, Billings, MT



appealing because of its status as the world's No. 1 family vacation destination and the built-in appeal of Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort and its two theme parks.

"A lot of the families, especially the ones with children, spent time at Disney World and Universal — and sometimes both," McCullough says. "Because campground owners work really hard for most of the year, for a lot of them this meeting is their only chance to go on vacation, so a lot of our attendees arrive early or stay later and do a lot of things in the area. Because of that,

activity, too. For the Orlando meeting, attendees pitched in for projects at Forever Florida Eco-Safari and Clean the World. "Participating in community service events and learning at a young age to give back to your community is another wonderful thing for kids to do," McCullough says. "And that kind of activity really reflects the corporate values of KOA."

### **A Democratic Process**

John White, general manager at K/E Electric Supply Corp. in Mt. Clemens, MI, oversees his company's 25-year-old

annual incentive program. Every aspect of the program, from decisions on the destination and hotel, as well as whether to include children in any given year, is determined by a democratic process that involves input from employees.

In October, K/E Electric, which sells electrical supplies to the construction industry, hosted 150 attendees, including children, at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Sandusky, OH.

The company's incentive destination is always within a five- to six-hour drive, White says. And sometimes it is family-friendly, while in other years it is adult-oriented.

"And when we include children, we pick a family-friendly resort such as Kalahari this year or Great Wolf in Traverse City, Michigan, or King's Island in Ohio," says White, who has planned the program for 13 years.

"The choice as to whether we bring children depends on whether or not our employees want to in any particular year," he says. "We announce the program each May, because it covers the summer months, which are the most important part of our year because we sell to the construction industry. We poll our employees, and each year they make suggestions on where they'd like to go and whether they'd like children to be included or whether they prefer an adults-only trip. But it's a totally democratic process based on what our employees tell us they want in any particular year."

Despite the fact that the inclusion of children is not an every-year practice, White says that he and company management do recognize the benefits of family-friendly outings.

"A lot of it has to do with the business climate at any given time," he says. "We use this program as a morale builder, as a motivator for our people to get the job done in terms of sales, and when families are being included in the program, it helps get the spouses more involved. And that's true when the kids are involved, and we're going to some place that has attractions like a water park or



Photo courtesy of Universal Orlando Resort  
Jenny McCullough, KOA director of training and events, said her attendees were "pumped" just like these happy fans when they learned they were on their way to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort.



Photo courtesy of Kalahari Resort and Convention Center

This indoor theme park at Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells, WI, as well as all the kid-friendly amenities at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Sandusky, OH, provide hundreds of reasons to bring the kids to the annual conference.

something else that kids will enjoy. And when that is the case, the wives also get involved in terms of helping decide where we go and what we do.”

And just as everything else is determined by democratic consensus, so is the selection of each year’s hotel property. “We chose Kalahari Resort and water park in Ohio because many of our employees have been there before and a number of them suggested it. And oftentimes what happens is that our employees choose a place that not only has things for the kids to do, but also has entertainment for adults. And that was the case at Kalahari. And as far as our budget goes, they do things like offer passes to the water park with your room. So we also got good value. And the service was very good.”



**“In some instances, there are companies we’ve been working with for 10 years, and they regularly tell us that they see the benefits of including families and kids in their events.”**

**Garen Gouveia, Founder and President  
Corporate Kids Events, Grass Valley, CA**

### Recognizing an Opportunity

As the meetings market continues its recovery, more and more companies are seeing the light when it comes to including children in some of their meetings and events, Gouveia says.

And one of the most common benefits, he says, is increased — and more enthusiastic — attendance.

“We definitely find and have talked

to clients and prospective clients about the fact that they have better attendance and more successful meetings when they include children and provide child care and activities for them,” he says. “Making parents comfortable about bringing their kids definitely enhances the success of the event.”

And for companies that are so inclined, there is a surprisingly long roster of potential destinations — in addition to marquee names such as Orlando

or Anaheim — that are very family-friendly. Among them are Virginia beach, VA, Branson, MO, and Florida beach resorts such as Destin, where the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa has been attracting family-friendly meetings for years. In addition, famous historical destinations such as Boston, Philadelphia and Williamsburg, VA, offer the advantage of educational benefits for children who are eager to learn more about their national heritage.

For those companies that decide

to include children for the first time, Gouveia offers some advice based on his 13 years of experience.

“The important thing is that if you’re going to be inviting children to your meetings or events, there needs to be time put into planning that,” he says. “Oftentimes, it’s just secondary and companies think they can just hire a local babysitting service to get the kids taken care of so adults can focus on the meeting. But what companies find very quick-

ly is that if you put the extra effort into finding a truly qualified vendor that is going to create wonderful things for the kids to do with themed events and age-appropriate activities, that is going to be reflected in the overall success of the program. The bottom line is if you have happy kids, you’re going to have happy parents, regardless of what else happens or doesn’t happen. If the kids come home raving about the great experience they had, that goes a long way toward the overall success of the meeting.” **C&IT**

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**Four Diamond Award**

# Powering Meetings With Mobile Technology

By John Buchanan

Over the past five years, new technologies have transformed the meetings industry for both planners and attendees. Rather than slowing down, innovation is running rampant — and there is no end in sight to the almost limitless number of ways new applications will improve the ways planners do business.

## Next Generation Mobile Technology

“In effect, every meeting planner now carries around a supercomputer in their pocket,” says Bellingham, WA-based meetings industry technology guru Corbin Ball, CSP, CMP, MS, of Corbin Ball Associates. “And especially since these devices have been attached to the cloud, they are very powerful computers with very extensive capabilities. And all of that has happened in the last five years.”

Since then, Ball says, smartphone and tablet technology for devices such as the iPhone and iPad have accelerated the tech revolution. “And the major change was that it made these powerful technologies easy enough that a three-year-old or a grandmother could use it,” Ball says. “So there is a whole different approach to technology now. And there are hundreds of thousands of apps now — and thousands of those are applicable to meeting planning and attendees. That’s a quantum shift.”

The factor currently driving next-generation technology innovation and

capabilities for planners and attendees is mobile technology. “And that,” Ball says, “includes everything from interactive programs to lead exchange to audience engagement tools to attendee surveys to social media.”

There are now hundreds of mobile companies and mobile apps targeting meeting professionals. “I have more than 200 linked at my regularly updated website *CorbinBall.com*,” Ball says. “And although there will likely be a shakeout similar to the dot-com deflation of the late 1990s, the companies that survive will continue to change how we do business.”

One of the hottest areas of mobile development at the moment is the proliferation of low-cost, do-it-yourself apps that can be customized by individual users. “It is now possible to create a fully featured, cross-platform business app for your iPhone, iPad or Android mobile device with customized logos, colors and content using *Biznessapps.com* for as low as \$39.95 a month. And it’s very easy to do because the site provides very easy-to-use video tutorials.”

Other leading-edge providers of DIY technologies include *Grupio.com*, *GenieMobile.com*, *EventKaddy.com* and the more high-end *QuickMobile.com*, Ball explains. “And oftentimes, these are provided at a fraction of the cost of a standard application built by mobile app programmers selling products.”

The other sea change is represented

by the ongoing empowerment of attendees to have more of a hand in the creation and execution of the meetings and events they attend. “That’s one of the most important ways that all of the social media tools are being linked to meetings now, so people really can get engaged before the meeting and make suggestions about how to make the event better from their point of view,” Ball says. “And as a result of that, more and more events are actually being organized by attendees, based on what their specific desires are. And that kind of engagement is just going to become more and more important because social media tools allow it now.”

At the same time, however, increasingly rapid technological innovation is helping meeting planners become more productive and effective by giving them specific tools that meet the demand for precise, individual functions.

## New Applications Raise the Bar

Over the past year, technology providers have introduced a flurry of new products for both planners and attendees.

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), a global leader among travel management companies and an established innovator in strategic meetings management capabilities, has introduced a pair of proprietary applications for its clients.

Developed in partnership with StarCite, CWT Meeting Optimizer helps

# A Supercomputer in Your Pocket

planners find the best destination for a meeting by inputting the number of attendees, their locations and the meeting dates. The app then generates a list of optimal destinations worldwide, including facilities with Telepresence teleconferencing facilities in order to add a virtual meeting component to the event. Based on CWT's analysis, Meeting Optimizer saves companies an average of 25 percent in total event costs by promoting unprecedented efficiency in the selection of destinations and venues.

CWT 78 BizDays is a new mobile app that helps planners find the most convenient day and time to hold an international conference call, video conference, meeting or event. Developed in partnership with HEC Paris Professor of Management Michael Segalla, the app identifies the best — and worst — times for scheduling events in foreign countries. It also sends attendees meeting notifications via email and provides a wealth of information on individual countries, including national holidays. CWT 78 BizDays is available for iPads and iPhones from the Apple App Store, or via the Internet at [CWT78BizDays.com](http://CWT78BizDays.com).

Another innovative new app designed to make planners more efficient and effective is Talent Chaser's plus-in Meeting Manager, which facilitates creation of a meeting with the touch of a button. Meeting Manager allows planners to easily upload and download documents, as well as view and access various kinds of documents, spreadsheets, videos, and other relevant files. It also empowers planners to manage information about all of their meetings and events in a single location and access data from past meetings easily and quickly. It also allows tracking of all individual attendees and the definition and setting of security levels for each. A one-month free trial is available. For more information, visit [TalentChaser.com](http://TalentChaser.com).

Another convenience-enhancing tool for planners is VoiceCal, the fastest, most user friendly technology for recording calendar events into an iPhone via voice recognition. It eliminates the dangerous habit of entering calendar events manu-

ally while driving or walking. VoiceCal offers a "no touch" interface that enables users to simply launch it and speak. Spoken events appear instantly on a user's iCal and anywhere iCal is synchronized, such as Google Calendar.

The app's biggest single innovation is that it allows users to speak multiple events at one time, without a need to recycle the app's functionality. It is backwards compatible with all iPhone platforms 3G and above. System requirements include iOS 4 or above and data

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***"Especially since these devices have been attached to the cloud, they are very powerful computers with very extensive capabilities. And all of that has happened in the last five years."***

**Corbin Ball, CSP, CMP, MS**  
Corbin Ball Associates  
Bellingham, WA

connectivity. VoiceCal is available for \$1.99 at the Apple App Store.

The new website [VenueBook.com](http://VenueBook.com) is being hailed as the Open Table of event planning. The site matches planners with New York City meeting venues. In addition to traditional spaces such as hotel ballrooms and restaurants, VenueBook features bars, loft spaces, galleries, nightclubs and private event venues. It also lists more eclectic and offbeat venues such as a boxing studio, classic car museum, yoga studio and trendy retail shops. It includes up-to-the-minute information of the availability and features of the city's latest hotspots. Users can custom-build event menus and coordinate details such as decor and music.

Once attendees or exhibitors are at the location, Video Tattoo offers what it calls "the ultimate accessory." Its extremely innovative name badges — which won a Techno-How award at this year's IMEX show — programs video content or other custom graphics into

highly visible badges that command attention. A line of related products embeds similar devices into articles of clothing, such as jackets. The striking new capability can be used by planners to highlight individual attendees and their role at the meeting, or be used by vendors or exhibitors to promote their products or booth activities. Any moving images, still photographs or graphics can be programmed into Video Tattoo for public display. The devices have already been used at the Consumer Electronics Show and Las Vegas Sands Expo Center. For more information, visit [VideoTattooInc.com](http://VideoTattooInc.com).

### **Social Networking Opportunities**

Forced to do more with less in a post-recession working environment, planners often need all the help they can get in planning a meeting or event. CanWeNetwork from Austin, TX-based CanWeStudios, is a new and unique mobile business networking tool that can help planners find collaborators and creative talent across the country. Recommended contacts are mined from LinkedIn data on location, skillsets, experience, shared interest and personality traits. Once downloaded, the app runs in the background of a planner's mobile device to facilitate the quick and easy recruitment of logistical and creative allies. For more information, visit [CanWeNetwork.com](http://CanWeNetwork.com).

On an even larger scale, the Social Media Command Center from digital marketing agency BarkleyREI helps organizers and hosts of major conferences, conventions and events deploy aggressive and far-ranging outreach efforts designed to maximize the onsite impact of and participation in the event. For example, a Social Media Command Center helped the Kansas City Convention & Visitors Association serve as a virtual concierge for more than 15,000 visitors to Major League Baseball's All-Star Week last summer. The service delivers a team of highly trained destination marketing and social media professionals who use Facebook and Twitter to initiate, curate and respond to large-scale social conver-

sations created by individual events such as a trade show. For more information, visit [BarkleyREI.com](http://BarkleyREI.com).

For attendees who want to network or collaborate, the new app Topi offers the capability to create topic-based discussion boards and an attendee search function, both designed to connect attendees with shared interests. Topi ([Topi.com](http://Topi.com)) was conceived as a location-based social networking app, but CEO David Aubespin, a former Google engineer, shifted the product's focus early on, convinced of its ability to improve the meeting experience.

Attendees populate their Topi profiles by connecting to Facebook. They can also link to their accounts on LinkedIn, Twitter, FourSquare and Instagram. The app automatically suggests attendee users should meet, based on the affiliations and interests pulled from their social media profiles. When users launch the app, they see a list of up to 10 discussion groups. The first includes all attendees, sorted by relevance to the participant, and the rest are custom groups generated by Topi.

### **Venue Technologies**

As new and unique technologies continue to arrive with the regularity of tides, innovative hotels and venues have gotten in on the action in order to set themselves apart by making life easier for planners.

Omni Hotels & Resorts has partnered with eMarketing360 to develop a new planner app optimized for the iPad. Created for proprietary use by planners hosting a meeting at an Omni property, the new app eliminates the need for traditional binders and reams of paper. But it also helps planners expedite everything from menu management to floorplan reviews. Developed from extensive research with a customer advisory board of top meeting professionals from across the U.S. and pre-loaded onto an iPad provided for a planner's use during the meeting, the app includes all of the key practical details related to oversight and facilitation of a successful meeting. In addition, with the tap of a button, planners can request immediate assistance

from a dedicated conference services team. The new tool has been rolled out at some of the company's premier properties, such as the new Omni Dallas, Omni Fort Worth and Omni Amelia Island Plantation in Florida. By early 2013, it will be featured across Omni's full portfolio of meeting hotels.

To help planners assess and use its facilities, Florida's Boca Raton Resort & Club, a Waldorf Astoria Resort, has created Boca Meet 360, a new app that gives planners a detailed virtual tour

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***"We're still at the tip of the iceberg. Only a tiny percentage of all meetings have really been touched by mobile technology and real engagement yet. The best is yet to come."***

**Brian Ludwig, V.P. Sales**  
Cvent  
McLean, VA

of the 356-acre complex, including its meeting facilities, levels of accommodations, amenities and leisure activities. The unique, state-of-the-art app uses the built-in functionality of a gyroscope to provide a panoramic floor-to-ceiling view at 15 key points of interest on the sprawling property. Features include high-resolution photo and video galleries, as well as floorplans for meeting and function space. It also features a live Facebook feed and LinkedIn group feature. The new app significantly raises the standard for the range and quality of visual information a hotel should provide to planners.

### **Market Dominance**

While individual vendors promote individual new products designed to deliver specific benefits to planners, the big players such as Cvent continue to strive for overall market leadership and brand loyalty. At the same time, however, some are quickly expanding their capabilities.

Cvent was not a force in the mobile

market segment until recently, notes Vice President of Sales Brian Ludwig. However, in 2012, the company aggressively pursued key acquisitions that would shore up its product line. It bought mobile vendors Seedlabs, which it renamed Crowd Torch and targeted toward consumer events, and Crowd Compass, which is aimed at major meetings and trade shows.

But both companies were important innovators whose product development work enhances Cvent's constantly evolving leadership position in the meetings market.

Meanwhile, Cvent continued to focus on its core strengths. For example, it introduced a new resource management platform, geared toward its strategic meetings management platform, that planners can use to track and manage speakers, meeting space, equipment and vendors. The company also improved upon its integration with Concur's travel management platform by adding to its real-time flight booking functionality the ability to track and manage hotel and car rental bookings.

But the long-term holy grail for Cvent — and the meeting industry — is mastering the principles of maximum efficiency and comprehensive meeting management, Ludwig says.

"What we want to ultimately be able to do is allow for clean and easy flow of all expense data into our system," he says. "And that can either come from Concur's expense management function, or from a purchase card, which a lot of companies and planners use now to control and track expenses. The goal is for the planner to not have to key in anything manually in order to have all of that data at his or her fingertips. And the driver of that is strategic meetings management and the need for companies to really get their arms around their meeting spend."

In the meantime, however, the impact of technology on meetings is still in its infancy, Ludwig says: "We're still at the tip of the iceberg. Only a tiny percentage of all meetings have really been touched by mobile technology and real engagement yet. The best is yet to come." **C&IT**

## The Diversity Dilemma

### How to Avoid a Culture Clash and Foster a Sense of Unity

By George Seli

The increasingly global character of business in the 21st century has had many effects on corporate life, and one of the most salient is multicultural meetings. When companies expand their operations into new countries, develop their customer base globally, or merge with or acquire international firms, a variety of events with multicultural attendance often ensues, from incentive trips to training meetings to product launches.

An executive at a premier meeting and incentive company noted that as their client base grew globally, it became more important to integrate the constituents from those areas of the world in the overall event planning. Specifically, the company has seen more attendees from the economically strengthening BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries.

Furthermore, a widely multinational corporation is still finding room for overseas expansion. According to their senior event planner, Asia is a big growth market for them. They hold a great number of meetings there. In addition, the company arranged an event on the West Coast for their Latin American dealers.

#### Multiculturalism Defined

Yet multicultural meetings aren't necessarily the result of globalization in business, as the U.S. itself harbors a great diversity in cultures due to ethnic diversity. Interestingly, U.S. meeting planners tend



to define "multicultural" in terms of ethnic diversity, while those living outside of the U.S. tend to equate multicultural with multinational, according to the findings of an MPI Multicultural Initiative study. After 120 interviews with a random sample of MPI members, it was found that 80 percent of all respondents "noted that organizations which provide meeting services need to be sensitive to specific needs of meeting attendees from various races or cultures."

But for respondents living in the U.S., "multicultural" meetings are often described as meetings of people from various ethnic backgrounds, including religions and races. Respondents living outside the U.S. more often described 'multicultural' meetings as meetings of people from various nations."

But despite attendees' diversity — whether national, ethnic, generational, or otherwise — a sense of unity must be fostered at a corporate meeting. In that context, participants are all employees (or clients) of the same company, and a single corporate brand and message must draw them together. Multinational meeting company clients attempt to set a consistent tone and create an "environment of oneness at their meetings," said the executive.

That may require a little give and take on attendees' part in how they expect the meeting to be conducted, such as its formality or scheduling. German and Asian attendees typically put a strong emphasis on punctuality, for instance. Indeed, late arrival to a business meeting is often considered insulting to the Chinese. But when these attendees are just one cultural group among many at the meeting, they may well need to expect and allow for more flexibility in start and end times. Latin attendees might expect more time allotted for lunch (the main meal of the day in their culture) and a program that runs later, conforming to their work customs.

A planner facing a mix of attendees from various backgrounds would do well to stage dinner somewhere in the middle. Thus, neither group would be eating at their usual hour, but neither would deal with a radical shift. Of course, it's natu-

ral that customer-facing events will cater more precisely to any cultural preferences of the attendees than internal events.

#### Business Customs

Much has been written on the business customs of various cultures, but instead of making any prejudgments as to how attendees would want the meeting structured, what entertainment or offsite activities they'd prefer, and so on, it's arguably best to take an empirical approach and find out. To that end, Maritz Travel deploys a tool called Meetings Effectiveness, which essentially informs design of a meeting by gathering quantitative data on potential attendees' preferences. "While we do have to be somewhat utilitarian about some choices including destination and properties, we can be more individualized in other ways — free time, optional sessions, activity selection and family-friendly — based on feedback from the Meetings Effectiveness tool," says Jim Ruzsala, senior director of marketing for Maritz Travel. "A move towards creating more individualized incentive travel experiences has become a must, and incorporating the voice of your program participants and creating an exceptional experience from their perspective can make a significant business performance difference."

In the senior event planner's experience, the Asian market requires much more attention to protocol, to the sensibilities of their culture. Therefore, planners have to make sure that they are seating the Chinese leader at this position and next to him is the appropriate person. (Chinese guests are seated in descending order of rank with any interpreters sitting behind the principle speakers. These speakers will typically sit at the center of the table across from each other.) And when planners work with government officials or high-level suppliers, it's even more important that such cultural needs are met. Moreover, with a totally U.S.-based meeting, planners have much more leeway and may randomly seat guests to a certain extent. And with any attendees who are competent in English but not to the degree that they readily understand idioms, regional expressions or pop cul-

ture references, it's best to avoid entertainment that might depend on that capacity, she has found. Planners have to be sensitive about the type of entertainment offered to a multicultural group of attendees. A good idea is to try to use visuals as opposed to spoken language. For instance, a Blue Man Group performance instead of an English-language comedian would fit the bill. The language factor obviously extends to other aspects of the event besides entertainment: everything from registration materials to signage should be kept in "plain English," as they say, or offered in multiple languages if needed.

#### Inclusivity Cues

Language is also a means by which attendees of certain backgrounds can feel included — or excluded. "To the extent that you are inclusive in your language you allow for the possibility that there are people who may identify differently than your majority population," notes J. Kevin Jones Jr., deputy director of Out & Equal Workplace Advocates. The nonprofit organization focuses on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues in corporate America. "The important thing to recognize is that at any meeting you have there will likely be members of the LGBT community present, whether you're aware of it or not. And there are lots of cues that they pick up in terms of language and visuals that either feel inclusive or feel exclusive," Jones says. "If you use the word 'spouse' or 'partner' instead of 'husband' and 'wife,' you basically tell someone who's in a relationship with someone of the same gender that they're included" in the target audience. Speakers should be coached on their language in this regard, if necessary, Jones stresses. "For example if you have a CEO talking about diversity in general, he might refer to, in what he intends to be a good way, 'I believe that a person's sexual preference is not important in determining who gets the best job.' Well, that language specifically would be problematic for someone in our community because it refers to sexuality as a preference." Now, it may be that a very small percentage of the attendance is part of the LGBT community, or even none at all. But importantly, "you don't know whose brother, whose son,

whose parent, whose best friend is also part of the LGBT community,” says Jones. “So when you add those who care about or are in relation with LGBT, you may then be talking about 40-50 percent. And to the extent that they are tuned into sensitivities around that community, something concerning to LGBT may be concerning equally to a much larger audience.”

Also important to bear in mind is that the demographics of whoever is on stage also can send a message of inclusiveness. For example, when a Hispanic gives a keynote, or a Gen Y employee delivers training on her specialty, those in the audience of the same demographic tend to feel that the company is particularly accepting of them. A similar effect results from providing entertainment during the event that reflects attendees’ culture or generation.

### A Mixed Bag

Mixed demographics can require something of a balancing act on the part of the planner. Clearly, Gen Y participants tend to favor different kinds of entertainment than baby boomers, beginning with often-diverse musical tastes. But in line with the point that fostering unity is important, it’s probably a good idea not to segregate the group at different entertainment functions if possible. Especially when incentive winners are all age groups, one savvy planner says she doesn’t segregate the 20-somethings from the 50-somethings because she wants them networking together. As a matter of fact, she says it’s a good thing to understand what your fellow employee does after work. That it helps to foster unity.

Now, if for some reason a planner thinks that an extracurricular event may not be appealing across the demographic board, a good approach is to market it as just that: extracurricular. Ensure that attendees don’t see it as their primary opportunity for networking. For example, if it is an entertainment option that may not appeal to the entire group, set it up at the end of the day so it does not appear to be a mandatory-type event.

This sort of issue doesn’t arise, of course, with a generationally uniform group, and here the entire event can be tailored to the general preferences of at-

tendees in a particular age bracket. For instance, if a planner has a client with attendees in the same age group such as the mid-20s, it’s a simple task to factor that into all the planning including the hotel style, which in this case would be more cutting-edge or have a hip feeling as well as a more relaxed dress code.

One planner who it might be said has her finger on the pulse of Gen Y is 26-year-old Abigail Wesley, part of San Francisco-based BCD M&I’s sales support and marketing team. Wesley has observed some marked preferences in travel incentives among that demographic: “What we’ve found is that they are the generation asking about all-inclusive properties: typically a beach destination that provides the group with VIP access to the resort’s on-property amenities. They seem less interested in organized activities. Meeting sessions similarly tend to be more casual. We’ll bring in lounge chairs and beanbag chairs, so it’s not a structured, ‘sit in a classroom and watch a PowerPoint’ environment. It’s more interactive.”

Using the online survey tool for corporate clients in the past, Maritz has had cases where preferences might be traced to cultural or generational demographics. “Today, there are four to five generations in the work force, creating a much larger melting pot of diversity — both culturally and generationally — than ever before,” says Ruzsala. “This melting pot, along with the multiplicity of behavioral and attitudinal values, influences individual choices when it comes to what participants need, want and prefer in an incentive travel program, ultimately challenging the design process of successful incentive travel programs. It is imperative that we work with clients to create research- and experiential-based design approaches to provide the best value to both the sponsoring organization and program participants.”

It’s safe to say that, statistically, younger attendees are more comfortable with — and would prefer — virtual communications regarding the event, particularly via mobile apps and social media. But the convenience of these media is certainly not lost on every attendee over 40. “Having a Twitter wall that allows at-

tendees to track and further discuss session topics does seem to appeal to every generation,” says Wesley.

Again, surveys are a simple way to find out how attendees want to be communicated with, and a planner might discover that she does indeed have some tech-savvy older folks on her roster.

### Social and Green Practices

One CMP has discovered that social media has been very well accepted throughout her multinational company, including senior employees, who are very technologically astute. She even stages an annual meeting for 300 senior-level managers who all use iPads.

In fact, her company decided a couple of years ago that emphasizing electronic communications is part of the company’s sustainability initiative. While such “green” practices may be especially appreciated by some demographics (e.g., West Coast 20- and 30-somethings), whether they are adopted at meetings tends to be more a function of corporate culture than attendees’ culture or generation. And some cultures are far more advanced in their green practices than others.

It is the meeting planner who often implements that corporate directive and decides on specific ways to make the event green, whether contracting with a property with a certain green designation, encouraging the use of public transportation among attendees, and so forth. Planners of all generations are leading the green meetings movement, but when it comes to the younger professionals, one can expect that priority to come naturally.

Wesley, for example, has become “kind of the sustainability expert” at her BCD office. Her generation has grown up with green practices such as recycling, and increasingly will demand transparency regarding those practices, she feels. “Because the younger generation is so well informed, they’re not going to take green designations at face value, but really question and examine vendor practices. “If you say you recycle, they may ask to see where and how it’s done.” We’re definitely coming into more of a transparent age, and that’s going to matter a lot to the younger generations.” **C&IT**

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COULD BE WALKING  
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# Now That's Entertainment!

Judy Ivie, president of I.C.E. Events, has been planning special events for 23 years, so she has plenty of experience booking entertainment for a wide variety of corporate events. The instructions she most commonly receives from her clients are these: "Here's our theme. Create an impact package."

Ivie frequently works with David Thomas, president of the Oklahoma City-based event entertainment firm Shows In A Box, to book entertainment for her clients' events. "What is so wonderful about David and (producer) Angie Sellers is that I can give them the most off-the-wall concept, tell them that it has to be impact, it can only be 10 minutes or 15 minutes to open, five minutes of the finale and four shows in two days, and it's done. It's choreographed; it's perfect. They're the most professional crew in the United States."

## Playing Up the Theme

"As far as entertainment," Thomas explains, "we're there to set the mood and enforce the theme. Usually, the hardest part of any kind of program is getting people's attention to the stage, so many times we'll 'wow' them with a highly produced seven to nine minutes. At that point, it's turned over to the VIP or master of ceremonies."

Thomas is also a magician, and he says that magic is a common theme used for corporate events. "Usually, in that situation, the message is 'creating the magic in you.' On a personal level, you're raising your family, and you have to reach your goals and help the company. Really, it is magic."

"They took our VIPs and made them

the magicians," Ivie describes. "It was unbelievable. Then they've done Chinese acrobat shows, cirque and industrial movement. They actually brought in the crew from Stomp from New York for me. Always, the best you can find.

"They also brought in The Groovalos," she continues. "They're a famous dance group that has been on 'Dancing with the Stars.' They choreographed a dance production to our theme." According to the group's website, a theater production based on the group's history has been called "the Hip Hop Chorus Line

of our time" and "The Cirque du Soleil of the street."

Thomas says that Chinese acrobats are a good choice when the theme involves teamwork. "A Chinese acrobat team really works closely to create their act," he states. "Basically, in a general session, entertainment is not ever used for entertainment by itself, but as a way to reinforce the theme."

## Making the Right Choice

Ivie described some of the keys to choosing the right entertainment for a particular group. "First off, it's know-



Photo courtesy of Blue Moon Talent Inc.

The Boogie Wonder Band – The Ultimate Disco Tribute is available for corporate gigs.

## Making an Impact for Memorable Events

By Karen Brost

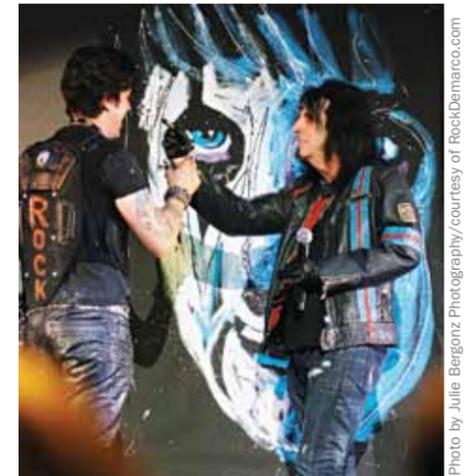
ing your audience, your demographics and your age range. Also, knowing the theme of the event and not just trying to fill space — no fillers. Take the time that you have (and give it) maximum impact. Have a strong opening and a strong close."

Thomas cautions planners not to assume that all entertainers know how to work with a corporate audience. "There's a special approach that needs to be taken when it comes to corporate entertaining. There are lots of entertainment options out there that may be great for private functions, but aren't appropriate for a

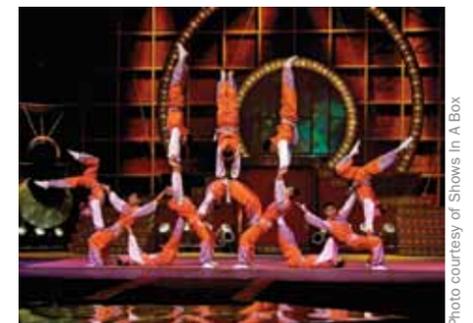
business environment. Corporate entertainers who have experience know exactly how to work with your audience."

## Grand Entrances

Thomas explains, "If it's a situation where people are driving up to the valet parking area, you may have ambience entertainment. We've had our Chinese lions greet people as they're getting out and plate spinners down the foyer. You've seen these Chinese girls. It's quite artistic. They have four rods of plates and they're beautiful. It's not like plate spinners you'd see in a circus.



Performance artist Rock Demarco (left), the world's fastest painter, with Alice Cooper.



The Amazing Chinese Acrobats are just one entertaining offering from Shows In A Box.



String Angels play classical music with a rock twist using electric violins.

Breaking the Ice

“One area where entertainment is used quite a bit is during the cocktail hour,” Thomas describes. “Many times, our cirque (performers) and our Chinese acrobats are in the cocktail area, maybe on a small six-by-six-foot stage in the round. You can bring a contortionist out. It’s just to give kind of a tease of what they’re in store for the rest of the evening.”

“It also works very well as an icebreaker because if you can bring a great act in there, and do three to five minutes and ‘wow’ people. It gives them a chance to turn to their neighbor who they might not know and say, ‘Did you see that? I’ve never seen anything like that before.’ It gets people talking.”

Mission Accomplished

Thomas explains that entertainment also can be used to keep things lively during awards dinners. “We’ll open the evening with a ‘wow’ five to seven minutes, then in between courses, we’ll present small vignettes and end up with a big show at the end. In that case, the entertainment is not necessarily to give a message, but it’s there to help the evening along. Awards can get very boring. By interspersing entertainment in between, it breaks up the monotony and makes it more entertaining.”

He also says that entertainment can be used effectively at the beginning of the day. “If you have a multiple-day event and you want something in the morning to wake everybody up, you can do something really cool. That works well if you’re bringing the talent in for the evening, anyway, so it really doesn’t cost much more to have them come in and do a ‘wow’ in the morning.”

The Great Pretenders

Philly Mendelson, booking agent for

Blue Moon Talent Inc., which has offices in Nashville, Denver and Asheville, is a self-described “talent go-to girl and fast, responsive workaholic.” She says that entertainment trends go in cycles, but that recently she has seen a big increase in the number of requests for celebrity impersonators.

“Usually, these impersonators are inexpensive. We just had an event last week. It was a fundraiser for the YMCA. We had a Rhett Butler and a Marilyn Monroe. They did a meet-and-greet for an hour and a half and The Three Waiters (opera-singing waiters) were the main act. If people are looking for something to happen during the cocktail hour, let’s say, this is one type of ambient entertainment. Another type would be cirque performers floating around. Living statues are also a great ambient-type of performance.”



*“It’s knowing your audience, your demographics and your age range. Also, knowing the theme of the event and not just trying to fill space.”*

Judy Ivie  
President  
I.C.E. Events  
Bonita, CA

Mendelson says that impersonators are great for red carpet events. “It’s a lot of bang for the buck. Certain entertainers are very good value for the money. We have a great Stevie Wonder. He’s like a clone of the real Stevie Wonder and he’s actually blind. He’s the next best thing.”

She listed a few impersonators that seem to be perpetual crowd-pleasers. “The Rat Pack never dies. Frank Sinatra will never die, and Elvis will never

die. Marilyn will never die. Johnny Depp doesn’t die. Sean Connery doesn’t die.” She also notes that while she gets an occasional request for a political impersonator, most corporations shy away from politics.

Mendelson adds that the best impersonators are usually based out of Los Angeles, Las Vegas or Orlando, which are the main hubs where they can get work.

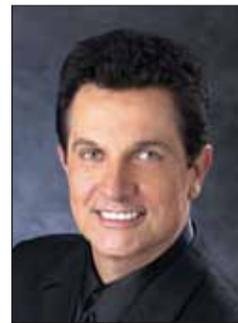
More Acts to Choose From

Mendelson says that requests for female string acts — those with three or four violinists — are also strong. “Acts like the String Angels are really popular right now. It’s totally a twist on classical. It’s very upbeat. They play Mozart to rock. Nobody doesn’t love those acts. They’re very, very popular and fairly affordable. We also have a young solo ‘hip house’ violinist. It’s a cross between hip hop and house music. He just performed at the Denver Art Museum to absolutely rave reviews. He was also on ‘America’s Got Talent.’

“Performance painters are also still very popular,” she continues. These are artists who create a painting on stage while the audience tries to guess which celebrity they’re painting. “They’re also a very good value for the money, because for a fundraiser, you can auction off the painting.”

“Dance bands are always big,” Mendelson continues, and black-light acts like Fighting Gravity and Lightwire Theater are also still very popular. Fighting Gravity was one of the most sensational acts to come down the pike.” She notes that black-light acts are very pricey, “But, for the three-minute show opener or closer for the company that has money, you cannot go wrong with that kind of an act.”

Mendelson also says that people always want music headliners. “They want to see if they can get somebody who’s a name, and we can get anybody they’re looking for, from Jennifer Lopez to Jason Mraz, anybody at all. If they can afford Elton John or the real Paul



David Thomas, President  
Shows In A Box, Oklahoma City, OK

McCartney, they’re just going to go with the real deal, rather than a tribute act.”

The Element of Surprise

Once you book big-name entertainment, keeping it a secret until the “big reveal” can add to the excitement of the event. That’s the strategy used by Interline Brands Inc. for its Annual Partners Conference, which was held this year at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Orlando.

“We keep the identity of both our Thursday keynote speaker and our Friday night entertainment secret, and that makes both events the object of conjecture from one year to the next,” explains Janet Searcy, executive assistant for Interline Brands. “We believe this element of surprise creates an anticipation in our conference attendees who not only look forward to finding out who it will be, but also in trying to guess identities and even to trying to get us to slip up and reveal the info beforehand.”

This year, Interline’s management team succeeded once again at keeping their secrets. Attendees were wowed to discover that their keynote speaker was retired General and former Secretary of State Colin Powell and that the headline entertainer for their Friday night awards dinner was none other than rock star Sammy Hagar.

“Since moving the event from Jacksonville to Orlando in 2007, we have tried to provide progressively better entertainment and the reaction has

*“There’s a special approach that needs to be taken when it comes to corporate entertaining. There are lots of entertainment options out there that may be great for private functions, but aren’t appropriate for a business environment.”*

been phenomenal,” Searcy explains. “We have had the Blue Man Group, Cirque Dreams, Tim Allen and last year, Frank Caliendo. This year Sammy Hagar was a huge hit. It is an increasing challenge to come up with something new each year, but the response makes it very worthwhile.”

“Everybody was speculating about who it was going to be,” comments one district manager who attended the conference. “That’s a good thing. It keeps everybody talking about Friday night. Awards dinners aren’t the most exciting things for most of the crowd, but the speculation about who the entertainment would be kept the buzz really going.”

“The first response (to seeing Sammy Hagar) was shock,” he continues. “We thought ‘Are they kidding?’ The next re-



Philly Mendelson  
Booking Agent  
Blue Moon Talent Inc.  
Golden, CO

*Usually (celebrity) impersonators are inexpensive. ...It’s a lot of bang for the buck.”*

sponse was that people got out of their seats and rushed the stage to get as close as they could. That was the reaction. You knew that this worked.”

A theme party on Thursday night



Blue Moon Talent Inc.’s Philly Mendelson notes that recently she’s seen “a big increase” in requests for celebrity impersonators for corporate events. Some of the acts her agency can book include (from top): Christina Shaw as Shania Twain; Danny Lopez as Johnny Depp; Jeffrey Allen as Elton John; Michael Firestone as Michael Jackson; Holly Beavon as Marilyn Monroe; Samira as Tina Turner; Marcel Forestieri as Jay Leno. (All photos courtesy of Blue Moon Talent Inc.)



Photo courtesy of Benchmark360° Inc.  
In "Rock Stars Wanted," a Benchmark360° signature event, attendees fulfill all their rock star fantasies including making their own music videos.

got the group in the right frame of mind for Friday night's surprise. "The theme was 'Rock Stars Wanted' and was planned as a mystery hint targeted at our Friday night entertainment," Searcy says. This package event, which was orchestrated by the event planning firm Benchmark360°, included rock star lookalikes, karaoke performances and a green screen setup where attendees could make their own music videos.

dance like a rock star, play like a rock star, perform like a rock star and party like a rock star. The stations kept them engaged through games, dancing and karaoke as well as a specially designed menu reflecting the theme.

"This not only encouraged crowd participation," she adds, "but it kept the energy level high throughout the night. All guests, including client executives and associates as well as their clients, had an evening that reflected most positively on the Interline brand, reinforced key messages of the overall conference and is still being recounted and relived through the images that captured the fun and event highlights."

*"The event was very interactive. ...This not only encouraged crowd participation, but it kept the energy level high throughout the night."*



**Terry Dougherty, CMP**  
Director  
Benchmark360° Inc.  
Atlanta, GA

"This event is a B360° signature event and was designed to give the 1,400-plus guests an opportunity to be true rock stars," explains Terry Dougherty, CMP, director of Benchmark360°. "The hotel ballroom was transformed by décor, extensive staging and lighting all created by the B360° team. The event was very interactive and gave the guests an environment in which they could

So how can you be sure that the act you're considering will be a good fit for your group? Thomas gave a few pointers. "Usually, what we recommend is a real-time video, not a video that's cut up, but a video that has a wide shot, so they can really see the show. That's very helpful. When it's cut up and a montage, you really don't know what you're getting."

He also suggests checking references from other companies that have used the talent being considered. "We have recommendations from very reputable companies that have used the act and

we say, 'Hey, call them.' We work with Fortune 500 companies all the time."

### Booking Windows

Thomas also offered a few words of advice on how early a group needs to book its entertainment. "We are able to pull things together pretty quickly, but, of course, you're at the mercy of your talent and when they are available. The more leeway you give us, the better chance the talent you want will be available. We always bring in the best of the best. Most of the talent we use are actually working in shows." Also, he adds, "If you book late, you're going to pay more for travel."

### Looking Down the Road

Mendelson noted that TV shows like "America's Got Talent," "So You Think You Can Dance" and other talent competitions are making their mark on the corporate entertainment world. "I think that just like on the television programs, acts are crossing over. Let's say that instead of just being a BMX bike act, there will be acrobatics, bikes, flame throwing, juggling. It's like 'bring it on.' This is what's happening as a result of these talent shows.

"People have to keep thinking, 'How can I make this a little better, a little more unusual than the act that was on last season?' There are only so many ways to reinvent the wheel. So things are becoming more and more blended. I think that is definitely a trend that's going to continue, and we're going to see more and more of it. You're going to see musicians that are also doing hip-hop dancing. You're going to see jugglers that are juggling black-light balls. I really do think that neon and black light and lasers and fire and smoke and all of those things are just going to play a bigger and bigger part," Mendelson says.

### Rounds of Applause

Ivie regularly gets the kind of response that every event planner hopes for when booking entertainment. "A standing ovation every time," she states. "What always thrills me is a standing ovation at 8 a.m." Now that's entertainment. **C&IT**



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# Gaming Destinations

## Las Vegas Leads the Way to Winning Events

By John Buchanan

**W**hen it comes to gaming resorts, Las Vegas has been the heavyweight champion for more than 50 years. The perennially popular destination combines major meeting hotels with thousands of rooms and unparalleled amenities, and a vast array of offsite venues and activities.

Katy Grant, a partner at independent meeting planning company Event Alchemy in Lafayette, CA, uses Las Vegas for at least one meeting a year. For the last two years, she has used the AAA Four Diamond, 5,044-room MGM Grand as the venue for a high-tech client's annual HR conference for 2,500 attendees.



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Aria Resort Casino's 300,000 sf of versatile meeting space includes the 51,225-sf Bristlecone Ballroom, which can be subdivided into 10 sections ranging from 2,042 sf to 17,328 sf.

"Our high-tech client is on the cutting edge of their industry, so they always like to do things that are creative," Grant says. "And Las Vegas really lends itself to that, because you have all this great entertainment and fantastic amenities. And those things allow them to create unique experiences."

For example, the company armed attendees with video cameras and staged a movie-making competition that capitalized on the vast visual palette of the Las Vegas Strip and its beautiful surroundings. In turn, the films were thematically geared toward the company's business goals and achievements.

The many venues and dining and entertainment options housed onsite at mega-hotels such as MGM Grand save planners time as well as transportation costs.

"There are so many incredible dining options in the MGM Grand that we've done dine-around programs just within the hotel," Grant says. "We've also done high-end executive dinners. And we've used a number of the meeting and event venues within the hotel. That range of options just makes things simpler and easier for me as a planner, but it also offers our attendees a lot of options for dining and entertainment."

MGM Grand features two restaurants from celebrity chef Joel Robuchon — the Michelin three-

that if we needed more sleeping rooms, there would be the capability to do that. And the same thing held true with meeting space. And in fact, by the time the meeting happened, we ended up using their entire conference space. And that allowed us to have more breakout space and enlarge the size of our general session."

Las Vegas is one of just a few U.S. destinations where a planner can find several thousand rooms under one roof. "And it is very important to this client to keep this meeting under one roof so it feels cohesive and there are lots of opportunities for face-to-face networking," Grant says.

Another key advantage of Las Vegas is that it provides a broad, almost unlimited creative canvas.



**Katy Grant**  
Partner  
Event Alchemy  
Lafayette, CA

*"It is very important to this client to keep this meeting under one roof so it feels cohesive and there are lots of opportunities for face-to-face networking."*

Vegas was a safe bet because we could work with a large hotel like MGM Grand that could grow with the group. It meant



(Left) KÀ, a Cirque du Soleil production at the MGM Grand, is performed in a theater equipped with a state-of-the-art sound system. (Above) Event Alchemy recently staged this cutting-edge event at MGM Grand for a corporate client.

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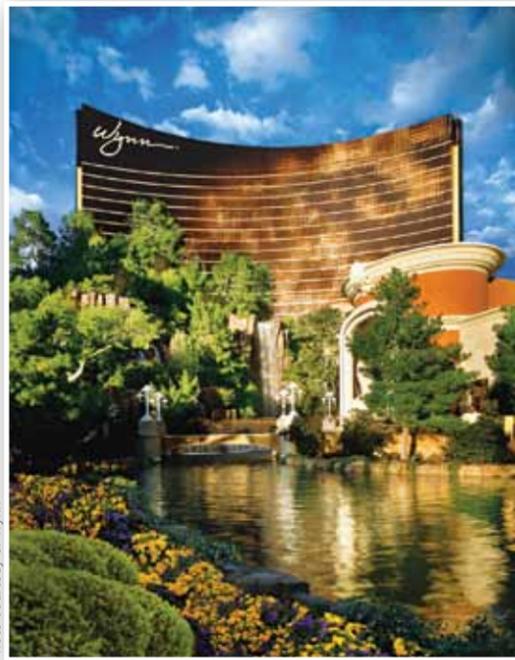


Photo courtesy of Wynn

(Right) *Le Rêve – The Dream* at Wynn Las Vegas is staged on Wynn's theater-in-the-round, which includes a 1.1-million-gallon pool and features fire rings atop the water.



Photo by Tomasz Rossa

star, Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond Joel Robuchon and the more casual L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon — as well as acclaimed restaurants from Michael Mina, Tom Colicchio, Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck.

Entertainment options include KÀ by Cirque du Soleil and the long-running Crazy Horse Paris.

A related benefit that often surprises planners who are first-time users of Las Vegas is its general value proposition. “Vegas is a great place when it comes to budgets,” Grant says. “There are a lot of famous high-end restaurants, but there are also a lot of inexpensive places to eat. You have everything from Michelin-starred restaurants from celebrity chefs down to food courts. And there are a lot of activities.

So that means you can have a welcome reception early in the evening and you don't really have to feed your attendees, because there are so many options for places to go for them afterward. And the same is true of entertainment. There is literally something for everybody in Las Vegas.”

Mike Dominguez, senior vice president of sales for MGM Resorts International extols the virtues of one of his largest meeting hotels in Las Vegas: “The appeal of a property like MGM Grand is that we really offer something for every conceivable type of client

and meeting,” he says. “And that ranges from holding an event for 15,000 people in the Grand Garden Arena, to having 15 high-end executives use our conference center for a very important meeting. We can customize any kind of meeting for any kind of client and still also deliver the unique benefits of a gaming resort.”

Two additional MGM Resorts properties ideal for meetings and events of various sizes include Monte Carlo, which features 30,000 sf of flexible meeting space with a variety of floor plans to best fit a planner's needs, and New York-New York Hotel & Casino, which offers more than 21,000 sf of convenient, adaptable space.

Marquee names in Las Vegas that generate planner enthusiasm include MGM's Aria Resort & Casino, which an-



Photo courtesy of South Point Hotel & Casino

South Point Hotel & Casino boasts 165,000 sf of meeting, function and exhibit space including a 25,000-sf ballroom.



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Photo courtesy of Las Vegas CVA

The Las Vegas Convention Center, with more than 2 million sf, can accommodate up to 2,000 attendees theater-style.

chors the world-renowned City Center complex that now dominates The Strip, Wynn Las Vegas and its newer sister next door, Encore.

The gaming properties operated by MGM Resorts International and Caesars Entertainment form the backbone of a vast portfolio enthusiastically promoted by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, which has established a universal reputation as one of the premier providers of consultative services and resources for meeting planners.

Off-The-Strip gaming resorts can provide a more relaxed, less hectic atmosphere for meetings. One such property is Station Casinos' 500-room, Mediterranean-style Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino in Henderson — one of the first luxury boutique hotels built in the Las Vegas

Valley — offering 79,000 sf of meetings space plus "The Backyard," a pool-side event space accommodating up to 4,500 attendees. Shuttles are available to take attendees to The Strip, which is about 10 miles away.

The 2,163-room South Point Hotel & Spa, located just off The Strip, also offers planners a self-contained resort to keep the focus on meetings, as well as a shuttle to all the action when the business is done. South Point has 165,000 sf of exhibit, meeting and banquet space, as well as a 4,600-seat arena, 64-lane bowling center and Costa del Sur Spa.



*"And one of the reasons (our conference) has become so popular... is that it is held in a gaming resort and...offers some after-hours fun."*

**Tony Corpin**  
 Publisher  
 School Transportation News  
 Torrance, CA

**Beyond Las Vegas**

Once hindered by a stigma that rendered them off-limits to many companies and meeting planners, gaming resorts are becoming an increasingly popular option in a recovering market where bottom-line value and convenience for both planners and attendees are at a premium.

select a gaming resort for certain kinds of meetings is that there is an underlying understanding that a casino hotel property typically incorporates a lot of components and options when it comes to activities and what attendees can do during their free time or in the evenings," he says. "A gaming resort usually includes a lot of aspects under one roof. And that is generally not the case at a typical meeting hotel."



Photo courtesy of MGM Resorts

Atlantic City's premier gaming resorts include the 2,000-room Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, which has undergone a \$50 million redesign of its 1,566 classic guest rooms. The resort features world-class amenities that include celebrity chef restaurants from Bobby Flay and Wolfgang Puck.

And unlike most hotels that feature celebrity chef eateries, those at Borgata include private dining rooms, says Huttinger, one of the hotel's most vocal fans.

Blue Man Group opened its new show at the Monte Carlo (inset) last fall. It includes electrifying music, cool tech, a nightly procession and its signature interactive audience experiences.



Photo courtesy of Blue Man Group



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“The meeting space in the event center is extremely flexible, and it offers some wonderful opportunities for creating conferences for 500 or 1,000 attendees, or even more,” he says. “There is a

Located adjacent to the property is its sister property MGM Grand Foxwoods, which adds further amenities to a sprawling resort complex.

In Uncasville on 240 acres along

tinations once or twice over the years,” Corpin says. “But we found, based on those experiences, that Grand Sierra is more popular with our attendees and contributes to the success of the meeting by attracting more interest. There are some schools and school districts where gaming is an issue, in terms of getting budget approvals. But over the years, our conference has grown and grown. And one of the reasons it has become so popular every year is that it is held in a gaming resort and therefore offers some after-hours fun for our attendees.”

### Three Big Advantages

Corpin says that compared to other hotels, gaming resorts deliver a trio of distinct and compelling benefits: value, service and amenities.

Most important is better value. “What we have found is that having the gaming element gives us the ability to offer our attendees rooms that have, in effect, been heavily discounted in terms of rates relative to the value we get with the rooms,” Corpin says. “And to us, that is a big benefit for our attendees.”

Corpin estimates that when compared directly to traditional hotels, gaming resorts offer what amounts to a 50 percent discount on the cost of rooms. “What I mean by that is that based on my experience, at a gaming resort like Grand Sierra you get a room for \$100 that compares very well to a \$200 room at a non-gaming property. But on top of that, I also find that the rooms — in addition to being much less expensive — are actually also much nicer at Grand Sierra Resort.”

Huttinger, who regularly books clients into Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City, agrees with that assessment. “And I think that today,” he says, “that’s a pattern that you can now see across the country, not just in places like Atlantic City or Las Vegas.

Katherine Overkamp, CMM, CMP, manager, special events and client hospitality at US Airways in Tempe, AZ, shares that view. “You just get a better value proposition at a gaming resort,” says Overkamp, who will host a management meeting for 2,100

the Thames River in southeastern Connecticut is the Mohegan Tribe-owned Mohegan Sun. The 34-story hotel features 1,175 rooms and more than 100,000 sf of meeting space, including the 38,000-sf Uncas Ballroom and convention center.

### What Attendees Love

In addition to offering practical benefits for planners, gaming resorts are naturally a big draw with attendees, says Tony Corpin, publisher of Torrance, CA-based *School Transportation News*, which has held its annual conference and trade show for 1,100 school transportation supervisors, related personnel and vendors at Grand Sierra Resort in Reno for almost two decades.

“We tried other hotels in other des-

Station Casinos' 500-room Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino is located off the Las Vegas Strip. The Estancia Ballroom (left) is the centerpiece of the resort's 79,000 sf of meeting space.



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*“At a gaming property, you often get higher quality rooms and more amenities at a lower cost.”*



**Katherine Overkamp, CMM, CMP**  
 Manager, Special Events and Client Hospitality, US Airways  
 Tempe, AZ

**Amenities, Amenities**

The third key benefit offered by gaming resorts is more — and better — amenities. “There’s so much to do at a resort like Grand Sierra that our attendees don’t have to leave the property,” Corpin says. “For example, there are great restaurants right on the property. And that is very attractive to our attendees because it means convenience. But it also means that there is a social atmosphere onsite for our vendors, exhibitors and attendees to be able to get together in various venues and get business done.”

Overkamp saw that realization reinforced last year when she used Talking Stick as an overflow property for one of her major meetings. “What happens at a major meeting is that attendees often want to get together in small groups and have dinner,” she says. “And what I’ve found in many non-gaming proper-

kamp’s attendees last year. “They liked the number of options available to them and that they didn’t have to go off the property,” she says. “For them, it’s mainly an issue of convenience because their time is very important. But at Talking Stick, they also liked the quality of rooms and the service, too. And based on those measurements, we definitely got a better response from attendees who stayed at Talking Stick then we did from those who stayed at other properties.”

The big benefit for planners, Huttinger says, is that they can negotiate contract terms that include amenities that can’t be easily matched by traditional hotels. “That’s because the amenities are designed into their infrastructure,” he says, “based on the clientele they usually cater to. For example, in a gaming property, you will typically find a better inventory of suites and other special accommodations and amenities that are designed for high-end gaming customers. But as a meeting planner, you can take advantage of them.”

Overkamp corroborates that analysis. “You can get similar kinds of amenities at non-gaming luxury hotels,” she says. “But it’s at more of a cost. At a gaming property, you often get higher quality rooms and more amenities at a lower cost.”

Dominguez adds that top gaming resorts offer upscale, exclusive amenities that cannot be matched by other hotels.

As an example, Dominguez cites the 51 luxury VIP suites in the Skylofts hotel-within-the-hotel located atop the MGM Grand. Although they were originally created for high rollers, he says, today they are very popular with high-end meeting clients.

**Creating Camaraderie**

Yet another advantage of gaming resorts is their unique ability to generate attendee enthusiasm and group activity.

attendees at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale in February.

**Stellar Service**

But it’s not just better pricing that appeals to Overkamp. In her experience in recent years, a gaming property also delivers demonstrably better service.

Corpin agrees. “We also find that the overall quality of the service we get, including the quality of the restaurants and other amenities, is better at a gaming resort,” he says.

Huttinger notes again that based on its demanding transient clientele, a gaming property is simply geared toward a higher standard of service.

“Of course, a planner will find good service at any four- or five-star hotel,” Huttinger says. “But the difference is that in casino hotels, because they usually have so many things going on at

the same time, you just have more of a depth of experience and expertise. And that means that often a casino hotel provides special types of services, such as AV services that are geared toward major entertainment attractions, or VIP hosting, that you don’t find even at a four- or five-star traditional hotel. At a gaming resort, that kind of staff infrastructure is built into the property and that helps meeting planners stage more interesting and effective events.”

ties is that maybe they only have one restaurant. So that means I wind up having to transport people to an offsite restaurant. Talking Stick offers a variety of restaurants, so that means when various groups of attendees want to get together for their team dinner, I can just book them into one of the restaurants at the resort. That saves me transportation costs and the time required to plan getting people off-property.”

That reality also appealed to Over-



The Sands Expo Center and Venetian Congress facility, located at The Venetian, house 1.8 million sf of combined meeting and event space.

Photo courtesy of Las Vegas Sands Corp.

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In December, Caesars Palace welcomed Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill, an authentic English pub experience, and Gordon Ramsay BurGR opened at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. Earlier this year, Gordon Ramsay Steak opened at Paris Las Vegas. Meeting planners can use Caesars Entertainment's alternative venues option at these eateries, which allows them to apply a portion of their spending to their F&B minimum.

"Camaraderie is a really important part of a company's culture and its meetings," Huttinger says. "And one thing you can do in a place like Atlantic City is create ways to promote that camaraderie. And there are many ways to do that in a gaming property. And often, that functions as almost a teambuilding kind of activity."

For the last 10 years, Corpin has hosted a sponsored slot machine tournament that has become a core tradition of his annual conference and trade show. "It's extremely popular," he says. "People pay to participate and sponsors

also pay to be part of it. We have some sponsors that have been involved for 10 years. They absolutely love it."

This year, about 250 attendees and vendors participated in the event, which offers cash prizes subsidized by sponsors.

"It works for us because it's an inexpensive, fun event that people can enjoy during the conference," Corpin says. "And it also adds another way for attendees, vendors and exhibitors to interact and network."

At MGM Grand, similar activities such as tournaments in the hotel's fa-

In late 2013, Caesars Entertainment will present the High Roller, which features 28 glass cabins that can hold up to 40 attendees each, at The Linq, a new open-air retail, dining and entertainment district.

bled poker room or lessons from dealers are popular with planners and attendees.

### Expanding Horizons

Although long-established gaming destinations such as Atlantic City, Reno and Las Vegas are enjoying a new surge of popularity among meeting planners, a frenzy of development activity across the U.S. is lengthening the list of available options. Lured by tax dollars and the promise of more tourism, states and municipalities across the country are rushing to get in on the action, which means more options in more places when it comes to new and noteworthy venues.

Opened in 2009, the \$800 million Sands Casino Resort in Bethlehem, PA, has since expanded to include a hotel tower that made its debut last year. Owned by Las Vegas Sands Corp. and billionaire developer Sheldon Adelson, the Sands Bethlehem outpost has brought the high standard established at Adelson's The Venetian and Palazzo to the East Coast.

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Make it Happen.



Photo by Lauraleigh Photography

A United Refrigeration Corp. group enjoyed gaming at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City. Larry Huttinger of D. Lawrence Planners, who arranged the event, often uses Borgata because of its solid sales and service team and flexible meeting space.

resorts from Las Vegas to Florida, has partnered with Tower Entertainment to propose a new gaming resort named The Provence in downtown Philadelphia. The co-developers are now pursuing licensing from the state of Pennsylvania and funding from investors.

In Springfield, MA, developer Peter Picknelly is pursuing plans to create a casino project on 13 acres of prime land, and MGM Resorts is vying for a similar project. Casinos have to be approved by the citizens of Springfield as well as the state gambling commission. According to Massachusetts state law, only one casino is allowed in western Massachusetts.

In Cincinnati, Caesars Entertainment — operators of legendary Caesars Palace in Las Vegas and a sister property in Atlantic City — has announced plans to develop a new Horseshoe Casino Cincinnati.

Caesars also recently announced that their San Diego North property Harrah's Rincon Casino & Resort has

begun a \$150 million expansion, adding a 21-story, 400-room hotel tower and 23,000-sf ballroom that will connect to an expansive outdoor patio. The tower will open in the spring in 2014, bringing the total number of guest rooms to 1,065.

In downtown Las Vegas, work has begun on a Downtown Grand hotel that will rise from the site formerly occupied by the Lady Luck, built in 1964. The Downtown Grand is scheduled to make its debut in late 2013.

#### Getting Onboard

Even though gaming resorts have generated an almost unprecedented level of enthusiasm as the meeting market has recovered over the past year, there are still planners who have not discovered and taken advantage of their singular appeal.

"There are also still a lot of planners who for whatever reason have not had the opportunity to experience the difference, sometimes because the

company had held back from making a decision to actually consider a gaming property," Huttinger says. "But other times, it's just because the destinations where gaming properties are located across the country are not the kind of destinations the company typically uses."

And there are still a few companies and planners who adhere to the old stigma about gaming properties. Huttinger says. But, he adds, more and more of those companies and planners are now realizing that there are more and more gaming properties across the country — and that every state except Utah and Hawaii has now approved gaming to some extent.

"Gaming has now permeated American culture, especially if you consider things like the Powerball lottery," Huttinger says. "So I think the stigma is largely disappearing. And as a result, I think a lot more planners will start to see the benefits of using a gaming resort for certain meetings." **C&IT**

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# ON THE MOVE



PACE

Colleen Pace was promoted to director of sales and marketing for Cheyenne Mountain Resort, Colorado Springs, CO. She formerly served as the resort's director of sales.



O'SULLIVAN

Diarmaid B. O'Sullivan was named V.P. sales and marketing at the Millennium Broadway Hotel New York. He was first vice president of tourism development at NYC & Company.



MEYERS

Sheraton Kona Resort & Spa at Keauhou Bay on the Kona coast of Hawaii has named Donna Meyers as director of group sales. She was area sales manager for Oregon and southwestern Washington for the Great Wolf Lodge, Grand Mound, WA.

Omnia Housing Services, Flemington, NJ, has named Sandra Horvath as director of sales, based in Las Vegas. She was director of sales and marketing at The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa.



HORVATH

Wynn Las Vegas and Encore announced that Joseph Perkins has joined



PERKINS

the hotel sales team as the director of regional accounts, Southeast. He most recently was director of sales and marketing for the Sheraton Dallas Hotel by the Galleria, Dallas, TX.

Benchmark Hospitality International, The Woodlands, TX, has named Ted A. Davis as chief sales and marketing officer; and Eric Gavin as regional vice president of sales and marketing in support of properties throughout Florida, Colorado and California. Davis was Benchmark's senior vice president of sales and marketing. Gavin was V.P. marketing for Noble House Hotels & Resorts. **C&IT**

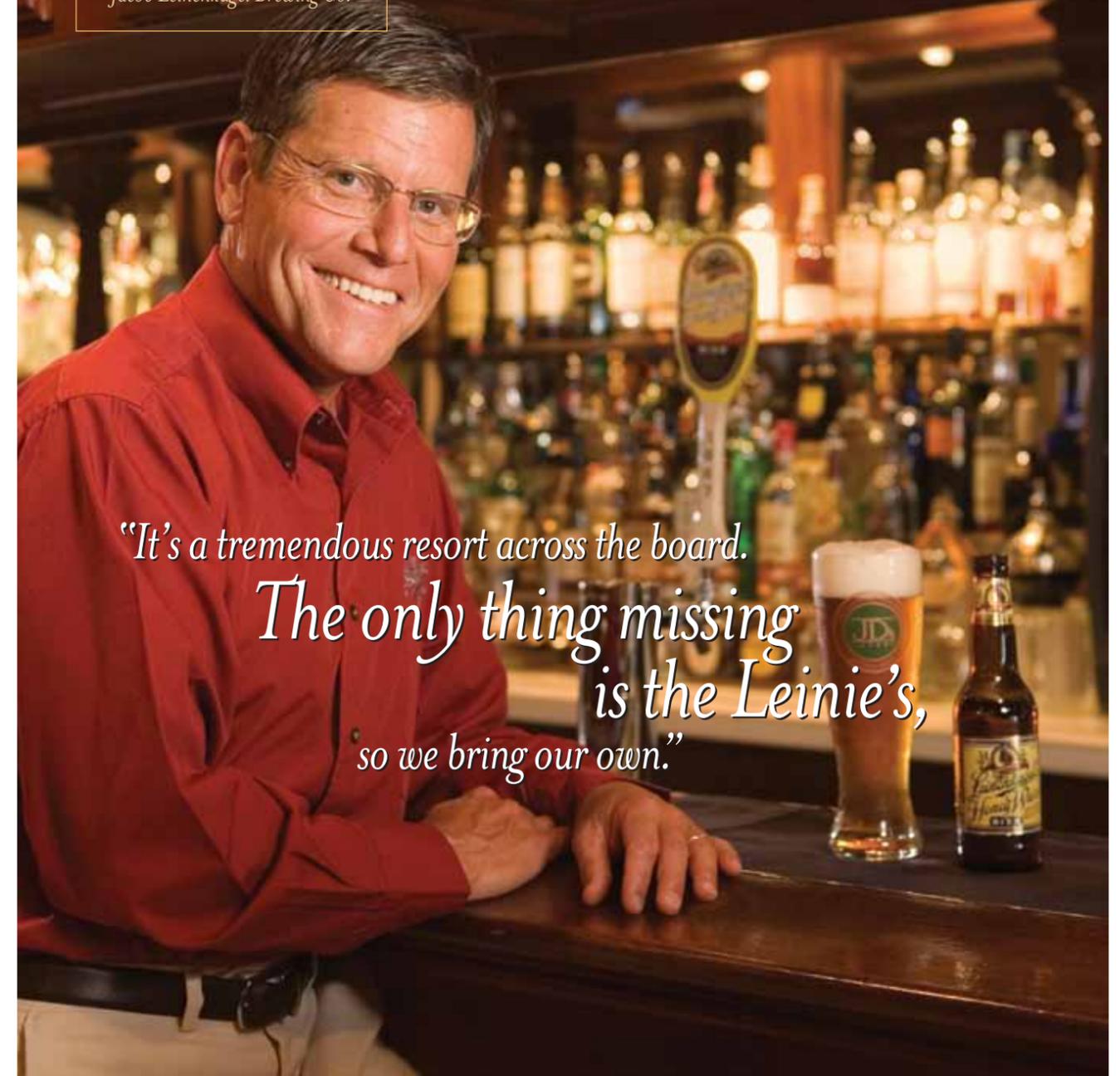
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President  
Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Co.



*"It's a tremendous resort across the board. The only thing missing is the Leinie's, so we bring our own."*

Jake Leinenkugel rewards his "all-Leinie team" — 130 of the top Leinenkugel distributors — with a trip to The Scottsdale Plaza Resort every year. And after 8+ years, he couldn't imagine going anywhere else. As he says, "They're the friendliest and most accommodating group of folks I've met in my 50+ years. They know us so well, they can almost read our minds. It feels like your own little oasis — homey and relaxing. We used to plan off-site activities, but our people would rather just hang at The Plaza. Everything's right here. The setting, the food, the service — it's just a delight to be here."

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