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DECEMBER/JANUARY
2015

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Giving Attendance a Shot in the Arm

How Health Care Conventions Are Building Healthier Numbers

PAGE 18

Let's Get Granular!

Fine-tune Your Segmented Marketing Strategies

PAGE 30

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Practice Greenhealth's CleanMed 2014 was held at the Cleveland Convention Center and the adjacent Global Center for Health Innovation (pictured).



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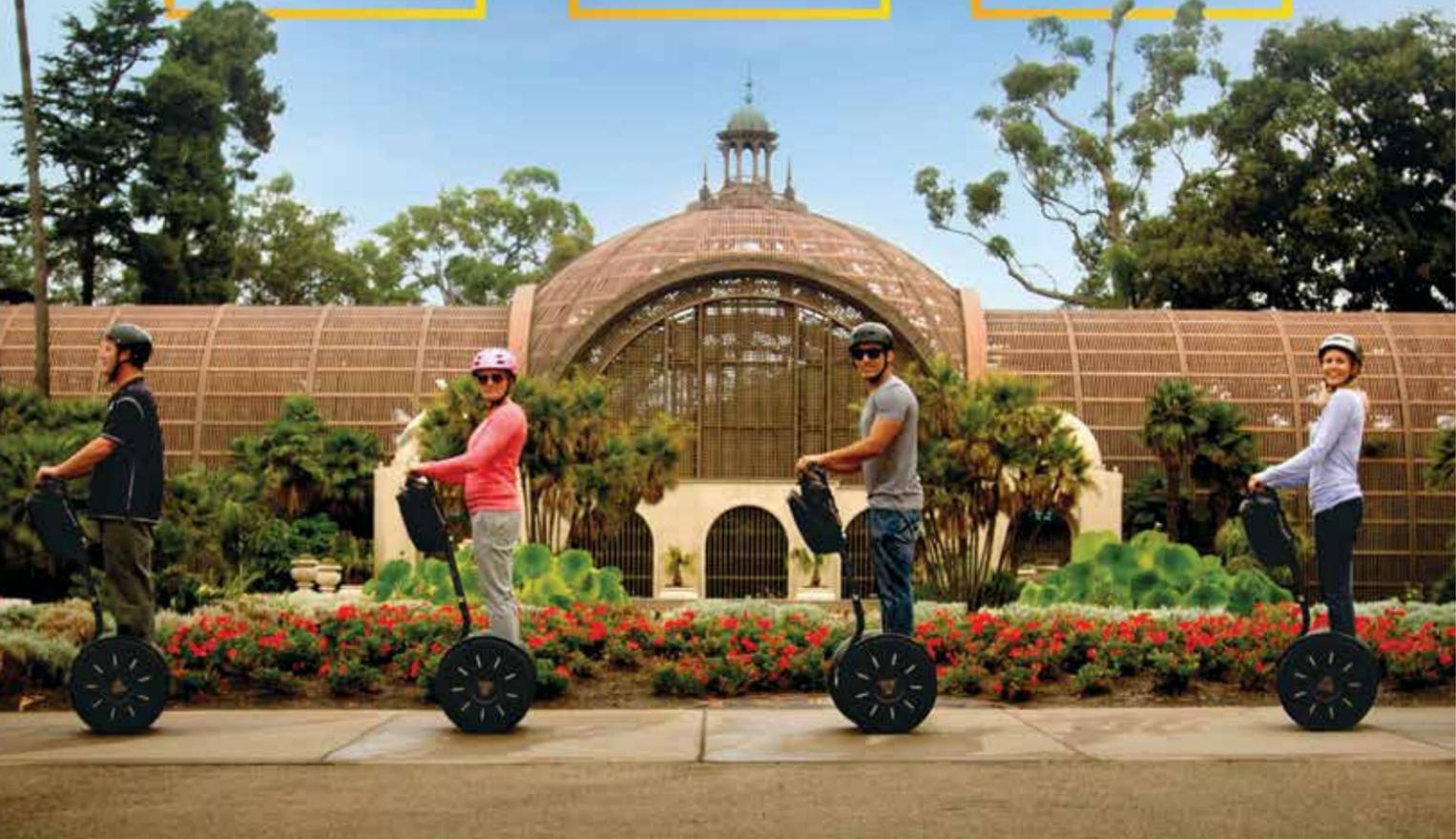
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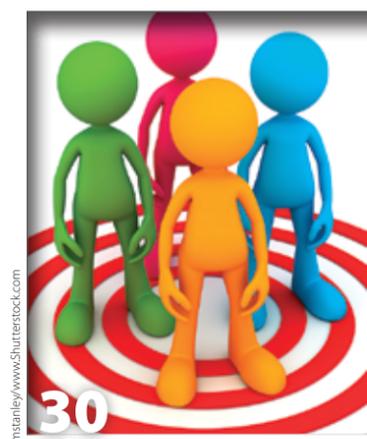
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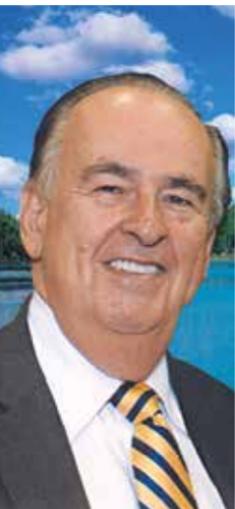
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Here's to a Healthier 2015



It's hard to believe that another year has come and gone, and that it's time once again to wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year. At the top of our industry's 2015 wish list is healthier attendee and exhibitor numbers, which make everybody happy. It's a constant battle, especially for health care associations, which are uniquely hamstrung by complicated PhRMA regulations. But associations of all stripes can identify: "We don't live in a world where companies exhibit at all trade shows in their subject area just to be present anymore," says Carrie Abernathy, CMP, CEM, CSEP, director of education, training and events at Practice Greenhealth, in our cover story on page 18. "Exhibitors need to see ROI and demonstrate ROI to upper management for each show. This means that, more than ever, conference managers need to work hard to provide exhibitors with post-show feedback and statistics as soon as possible in order to bring exhibitors back the next year."

Abernathy and other association planners will be happy to know that industry experts have predicted a healthier 2015, with the promise of some helpful innovations. David DuBois, CMP, CAE, FASAE, CTA, president and CEO of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events, tells us, "In 2015 we will see best practices emerge on how to define (attendee) engagement pre- and post-show and what the best measurements of ROI will be." IAAE's newly updated "Future Trends Impacting the Exhibitions and Events Industry" white paper highlights the importance of capturing big data and then "converting the data into tactical and strategic plans for future shows." In other words, proving ROI for both attendees and exhibitors. Chair of the Future Trends Task Force, Francis J. Friedman, president of Time & Place Strategies Inc., noted that the use of mobile apps, RFID badges, Near Field Communications and iBeacon to capture the data are becoming more prevalent, and that "Now, we are beginning to see companies that provide BDaaS (Big Data as a Service) starting to become available to our industry in the near future." You can download the white paper at www.iaee.com.

There's lots more data for you to capture in this issue that will help to boost your convention's ROI, including advice on how to fine-tune your segmented marketing strategies on page 30; an insider's look at the top emerging global destinations for meetings on page 8; a risk management road map on page 24; and on page 10, gaming destinations that will help you draw a "full house."

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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San Antonio Tops Off Convention Center Expansion Ahead of Schedule



A rendering of the expanded Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

SAN ANTONIO, TX — San Antonio recently topped off the \$325 million expansion of its Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center three months ahead of schedule. Set for completion in February 2016, the transformation of the center is the largest capital project in the city's history. When completed, it will offer 514,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space; 270,000 sf of new exhibit space; 85,000 sf of column-free multipurpose space; a more than 54,000-sf ballroom; 70 meeting spaces including divisible breakout rooms; wrap-around balcony with views of historic downtown and River Walk; enhanced circulation and wayfinding; and well-defined street and river entrances.

"As our convention center is the heart of many San Antonio meetings, it's imperative that we offer the most flexible, innovative space possible," said Casandra Matej, executive director of the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau.

www.meetings.visitsanantonio.com

Georgia World Congress Center Becomes World's Largest LEED Certified Convention Center

ATLANTA, GA — The Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) recently was awarded LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. The GWCC is now the world's largest LEED certified convention center.

"This achievement solidifies Atlanta's place as one of the leading convention destinations in the country," said Mark Vaughan, executive vice president and chief sales officer. "We applaud the efforts of the GWCC to help advance the environmental sustainability of Atlanta's convention industry."

The facility, located in downtown Atlanta, first opened in 1976 with a total of 750,000 sf. The fourth and final phase of construction of the building was completed in 2002 bringing the total square footage up to the current 3.9 million, including 1.4 million of exhibit space.

In FY14, the GWCC diverted more than 275 tons of single-stream recyclables, 119 tons of organics for composting, donated more than 58 tons of food to local organizations, baled more than 27 tons of cardboard and diverted a total of 602 tons of material from landfills. Located in the heart of down-



The Georgia World Congress Center.

town Atlanta, the Georgia World Congress Center Authority, which includes the convention center, the 71,250-seat Georgia Dome, 21-acre Centennial Olympic Park and manages the Savannah International Trade and Convention Center, ranks among the top five largest convention destinations in the country, as well as one of the best sports and entertainment campuses in the world. www.atlanta.net

Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel Unveils New Event Space

WASHINGTON, DC — The Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel announced the completion of a multimillion-dollar renovation to its entire 64,000 sf of meeting and event space including prefunction space, the 19,000-sf Grand Ballroom, the 10,000-sf Renaissance ballroom and 30 breakout rooms.

Convention attendees will appreciate the addition of functional communal tables, wired with power and USB ports, a library and residential-like seating areas throughout the prefunction areas, encouraging guests to hold impromptu meetings or relax during meeting breaks.

The meeting space renovation includes a complete redesign of its 807 guest rooms and suites, a high-design, high-energy lobby re-concept, as well as the new Liberty Market — a grab-and-go market featuring healthful house-made food items for breakfast, lunch or a snack on-the-go. www.marriott.com



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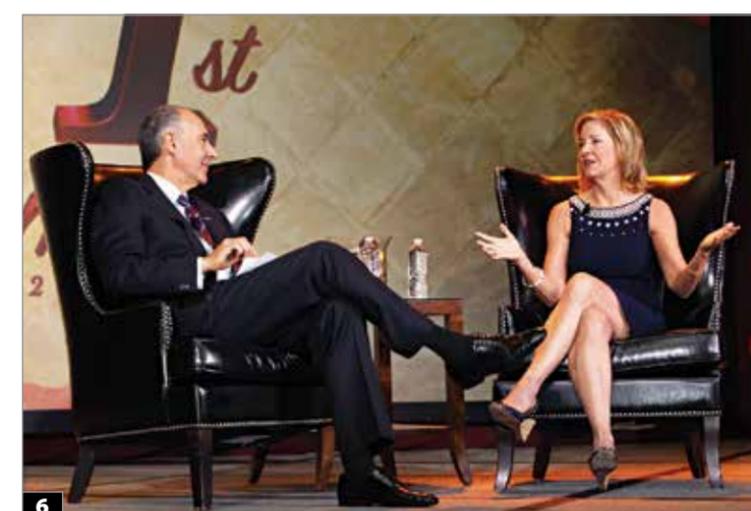


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5

1-3 The ASAE Technology Conference & Expo 2014 was held December 16-17 at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, National Harbor, Maryland. New this year, the pre-conference was held December 15 and gave CIOs tools and techniques to improve their capability to think beyond maintenance, cost-cutting and other routine IT management tasks. At the two-day event, attendees chose one of five pathways: Content, C-Suite, Leadership & Management, Next Generation Learning, and Platforms & Applications. Or, they could create their own by mixing and matching sessions from multiple pathways. **1** Reggie Henry (left), CAE, CIO, ASAE's chief information officer, interacted with a virtual concierge and showcased several gadgets and gizmos. Attendees then had some hands-on time with these new technologies to see how their organization could benefit from using them. **4** A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the debut of the new Connector at the Omni Hotel at CNN Center, a tunnel that connects the Omni attendees to the Georgia World Congress Center and the new College Football Hall of Fame and Chick-fil-A Fan Experience. **5** The world's largest sustainable building conference, The Greenbuild Conference and Expo, featuring the first "net zero" exhibit space, was held in New Orleans with 23,000 attendees and 600 exhibitors. **6** Visit Orlando's President & CEO George Aguel had a conversation with tennis legend Chris Evert at Visit Orlando's annual member luncheon December 12. A former No 1 ranked professional tennis player who won 18 Grand Slam singles championships, Evert talked about leadership, competitiveness and how a destination like Orlando can maintain its leadership position over the long run.



6

Emerging Global Destinations

Phelps R. Hope, CMP



Keep Your Eye on These Hidden Gems for Meetings

Many of the world's hidden gems are debuting on the national stage at a time when the meetings industry itself is bustling. It's worth exploring these emerging new markets to find the best deals and to ensure that association members and meeting attendees are satisfied.

First, we should qualify "emerging" as it relates to this topic.

- The destination should have something new and noteworthy to offer, such as an entertainment district for offsite events, memorable hotels or improved accessibility.
- The infrastructure, while relatively new, should be able to support association meetings.
- The tourism industry should be strong and have the financial support of the local government.
- The area should be politically and economically stable.
- It should offer stronger value-for-money compared with traditional association meeting destinations.

Here are a few exciting locations to watch, categorized by global region.

EUROPE

Poland is gaining steam as a key meeting destination, with a strengthening economy and competitive prices. The country is investing in multiple meeting hubs, the largest ones being Warsaw and Krakow where the new International Conferences & Entertainment (ICE) Congress Center opened



Krakow's International Conferences & Entertainment Congress Center.

MIDDLE EAST

Oman is a relatively new addition to the meetings world and is strategically located in the heart of the Middle East. The country's landscape, climate and rich history are being showcased to the world due to large government initiatives that have taken place in recent years. There has been substantial improvement in the infrastructure, including upgrades to roads and airports, and let's not forget the development of the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, which is set to open in 2016. To show its commitment to the development of the convention industry, the Oman Tourism Development Corporation has partnered with PCMA to provide training and education to Omani associations, increase

this year. Both cities expanded their hotel offerings in recent years with all major international hotel chains joining in for a piece of this expanding market. Notably, Poland's meetings industry currently accounts for two percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with great potential for growth.

Portugal continues to be among the more affordable meeting destinations, despite its increasing popularity. In 2013 alone, Lisbon hosted no fewer than 125 association gatherings and after hosting the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) Global Professionals Conference in the summer of 2014, I expect 2015 to be an especially good year for the country.

Azerbaijan is regarded as an industry innovator, with a meetings and tourism industry that is strongly backed by the government. The country has a rich historical culture that it is eager to showcase, and its favorable location, straddling Eastern Europe and Western Asia, makes it not only an accessible destination, but also a desirable one. In recent years Baku, Azerbaijan's capital has seen a tremendous amount of infrastructure growth. Since 2011 luxury hotels have been opening all over the city. Hilton, Marriott and Fairmont all have a presence in this market with the latest development coming from The Trump Organization, which in December 2014 announced plans for a new hotel to open in June 2015.

international awareness and assist with the opening of the convention center. With a surge of interest from the international community, Oman is pumping resources into becoming an attractive meeting destination. Already, it has the advantage of location.

ASIA

Seoul, South Korea is in the midst of a sweeping master plan specifically targeting international meetings. Not only is the South Korean capital safe, easily accessible (12 American cities offer non-stop flights to Seoul) and boasting modern transport infrastructure, but it also is a place where English services are commonplace. With multiple convention developments underway (one of them being Seoul's largest meeting complex yet), Seoul plans to expand its meetings infrastructure by three times by 2020.

Shenzhen, China is a booming port city and a major financial center where numerous high-tech companies are headquartered. With an impressive, centrally located Convention & Exhibition Center, more than 100 start-level hotels, beautiful coastline and various theme parks, Shenzhen has a lot to offer. This city certainly qualifies for this list as it aggressively courts meetings business to this economically evolving part of the world.

SOUTH AMERICA

Cartagena, Colombia is rich in natural beauty and culture, and it is quickly emerging as a premium meeting destination. The city has increased efforts to show the world that it is a politically stable region with world-class tourist attractions — both natural and cultural. The industry has ramped up its hotel infrastructure as well as its convention facilities (there are two convention centers in Cartagena). Other features that increase the city's appeal as an international meeting destination are its favorable climate, and easy access to the United States, Latin American and Europe.

Not many of us know this, but **Panama** is the world's second largest Free Trade Zone (which means the country's official currency is the U.S. dollar). On top of this, Panama offers an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax exemption, which allows U.S. companies to deduct expenses for meetings held



Panama's Amador Convention Center will open in 2015.

there. Panama City, Panama is on the cusp of opening the impressive Amador Convention Center with modern amenities and an international draw. It's a beautiful region that until recently has been untapped from a meetings perspective.

OCEANIA

Melbourne, Australia, the continent's second-largest city, is no stranger to the international scene. The world's friendliest and most livable city is making a name for itself on the international meetings scene with its world-class convention facilities (Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Center — the largest in the Southern Hemisphere), and growing hotel infrastructure (in 2011 the city had a total of 26,555 hotel rooms available). Melbourne is a globally connected city. Its time zone overlaps that of most Asia-Pacific nations, and Melbourne also is the midpoint between Europe and the United States.

Brisbane, Australia recently enjoyed attention on the international scale when the city hosted the G20 Summit this year in November. However, there is more to this city than that. Brisbane has no less than 230 hotels with more than 12,700 rooms, an award-winning convention center, beautiful year-round weather, an international airport 20 minutes from downtown and unique natural attractions.

Phelps R. Hope, CMP, is senior vice president of meetings and expositions for Kellen Company, an association management company with offices and representation in the United States, Europe, China, the Middle East, India and Southeast Asia. He can be reached at phope@kellencompany.com or 678-303-2962.

Drawing a Full House



Why Attendance Peaks at These Winning Gaming Resorts

By Derek Reveron

There was a time not so long ago when planners' choices of gaming destinations were pretty much limited to Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Not anymore. Today, about 35 states have resort or hotel casinos. Planners have a choice of gaming properties large and small in several states from Connecticut and Mississippi to Washington and New Mexico.

In addition to the value, groups are attracted to spacious meeting facilities, and multiple entertainment and restaurant options — all within the same property.

ATLANTIC CITY

Some associations select gaming resorts at various intervals for a change of pace while others return year after year, such as the New Jersey League for Nursing (NJLN). According to Gail Hammond, executive director of the Garwood, New Jersey-based association, the NJLN held its annual meeting in March at the Tropicana Casino & Resort Atlantic City for the 18th consecutive time and plans to return in 2015. More than 800 nurses, student nurses and other health care professionals attended.

The Tropicana's 2,079 well-appointed guest rooms and more than 100,000 sf of meeting space are a big draw. However, the value that the NJLN receives from the Tropicana keeps the group coming back again and again. Hammond negotiates contracts two years at a time, which she says helps her get good deals. "The room rates are lower than those of other hotels," says Hammond. "The rate in my new contract is the lowest it has ever been. It's a wonderful selling point for members who live in the area because they can afford to drive in and stay over and not drive back and forth." Hammond says a few complimentary

suites and reduced rates before and after the event are usually part of the arrangement, too.

The Tropicana's familiarity with the NJLN's needs and attendee satisfaction also keeps the group returning. "The staff at the Tropicana knows what our requests will be every year, and that is probably the No. 1 benefit of staying in a facility," says Hammond, who plans the meeting. "I know a group that keeps changing back and forth between Atlantic City hotels. I'm not one to do that. If the service and space fit my needs, and my people are satisfied,

"The hotel rolls back the seats, and we put our various law enforcement-related vendors on one side of the facility, and we have our presentations on the other side separated by partitions."

Reynaldo Z. Punzalan

Vice President

Washington Homicide Investigators Association, Seattle, WA

and we get positive feedback on our evaluations, I see no reason to change just to have a change of venue."

Keeping exhibitors satisfied with meeting properties is key for association planners, and the Tropicana does just that for the NJLN. "We find that our exhibitors especially enjoy being in a casino-type area," says Hammond. "They have told us numerous times that they enjoy going to Atlantic City and the Tropicana. They have so many things to do besides gambling. They have



In addition to the new façade and renovation of 434 guest rooms, the Tropicana Casino & Resort Atlantic City's new interactive light and sound show will light up the iconic Boardwalk.

many shops and a variety of restaurants. You can socialize and have a good time as well as do your work with the convention."

Hammond plans few activities at the Tropicana because of its variety of attractions as well as those available off-property. "We tried to do a banquet but most people at night want to do what they want to do, be it gaming or restaurants or whatever," she says. "I didn't have entertainment except for a welcome reception. I brought in a stilt-walker who dresses in costumes and face makeup that match the color I choose for the exhibit hall. This year it was black and gold. He greets people and poses for pictures with them," says Hammond.

The stilt-walker also selected the winners of a raffle designed to encourage attendees to visit exhibitors. Attendees qualified for the raffle by having at least half of the 50 exhibitors initial a form placed in tote bags during registration. Attendees with the most initials won a flat-screen TV. "The exhibitors like it. They told us that it's a good way to get individuals to stop at booths," says Hammond.

LAS VEGAS

No gaming destination tops Las Vegas when it comes to attracting meetings, and the city posted impressive numbers on all fronts in 2013. The destination received 39.6 visitors last year — the second-highest total ever, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA). Las Vegas hosted

22,027 meetings, trade shows and conventions in 2013, up 1.9 percent from 21,615 in 2012. Meeting attendance was 5.1 million, up 3.3 percent from 4.9 million in 2012. Meeting and attendance numbers for 2013 were the highest since 2008. Hotel occupancy averaged 84.3 percent during 2013, compared to the national average of 62.3 percent. Average daily room rate jumped by \$3 to nearly \$111.

This year promises to be another banner year for Las Vegas. "We will continue building on our momentum in the coming year, and we expect to welcome more visitors in Las Vegas than ever before when several much anticipated resorts and attractions debut in 2014," said LVCVA President and CEO Rossi Ralenkotter in a statement.

Las Vegas continues to expand its meetings infrastructure. About \$9 billion in projects are under construction in the city or have been announced, according to the LVCVA. One of the city's biggest projects ever is the Las Vegas Global Business District. The project includes a \$2.3 billion expansion of the Las Vegas Convention Center with new meeting, exhibition and general session spaces, additional eateries and a new lobby. A new world trade show facility will take advantage of the city's World Trade Center designation to attract meetings from overseas. Creation of a central transportation hub also is on the drawing board.

Among other major projects, Caesars Entertainment has opened The Linq, a multimillion-dollar entertainment, dining



Credit: Circus Circus Hotel Casino

In Las Vegas, the Circus Circus Hotel Casino's meeting and convention facilities boast more than 21,400 sf of flexible event space.

and shopping district. The Linq, located across from Caesars Palace, includes the Las Vegas High Roller, a 550-foot high observation wheel that opened recently. Caesars Entertainment debuted The Linq Hotel & Casino in October. Formerly the Quad Resort & Casino, the hotel features 2,256 brand new rooms and suites, and a completely renovated welcome experience built around a signature lobby bar, all new retail and spa amenities, and a new pool deck. The Linq Hotel & Casino is the portal to the Linq promenade, which offers 12 restaurants, eight bars, 14 retail shops and two concert venues. In spring 2015, the hotel will open a reimagined pool deck offering two pools and day club experience, new 15,000-sf spa and fitness center, Vortex Roof Deck, additional retail, and the all-new Living Room bar.

The new Las Vegas Arena, a joint venture between MGM Resorts International and AEG, is expected to open in spring 2016. The 20,000-seat sports and entertainment venue will be located between the New York-New York Hotel & Casino and Monte Carlo Resort and Casino.

South Point Hotel, Casino and Spa has unveiled its new 60-lane South Point Bowling Plaza — a 90,000-sf facility, which features 60 lanes in two parallel 30-lane rows; luxurious spectator seating for 360 people; and a one-of-a-kind digital scoring system with two 167-foot screens.

The All Net Resort & Arena, scheduled to open in early 2017,

will feature a multipurpose arena with a unique retractable roof; Victory Plaza, a 300,000-sf pedestrian plaza; and a hotel.

Among MGM Grand's 5,044 guest rooms is the 14th floor comprised of 171 Stay Well rooms, completed in January. The Stay Well guest rooms feature vitamin C-infused shower water, advanced room lighting tailored to sleep/wake cycles, air purification systems, EMF protection and more. The resort has even developed a Stay Well mobile app that provides wellness recommendations such as techniques to reduce the effects of jetlag.

Westgate Resorts announced the acquisition of the LVH — Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. Formerly known as the Las Vegas Hilton, it is now known as the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. The hotel is located one block off the Las Vegas Strip, is adjacent to the Las Vegas Convention Center and is one of seven stations on the Las Vegas Monorail.

Circus Circus Hotel Casino boasts remodeled rooms, award-winning dining, attractions at The Adventuredome and refreshed meeting space.

The Mob Museum, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, recently added two new displays of rare gambling artifacts as part of a collaboration with the Museum of Gaming History. The first display features rare, early- to mid-20th century casino chips, photographs and other memorabilia from the 1946 opening of Bugsy Siegel's Flamingo Hotel. The

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ROADHOUSE



The 370-room Tulalip Resort Casino near Seattle offers 30,000 sf of meeting space.

second display presents artifacts from legendary illegal gambling halls around the U.S. Located in downtown Las Vegas, The Mob Museum offers a variety of unique venues for private events.

NATIVE AMERICAN RESORTS

A number of mid-size and large Native American gaming properties are attracting meetings of local and regional associations. For example, earlier this year the Seattle, Washington-based Washington Homicide Investigators Association (WHIA) held its annual meeting at the Little Creek Casino Resort, according to Detective Reynaldo Z. Punzalan, vice president of the WHIA and the association's planner. The three-day meeting attracted 227 homicide detectives, investigators and prosecutors. Located about 75 miles north of Seattle, Washington, the casino resort is owned by the Squaxin Island Tribe. This is the three-year-old association's second consecutive meeting at Little Creek. The venue's concert facility was one of the attractions for WHIA. "They have a large concert facility that's separate from the hotel and gaming facility," Punzalan says. "The hotel rolls back the seats, and we put our various law enforcement-related vendors on one side of the facility, and we have our presentations on the other side separated by partitions. They have two Jumbotrons on either side of the partitions and a good audio-visual system for everyone to see and hear the presentations."



The ballroom at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Many groups house their exhibitors and vendors in separate rooms, but Punzalan prefers his approach. "We want more access to the vendors," he says. "If our people are on breaks from presentations, they walk around the partitions and talk to vendors if they see something they like."

Value also was a major deciding factor for the group.

Punzalan says he is "exceptionally satisfied" with the value received from Little Creek. "After the first meeting, we sat down with the sales and catering managers and reviewed the meeting. They gave us the same deal we had the first year for our second year. They also offered us a special deal for people who want to stay over a few extra days."

About a 30-minute drive from Seattle is the 370-room Tulalip Resort Casino, owned by the Tulalip Tribes. The property offers 30,000 sf of meeting space including several breakout spaces and the 15,000-sf Orca Ballroom. Meeting areas are adjacent to the Oasis Pool, creating a unique function area.

The Southwestern U.S. is home to two popular gaming properties operated by Native Americans. The 273-room Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino, located in Mescalero, New Mexico, owned by the Mescalero Apache Tribe, includes 40,000 sf of flexible meeting space and a 38,000-sf casino. The tribe operates nearby Ski Apache resort and the Mountain Gods Resort Championship Golf Course.

In Scottsdale, Arizona, Talking Stick Resort is a AAA Four Diamond property with 497 guest rooms and 22 meeting rooms including a 25,000-sf ballroom, 50,000 sf of outdoor function space, a 650-seat showroom and two championship golf courses. The resort, an enterprise of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, debuted in November its casino-level lounge, Palo Verde, which is available for event buyouts and rentals. The upper level includes oversized couches, coral tables and seating for more than 100 guests. It also features a second full bar and deejay booth for live entertainment. Connecting patrons on the second floor with the property's garden level, the new customized staircases are stainless steel and include manufactured glass. Equipped with sensors,

"Meetings in Seattle are expensive, even just for parking," says Punzalan. "There's free parking at the Little Creek and it's away from the city atmosphere in a rural environment. The facility there is top-notch. They have a great 18-hole golf course (Salish Cliffs Golf Club), and we get a discount on it. There is a top-notch pool and spa, good seafood restaurant, cigar bar and, of course, the gaming."



The 2,200 guest rooms at Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut are complemented by 150,000 sf of meeting and event space.

the stair tread is activated by motion and changes colors with each individual's step. The lights are programmed every three inches and feature multiple display options including a red-carpet effect, holiday-themed patterns and colors commemorating Arizona sports teams.

Additional renovations include a downstairs tavern complete with Southwestern-inspired cuisine and tequila offerings. Showcasing more than 40 tequilas, the venue allows guests to customize their experience and create their own margaritas.

Connecticut is home to two major Native American-owned gaming properties that attract significant numbers of meetings from groups based in the New England and New York Metropolitan area.

The AAA Four Diamond Foxwoods Resort Casino in Mashantucket, operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Native Americans, is the largest resort casino complex in the nation.

Foxwoods is upgrading its main concourse area with new retail space and restaurants, and plans to add a new retail mall, The Tanger Outlet at Foxwoods, with more than 80 outlets. Foxwoods features a total of 2,200 guest rooms in four properties — MGM Grand at Foxwoods, Grand Pequot Tower, Two Trees Inn and Great Cedar Hotel. The four properties offer a total of 150,000 sf of meeting space, including the 4,000-seat Grand Theater and the 1,400-seat Fox Theater.

The Mohegan Sun, Connecticut's other major casino, sits along the Thames River in Uncasville and is owned by the Mohegan Tribe. The property provides 1,200 guest rooms and a 100,000-sf convention center, including the 38,000-sf Uncas Ballroom. Michael Jordan's Steak House is among the Mohegan Sun's 45 restaurant and food options.

"I know a group that keeps changing back and forth between Atlantic City hotels. I'm not one to do that. If the service and space fit my needs, and my people are satisfied, and we get positive feedback on our evaluations, I see no reason to change."



Gail Hammond
Executive Director
New Jersey League for Nursing
Garwood, NJ



Located in New Mexico, the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino includes 40,000 sf of meeting space and a 38,000-sf casino.



Credit: The Mohegan Sun

The Mohegan Sun, located in Connecticut, provides 1,200 guest rooms and a 100,000-sf convention center.

GULF COAST

The scenic Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi, is one of the region's most popular gaming destinations. The 1,740-room AAA Four Diamond resort is an MGM Resorts International property that features 50,000 sf of meeting space and a 1,550-seat theater. The Beau Rivage is especially popular among Southern-based groups, who enjoy the property's 85,000-sf casino, 12 dining options, Fallen Oak Golf Course and Spa and Salon.

Last July, the Memphis, TN-based Southern Cotton Ginners Association (SCGA) met at the Beau Rivage for the third time in the last decade. The meeting attracted about 200 cotton processing and manufacturing business people and their relatives. As SCGA members hail from Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana,

Mississippi and Tennessee, the organization rotates its events among these states.

Meetings at the Beau Rivage tend to attract the SCGA's highest attendance. "We end up with good attendance at Beau Rivage although some people are driving from as far away as southeast Missouri," says Tim Price, executive vice president of the SCGA. "That's a stretch, to drive all the way to the Gulf. They choose to do it because of the Beau Rivage experience. They view it as a mini-vacation for their families. Some people arrive a few days early or extend their stays."

The Beau Rivage's value and self-contained activities make it a top choice. "The rates are comparable to what we pay at other destinations," says Price. "We pay for what our members use. They don't pay for a buffet that they may or may not attend. It's also a facility that has enough attractions so they don't get bored and leave the property. The minute they leave, you increase the possibility they will be late for meetings or not show up at all."

While the Beau Rivage's gaming is a big attraction, it's not the No. 1 reason why the SCGA's attendance peaks at the property. "It's a resort that happens to have gaming, not a gaming facility," says Price. It has a real let's-kick-off-our-shoes resort feel. We send them information about the resort as well as regional and local events based on the demographic profile of our attendees. Some people bring their boats and go on fishing expeditions."

FINAL THOUGHTS

Planners seeking a self-contained property that offers everything from A to Z for successful meetings and events will find it time after time at gaming destinations.



The casino floor at the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Credit: Beau Rivage Resort & Casino

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Giving Attendance a Shot in the Arm

Build Healthier Numbers in the Face of New Challenges

Patrick Simms

The vitality of a trade typically bolsters attendance at conventions held by the trade association: More professionals entering the field translates to more members and more attendees, and progress in the field translates to more professionals wishing to congregate to learn about and discuss those developments. Recent examples of this principle in action come from the health care field.

Cancer research has seen much activity as of late with new drugs, research and clinical trials, and it's likely not a coincidence that the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based American Association for Cancer Research has seen strong increases in attendance at its Annual Meeting. "We've had a record-breaking year in 2014 with almost 19,000 attendees in San Diego, and the year before it was well over 17,000. So attendance has been continuously growing, and in line with that, our exhibits have increased in number," re-



An interactive exhibit at the 2014 American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Annual Session in Boston. The Session attracted a record 6,800 attendees.

ports Pamela Ballinger, CMP, senior director, meetings and exhibits, citing 22 new exhibitors.

The field of pediatric dentistry also has been quite active in recent times, with "a growing number of pediatric dentists available each year as more programs have been added to the schools," notes Tonya Almond, CMP, vice president, meetings and continuing education, at Chicago, Illinois-based American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. In addition, "there is a new focus in the last couple of years on evidence-based dentistry, and it's very important in the organization to provide the best scientific evidence in the Annual Session." These trends in the profession, Almond feels, have contributed to a recent upswing in attendance, with nearly 6,800 total

attendees in Boston this year, representing about "a third of our active membership." "I've been here five to six years, and each year we beat our attendance. It's a good streak we've been on."

ROI AND THE BURDEN OF PROOF

However, some health care associations have seen reserved participation by exhibiting companies, due to diverse factors. Carrie Abernathy, CMP, CEM, CSEP, director of education, training and events at Reston, Virginia-based Practice Greenhealth, notes an increase in delegates but a drop in exhibitors at this year's CleanMed, held at the new Cleveland Convention Center and Global Center for Health Innovation (see box). "I believe that attendee budgets for continuing education and conferences are finally being 'unfrozen' or increased, but exhibiting companies are tightening their belts on which shows they choose to exhibit and cutting their budgets," she says. "We don't live in a world where companies exhibit at all trade shows in their subject area just to be present anymore. Exhibitors need to see ROI and demonstrate ROI to upper management for each show. This means that, more than ever, conference managers need to work hard to provide exhibitors with post-show feedback and statistics as soon as possible in order to bring exhibitors back the next year."

Alternatively, a reduction in the number of exhibitors can reflect mergers that have taken place. "Many of the pharmaceutical companies have merged, so where you used to have 50 exhibitors now you may have 30 companies," notes Cathy L. Nash, CMP, director, meetings and conventions department, with Arlington, Virginia-based American Psychiatric Association. Nash observed a drop from 2,891 registered exhibitors in 2008 to 1,555 at this year's Annual Meeting in New York, "quite a drastic drop in just six years."

The American Psychiatric Association also has had to contend with an overall decline in attendance since 2009, prior to which

"Now, the full program starts on Saturday with symposia, workshops and so on. So members who can't be away from their practice on weekdays can come just for the weekend."



Cathy L. Nash, CMP
Director, Meetings and Conventions Department
American Psychiatric Association
Arlington, VA

attendance had been in the 18,000 to 20,000 range, highlighted by a record 27,000 attendees in New York in 2004. This year's meeting in New York, a city with traditionally high attendance for the organization, drew just 16,517, and next year's meeting in Toronto is expected to draw around 12,000, Nash says.

Yet the challenge of declining registrants has led the association to take some instructive measures. For one, supplier partners for future meetings are kept apprised of the attrition trend, especially because the meetings are booked so far out. "We're constantly having to renegotiate contracts because we signed them so far in advance, and what we do each year after the meeting has taken place is send the future cities our room pickup history and our revenue history, so that the cities are aware of changing patterns in our meeting," Nash explains. "We send that information to the CVBs and the key hotels that we've signed. And as we get closer and closer, we're signing fewer and fewer overflow hotels and doing a smaller overall peak night package than we used to do."

International groups who use their own travel agents are also contributing to the attrition problem. "They'll sometimes book at two or three hotels with different travel agencies, and then right before the deadline, they might cancel 50-60 rooms in the block, and it creates a big problem for us," she relates. "So in 2015 we're going to institute a charge if they don't stay within the block. We're going to see how that works for those groups, and then possibly broaden it to all registrants in the future."

ADAPTING TO NEW REGULATIONS

According to Nash, one development that has adversely impacted attendance at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting is the PhRMA regulations instituted in the last few years. "Prior to 2009 we had much more participation from the pharma industry. Companies were allowed to



The 2014 Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association was held at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City.



Carrie Abernathy, CMP, CEM, CSEP
Director of Education
Training and Events
Practice Greenhealth
Reston, VA

"I believe that attendee budgets for continuing education and conferences are finally being 'unfrozen' or increased, but exhibiting companies are tightening their belts on which shows they choose to exhibit."



Tonya Almond, CMP
V.P., Meetings and
Continuing Education
American Academy of
Pediatric Dentistry
Chicago, IL

“There is a new focus in the last couple of years on evidence-based dentistry, and it’s very important in the organization to provide the best scientific evidence in the Annual Session.”

The latest regulatory development, the Physician Payments Sunshine Act, requires manufacturers of drugs, medical devices and biologicals to report all transfers of value exceeding \$10 they make to physicians. Reports of 2013 data were made available to the public in September. While the Act does not directly affect health care associations, these organizations can both help exhibiting companies in the data collection effort, and make delegates aware of the Act and the kind of information that will be reported.

“What the Sunshine Act is going to mean down the road is not that clear to anyone, but we’ve started collecting NPI (national provider identifier) numbers from physicians. The exhibitors may at some point need that data,” says Nash. “If they have a product theater, for instance, and a box lunch is given away, we actually put up signage at those events and state what the Sunshine Act is and that the food product (value transfer) may be reported, so it’s clear for all attendees. We also publicize how the Act affects them in the program book as well. We feel that’s our responsibility with a new regulation. And we have (knowledgeable) staff on hand answering questions about the Act.”

Over the last three to four years, the American Academy

support bringing in international attendees; they were allowed to pay for travel and registration for doctors. Sometimes they would bring in large groups of 300 to 400 physicians. And now our largest group of physicians might be 30–40,” she notes. “So we’ve seen our largest decline in international attendance since those guidelines have changed.”

Onsite at the New Global Center for Health Innovation



Attendees of Practice Greenhealth’s CleanMed 2014 at The Global Center for Health Innovation.

Practice Greenhealth’s CleanMed 2014 was held in June at the Cleveland Convention Center and Global Center for Health Innovation, a \$465 million project that debuted last year. Naturally, the facilities’ green creden-

tials played a role in the site choice. “The biggest factor in our venue and city choice is environmental sustainability,” says Carrie Abernathy, CMP, CEM, CSEP, director of education, training and events. “The facilities are

LEED Gold certified, so that is a mark of excellence that shows us right away that their environmental practices are top notch. We were brought in during the build process and were updated all the way through the launch on how they would mitigate the impact to the environment. The center has a light reflective roof, motion-sensing lighting, and tons of natural lighting to reduce the use of electricity in some of their largest spaces.” Apart from the eco-conscious aspects, “the facility feels brand new and is just beautiful. The staff are amazing and accommodating, and the catering company made it easy for us to provide local, sustainable and organic foods where possible to our attendees.”

The new Cleveland Convention Center includes 225,000 sf exhibit space divisible into three exhibition halls, 35 meeting rooms and a 32,000-sf, column-free ballroom with panoramic views of Cleveland’s lakefront. The adjacent Global Center for Health Innovation offers an 11,000-sf, column-free junior ballroom. —PS

Credit: EPNAC Photography, Jules Clifflord

of Pediatric Dentistry also has been collecting attendees’ NPI numbers during registration, “so any of the exhibiting companies can download that themselves and have access to it for their reporting,” Almond explains. While the Annual Session does not see many pharma companies exhibiting, the Sunshine Act also applies to medical device manufacturers, and some of these kinds of companies do exhibit (even the toothbrush is defined as a medical instrument, Almond adds).

Preceding the regulation on financial transparency, the PhRMA guidelines dissuaded any gift-giving by exhibitors in the first place, and that can make it more difficult to draw attendees into the exhibit hall. “In the old days they would go in to get the giveaways, and those don’t exist anymore,” says Ballinger. “So we have a spotlight theater in the hall, food stations and our huge AACR Central membership booth. We work very hard to come up with things that are going to drive attendance in the hall, and then it’s up to the exhibitors to, obviously. Most of them work very hard to make what they do in the booth to be of educational import.”

MAXIMIZING VALUABLE TIME

Health care associations also need to work hard to drive attendance to the annual convention itself, either to preserve an uptick in attendance or recover from declining numbers. This multifaceted effort often includes tweaking the schedule and programming to facilitate participation. “Our attendees are busy health care professionals that have very little time for conferences and continuing education,” Abernathy says. Part of making CleanMed a draw is thus to maximize the value for attendees who take time away from the office to attend. “We co-locate other meetings, and we provide several continuing education credits in one location. We also hold a large awards gala to award top hospitals and professionals at the same time as the conference, so that they can take time off for the conference and gala at the same time.”

In a similar vein, the American Psychiatric Association compressed its con-

vention from six days into five a few years ago, moving more programming into the weekend that starts the event. “On Saturday and Sunday we used to only have our courses, which are six- to eight-hour ticketed events. So members were registering for the meeting and unless they were attending those courses there really wasn’t much else for them to do on those days,” Nash explains. “Now, the full program starts on Saturday



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— SAM KENNEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TECHWEEK

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Pamela Ballinger, CMP
Senior Director
Meetings and Exhibits
American Association for
Cancer Research
Philadelphia, PA

“AV is one of our hot buttons. It’s probably the thing we spend the most money on because every room has AV, and with any scientific meeting if the AV isn’t stellar, your whole meeting is a failure.”

notes. While some attendees have indicated that they miss the social aspect of the traditional poster hall, “you’re never going to make everybody happy all the time,” Almond says.

These days, much socializing and networking at conventions take place virtually, or face-to-face facilitated by social media tools. And health care conventions are certainly part of the trend. “Our conference utilizes the SpotMe mobile app to connect our attendees,” says Abernathy. Gamification also furthered networking at CleanMed 2014. “We handed our Wi-Fi-activated iPod touches to attendees and engaged them throughout the conference with games that pushed them to interact with peers and exhibitors. For example, the attendee that used their iPod to scan the most attendee badges during networking events won a prize. We also used a ‘treasure map’ on the app to direct attendees to certain exhibitors on the expo floor.”

The American Psychiatric Association also uses a virtual tool that supports exhibitor promotion. Attendees receive a link to a Virtual Registration Bag that includes links to exhibitor materials. “We found many registrants would throw away

with symposia, workshops and so on. So members who can’t be away from their practice on weekdays can come just for the weekend for the 8 a.m.–5 p.m. programming.” In addition, the organization offers the opportunity for members to meet all their CME requirements for the year by attending the full five days.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Education at the more scientifically oriented health care conventions often carries robust AV requirements, and the American Association for Cancer Research’s Annual Meeting offers just one example. “AV is one of our hot buttons. It’s probably the thing we spend the most money on because every room has AV, and with any scientific meeting if the AV isn’t stellar, your whole meeting is a failure,” Ballinger stresses.

An innovative use of AV technology can be seen in the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry’s latest Annual Session, where the poster competition “went virtual.” “We’ve gotten rid of the old poster boards, and we’re doing an e-poster gallery and poster app (using the vendor CadmiumCD). The students love it because they’re not spending

the dollars to create the posters that most of them don’t have the software to do, and they don’t have to stand for three hours just to be judged face-to-face. Now we’re just asking our residents to give a half-hour presentation,” Almond says. The presentation technology includes 55-inch monitors and an iPad on a stand, used to zoom in and out. Also, there are on-demand stations in a rotunda where further discussion about the posters can be pursued.

“We’ve actually had some program directors say they had stopped telling students they needed to do posters, but now because it’s electronic, they’re having them take up the project again. We had 100 more poster submissions from 2013–14,” she



Practice Greenhealth experienced an increase in delegates but a drop in exhibitors at this year’s CleanMed in Cleveland.

the physical bag,” Nash says. “We charge exhibitors a fee to put a document in the bag, and our internal staff can put in pieces advertising the sessions.”

Planners cannot control all the factors that affect convention attendance, including trends in the health care field and economic conditions. They also depend on committees, presenters and exhibitors to create a conference with engaging, topical content that will draw members. Yet planners can seek to ensure that the site choice, conference scheduling, presentation technology and networking tools all support a convenient, effective experience for delegates, the kind of experience that ultimately supports healthy attendance figures. AC&F

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Reduce Your RISKS



Make Sure Your Association's Risk Management Roadmap Is Ready to Roll

By Gabi Logan

Would you ever imagine that the truck with your printed materials could be stolen and burned to the ground? Or that someone could sabotage your event by causing a chlorine gas leak?

Has your event ever been disrupted by demonstrations in the streets such as those around the country protesting grand jury decisions in Ferguson and Staten Island? These are not fictional scenarios.

September 11, the Boston Marathon and the current Ebola risk are all events wide and severe enough to affect the way in which

planners go about their jobs, but there are dozens of more common unexpected issues that have the potential to derail events.

We live in a world of unknown unknowns. Every meeting planner knows that information and preparedness are key to putting on great events, but taking the time to put together a comprehensive risk management plan and address it often is a task that too often is eclipsed by more pressing concerns.

WHEN THE UNIMAGINABLE HAPPENS, WHAT'S NEXT?

Do you have a comprehensive risk management plan in place for your organization? If so, do you revisit it often?

These two questions send a startling number of association

meeting planners who are normally proud of their dotting of i's and crossing of t's into embarrassed mumbles. But as the major threats to events today have grown far beyond the usually insurance-covered trio of kidnapping, ransom and extortion, a wide-reaching risk management plan and appropriately trained staff are not something that can be put off.

According to a 2013 survey by the Global Business Travel Association, less than half of travel managers — 44 percent — have crisis and evacuation plans. Only 70 percent of travel managers collect emergency contact information, and 59 percent collect crisis information related to the destination.

Concierge-level security may have been a buzz word in recent years, but the most worrisome threats to today's meetings, particularly for associations that don't host top executives who might be targets for kidnapping, are the hardest to identify in advance: criminal acts, natural disasters and medical emergencies.

When the Boston Marathon bombing took place, staff from the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association (ASCA) were in town set-

ting up their annual event at the convention center on the marathon route. Even as an association whose members deal with potentially life-threatening situations daily, the ASCA was not prepared for a crisis of that scale.

"We did not have a plan in place," Bill Prentice, the CEO of the Alexandria, Virginia-based association said during PCMA's Convening Leaders conference this year. "We weren't prepared."

CRISES COME IN ALL SIZES

Though major critical incidents, such as the bombings at the Boston Marathon, receive the lion's share of attention in risk management case studies, having a comprehensive risk management plan in place allows your team to respond to issues that seem more mundane than a terrorist attack on a public holiday, but are no less severe for those involved.

As of press time, a nor'easter is causing flight disruptions along the East Coast while the largest storm in five years hits the Bay Area in California. Though the Northeast corridor has not experienced

an event on the level of Hurricane Sandy or Irene for a few years, airlines' response to winter weather has changed, creating issues getting early arriving staff onsite and greatly hampering meeting setup and operation.

Pamela S. Dallstream, CMP, CMM, director of meetings and conventions for the Mount Prospect, Illinois-based Society of Critical Care Medicine, has had a risk management plan in place for her organization, but still finds that even responses to issues that should be foreseeable such as winter weather can change from year to year.

"The 'polar vortex' affected staff travel to the 2014 annual meeting, with key staff being delayed several days, so we are incorporat-

"The 'polar vortex' affected staff travel to the 2014 annual meeting, with key staff being delayed several days, so we are incorporating plans on how to get these key staff to the meeting as quickly as possible."

Pamela S. Dallstream, CMP, CMM
Director of Meetings and Conventions
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Mount Prospect, IL

ing plans on how to get these key staff to the meeting as quickly as possible," she says. "While all staff participating in the meeting are important, those responsible for and knowledgeable of key logistics must arrive on time at all costs."

Dallstream's association was also the victim of the stolen truck scenario mentioned earlier. "Our onsite registration materials were printed in the host city instead of in the headquarters city one year to save shipping costs between the city and an offshore meeting venue," she explains. "The night before registration opened, the truck with our registration materials was stolen and subsequently burned. The printer was able to reprint all of the materials and deliver them only a day and a half late, but the money we saved by not shipping the materials was not worth the stress placed on staff waiting for the materials and explaining to the membership why materials were delayed," she says. "We have determined that it is always better to print onsite registration materials in our headquarters city and include the materials with office equipment and supplies shipped to the meeting venue."

THE ROADMAP TO YOUR OWN ROADMAP

One of the oft-cited reasons for not creating an official organization risk management plan is that the time needed is significant and difficult to carve out with all the necessary parties. However, for most associations, once you do the legwork, you can reuse the same

plan with minimal tweaks for years to come. Though risks, and particularly unexpected disasters, vary widely, preparing appropriately is a relatively similar process for most risks.

Creating a risk management plan involves five basic steps:

1. Identifying potential risks.
2. Assessing their potential impact.
3. Determining their consequences.
4. Identifying ways to reduce risk.
5. Creating a prioritized list of risk management tasks.

And there are a number of ways to approach the planning process. Thankfully for planners pressed for time, a variety of resources have already set up the basics, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

In response to the Boston Marathon bombing, PCMA worked with members to create an emergency action plan template to help organizations walk through the essentials of crisis management before their events and create their own custom action plans. The template is downloadable online, but PCMA cautions that it is meant to be a quick-start guide more than a comprehensive planning tool.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) offers a set of templates from contingency plans to risk management plans to risk management "lite," again with an advisory that a full plan is a safer and more comprehensive choice for capturing all risk. These templates and others relating both the risk management and event planning generally can be downloaded from the CDC library at www2.cdc.gov/cdcup/library/templates.

Some organizations keep a list of potential or the most common issues on file and walk through it in a contingencies meeting. If you choose to go this ad hoc route, make sure you capture these potential risks:

- severe weather
- natural disasters
- terrorist attacks
- transportation strikes
- protests or other forms of government unrest
- data hacking
- attacks by disgruntled former employees or customers
- global health emergencies
- individual medical emergencies among staff or attendees
- physical corporate espionage

Though not necessarily a front-of-mind resource for association planners, the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) released a SITE Foundation Study specifically addressing risk management in meeting planning in October 2013 that provides a method for creating event-specific risk management plans that can be combined well with an ad hoc approach.

Begin with a list of stakeholders, including not only event attendees and contractors but also performers, potential trespassers, local residents and other members of the public. Score each potential risk between one and three for severity and one and three for probability, and multiply the two numbers to get a risk factor.

If the number is six or above, eliminate the potential for risk, shift the liability or at the least inform participants if the previous options

aren't available. If the risk is between four and six, implement any controls possible to minimize the risk.

STALE PLANS AREN'T SECURE

Once you have a plan for your organization, however, there is still work to be done, as association risk management plans must be dynamic or focused on a specific event.

Dallstream's group created a risk management plan years ago, because "staff knew we needed to create a plan that would guide us in the event of emergencies, but the plan has evolved over the years with several key areas being added each year depending on what emergencies crop up unexpectedly."

Rather than create an association-wide risk management plan through a specific set of event planning meetings, many organizations have found their best approach by folding crisis planning into their greater event rubric and planning structure, which ensures they revisit key risk issues, such as insurance updates, for each event.

"We don't have a specific, detailed risk management plan, but we do have a comprehensive event planning structure that enables us to identify and respond to emerging issues in real time," says Michael Cohan, director of professional development and instructional issues at the Trenton, New Jersey-based New Jersey Education Association.

"We typically engage in a comprehensive project management

"We often uncover issues that we need to consider and then develop contingency plans on an event-specific basis, and we also regularly consult with our insurance carrier."



Michael Cohan
Director, Professional Development
and Instructional Issues
NJEA, Trenton, NJ

plan with a variety of staff that bring a diversity of perspective to our events," he continues. "We often uncover issues that we need to consider and then develop contingency plans on an event-specific basis, and we also regularly consult with our insurance carrier when new initiatives suggest greater exposure, and therefore a possible increase in our umbrella insurance coverage."

COORDINATED COMMUNICATION COUNTS

One of the central pieces of any risk management plan revolves around communication: collecting contact information

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and informing attendees of potential issues in advance, relaying important information onsite during the meeting and dispersing an action plan should the worst occur.

When a widely publicized issue impacts your event, whether weather-related or a security crisis, attendees and suppliers are naturally expecting to hear from the association on whether the event will continue or be cancelled and what the contingency plan is. In these cases, it's important that one designated person sets the new agenda and that the information trickles through your own organization properly so it can be communicated to attendees, exhibitors and vendors.

"We utilize the same reporting structure for each event," says Dallstream. "So, the CEO and several senior staff are responsible for communicating issues with member leaders, and other senior staff are responsible for communicating with the media. The plan details where the meeting venue staff and leadership should

"Our most effective way to communicate with our attendees is through our mobile app. We can push out notifications immediately if we need to alert them about any activity or change of plans due to unforeseen circumstances."

Dana Neill, CMP
Senior Meeting Planner
National Association of College and University Business Officers
Washington, DC

gather to discuss issues, how often communication will be shared with members and who will filter information out to the media and the membership."

Once the message is clear, a good, old-fashioned phone tree is truly still one of the best ways to connect, though not the fastest. With the plethora of digital media today, your message should be communicated as simultaneously as possible through email, your website, social media and traditional media, as well as by phone. There are digital tools that now allow you to pre-record a message so that at the push of a button you can push that to attendees more quickly and easily as well.

Dana Neill, CMP, senior meeting planner at the Washington, DC-based National Association of College and University Business Officers, has found that her association's event app has completely changed the game for emergency response, through its automatic collection of appropriate contact information.

"Our most effective way to communicate with our attendees is through our mobile app," she says. "We can push out notifications immediately if we need to alert them about any activity or change

of plans due to unforeseen circumstances. We also work closely with the hotel staff and CVBs and are informed if anything is happening that may require action on our part."

HANDLING COMMUNICATION SURROUNDING EBOLA

In 2014, the need for clear communication has become particularly acute in light of recent Ebola cases. Meeting attendees, particularly those who do not travel often or, conversely, travel to places that might be or have been affected, are receiving much and often very mixed information regarding the risk of contracting Ebola.

Visit Orlando has worked with experts in security and global health in Washington, DC, to create an official Ebola response that it hopes can serve as an easy model for clients working on conferences, trade shows and conventions in the city.

Planners are advised to:

- Inform attendees that all cases of Ebola thus far have originated either in Africa or among healthcare workers and there is no indication there will be sustained, person-to-person transmission in the U.S.
- Communicate the profile of the event and attendees to local health officials or hospitals.
- Recommend through signage or other onsite communication that attendees follow standard "flu season" precautions, including washing hands regularly, using hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching orifices, such as eyes and mouths.

Despite the fact that anti-flu measures are advised, Ebola is far less transmissible, and requires direct contact with bodily fluids or an object contaminated with bodily fluids of an infected person. Symptoms, which include extremely high fever, weakness, vomiting and unexplained bleeding or bruising, can appear two to 21 days after exposure.

During this period of sustained vigilance, planners of events that have a reasonable chance of including attendees who have traveled in affected parts of Africa can follow the policy currently in effect at Canadian borders. At the registration desk — or through a digitally pre-distributed survey with an in-person follow-up for those who have not completed the survey — ask each attendee if in the last 21 days they have traveled in West Africa, specifically Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, or if they have come in contact with any individuals from any of those three countries.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If your association does not have a risk management plan in place or has been using something piecemeal for each event, there has never been a more important or easier time to take that step.

Whether you use the CDC or PCMA templates or work out something from scratch, make it a goal for your group to create a new plan or take the time to update and re-evaluate your existing plan in 2015.

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Let's Get Granular!

Fine-tune Your Segmented Marketing Strategies to Optimize Attendance

By Patrick Simms

Messaging tailored to certain kinds of potential conventioners within an association's membership sounds quite strategic. But in reality, segmented marketing is best thought of as an approach or practice that calls out for a strategy. What kinds of members will be targeted, and why? What method of outreach will be most appropriate to that segment? The decision to "get granular" with convention marketing is a good start to improving the initiative, but it's merely where strategic thinking begins. After all, developing such a program takes



Wendy Holliday
V.P., Attendee Acquisition and Experience, Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, Twinsburg, OH

"It can get crazy; you can have hundreds of marketing staff and still not segment enough."

added time and resources, and the ROI (i.e., improved attendance numbers and/or quality of attendees) cannot be left to chance.

Two extremes arguably should be avoided: not segmenting at all and segmenting excessively and indiscriminately. "We often find that clients aren't doing any segmentation to begin with," notes Barbara A. Myers, CAE, vice president, association services for Arlington, Virginia-based IMN Solutions, which launched IMN Event Solutions this year. "Associations have their databases, and when it comes conference time, they might be just marketing to past conference attendees in a very generic way." Myers, who formerly served as vice president of professional development at the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPE) and COO at the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International, has "gone through many exercises" in both these roles in trying to achieve good segmentation for marketing purposes. Without such legwork, one may fall prey to the other extreme: segmenting indiscriminately based on a slew of demographic information and other statistics about members.

"It can get crazy; you can have hundreds of marketing staff and still not segment enough," observes Wendy Holliday, vice president, attendee acquisition and experience, with Twinsburg, Ohio-based Velvet Chainsaw Consulting.

STREAMLINING SEGMENTATION

As a first step, Holliday suggests streamlining the segmentation to certain kinds of desirable attendees. "Suppose we want landscape businesses to come to our event. Well, that's a pretty broad category. So within that category you want to think about who are those top two segments that you want to see: For example, is it the CEOs of the companies, is it landscape businesses that have 10 or more employees?" she explains. "That's not saying you don't want to see other (kinds of attendees), but who are those top two groups that your sponsors or your exhibitors want to see?" That marketing focus can be complemented by some of the "standard segments," such as members who live near the convention site or those who have only attended once. The idea is to select three to five meaningful segments and then do catch-all marketing for the rest of the membership. This becomes a manageable initiative for what may be a small in-house marketing and communications staff.

Pinpointing the desirable attendees may require some research, such as polls, interviews and focus groups with exhibitors

"In terms of helping to increase attendance at our annual conference, one of the ways that we tried to segment our target audience was by content."



Barbara A. Myers, CAE
V.P. Association Services
IMN Solutions
Arlington, VA

and sponsors in order to find out who they want on the exhibit floor and why. The convention content that would attract those buyers can then be highlighted in the messaging, an initiative that itself may call for research. "You ask those attendees, what problems are you trying to solve? And then, for example, you can send a message to a CEO of this landscape group and point out two or three sessions that meet a problem that you know they have," Holliday advises. At minimum, polling should be conducted after each annual convention, but interviews and focus groups with members and exhibitors can be held periodically throughout the year.

MINING MEMBERSHIP INTERESTS

As member profiles in an association's database become increasingly detailed, research into their content interests will be eased. "Just like every association, we're working on how much we learn about each person, what their special interests are, what conferences they go to, which books they buy and so forth," says Mary Mackay, marketing director of the Chicago, Illinois-based American Library Association. Ideally, the profiles that reflect these interests will not be compiled through surveys. "We want members to have control of their own profiles," says Mackay, adding that ALA's ITTS department is working to augment the fields in the profiles to allow members to include more detail. Messaging then can be tailored to the career levels, specializations and interests members identify in their profiles.

"We do enough different types of member e-blasts that we hope that each type of member or member interest is going to be touched by one of the e-blasts they get," says Mackay. While the ALA is working on enriching its member profiles, fortunately the organization is "already structured in ways that help us target and segment," she adds, "because we have 11 divisions and several





Mary Mackay
Marketing Director
American Library Association
Chicago, IL

“We do enough different types of member e-blasts that we hope that each type of member or member interest is going to be touched by one of the e-blasts they get.”

other units within the association, and we use those lists in targeted ways. So if we have content that is appropriate for academic librarians, for example, we can reach out just to that group and those who identify themselves as interested in that topic.”

CONTENT MARKETING

APCO also takes a content-based approach to segmentation, Myers recalls. “In terms of helping to increase attendance at our annual conference, one of the ways that we tried to segment our target audience was by content. So instead of sending email blasts related to education to everyone on our list, we extracted specific tracks. For example, we created a CEO-level track, and we would send just the CEOs and other V.P.s the info on that track, (stating) why the event would help them specifically, and we would create marketing plans around the segments,” she explains. The content at the conference, and the messaging that advertises it, also can be geared toward hot areas in the field and the professionals working in those areas. “We were trying to identify the segments that had the largest growth potential,” Myers says. “We felt there would be more of an IT focus in public-safety communications, so we added a lot more IT content for the conference. And we looked at who in our database had IT-related titles, goals, etc. But we supplemented that with new lists because we were trying to break into a new market very focused on IT.”

TARGETING BY LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

A different breed of segmentation is based not on attendees’ content interests, but their level of engagement with the convention, as represented by frequency of attendance. Dave Martin, vice president,

marketing and content for the Washington, DC-based Electronic Retailing Association, is responsible for registration revenue, and PR and marketing around the ERA’s D2C Convention, with attendance ranging from 3,400–4,000. The marketing push focuses heavily on the retailers (i.e., those who manufacture, produce and sell infomercial products) as opposed to the suppliers. “If they come, the suppliers come,” he says. Beginning with the smaller Great Ideas Summit held this year, that audience has been segmented into “paid loyalists,” i.e., those who have attended the event the last three years, and “one-timers,” those who have attended once over that period. “We measure very closely the percentage of total registrants who are loyalists. It’s one of our key performance indicators,” notes Martin. “So if we’re getting around 50 percent paid loyalists we’re in good shape. The other segment we’re focused on is one-timers, who we need to convert to loyalists.”

The messaging to loyalists is along the lines of: “You’ve attended often over the last few years, so you know how important this show is. You’re one of the leaders in the industry, a ‘mover and a shaker,’ and we want you back...” For a one-timer, the call to action would identify the loyalists as “dealmakers” and then urge that member to “join the dealmakers’ club. You attended once, and we want to convert you to become part of that elite group.” Both of these kinds of personalization are clearly more powerful than the generic “Registration is now open. Please register.”

Onsite at the convention, the ERA pursues a similar kind of segmentation, with first-time attendees receiving a first-timer’s ribbon to wear (voluntarily) and having the opportunity to attend special orientations, meetings with board members and so on. The ribbon enables more seasoned delegates to identify and engage with first-timers. “We’ll also have a ribbon for loyalists this year, in order to give them a little more visibility, with the idea of connecting them to the first-timers and converting them,” Martin explains.

CHASING YOUTH

Young professionals, who represent the future of a given field, are typically a key demographic to target in convention marketing. One issue that the ISPE faced with young pharmaceutical industry professionals, according to Myers, is that there was a “tendency for potential members to engage in their own online communities and not be part of a mem-

bership organization.” The association thus launched a marketing campaign targeted to that segment, featuring a track with topics specifically designed for young professionals. Gamification was also part of the approach. For example, if they correctly answered a question based on a case study, they were entered into a drawing to win a free registration. In addition, testimonials from young professionals who had enjoyed a rewarding time at previous conventions were included in the messaging. “We sent a letter from one of the young professionals on how the conference helped their career,” Myers adds.

While the campaign ultimately resulted in increased registration from that segment, the ROI was not immediate. “The first year you create the awareness, but in my experience, it does take a couple of years to really get a segment to understand the benefits of being in that group,” Myers comments. “Especially with young professionals, year one and two you’re creating the buzz and value proposition to that segment, and once you lay that foundation (the campaign) recruits a lot of young professional ‘evangelists.’ And then it takes on a life of its own and grows larger each year. So don’t expect to see 10–20 percent growth the first year.”

NON-ATTENDERS

The portion of the membership that does not attend the convention can be the largest segment to target, and it’s an important one. “For most associations there’s a very small percentage of the overall membership that ends up going to your annual meeting,” Myers says. “For example, APCO had a membership of 15,000, and only 2,500–3,000 came to our annual meeting.” A non-attender survey can reveal some of the “barriers” to participation that then can be addressed in the marketing campaign, from travel expense to lack of time to a perceived low return on attending. One segment that often can attend with less travel expense is the membership that’s local to the convention site, and for that reason associations typically do a regional marketing push as the event draws near.

INBOUND VS. OUTBOUND MARKETING

That kind of marketing will typically be what is described as outbound marketing, consisting of calls-to-action to potential attendees via email, direct mail, telemarketing, etc. But in general, many associations are putting more emphasis on inbound marketing, where content is developed that draws members to engage with the organization. These media can include blogs, e-newsletters, white papers, etc. The term “inbound marketing” was coined by HubSpot CEO and Co-founder Brian Halligan, and the ERA has recently begun managing its inbound marketing content via HubSpot’s platform, which also enables gathering analytics and search engine optimization. “Using HubSpot we can change the messaging, whether it’s in emails, on landing

“Using HubSpot we can change the messaging, whether it’s in emails, on landing pages, etc., to essentially recognize loyalists and one-timers. So we’re using smart content.”



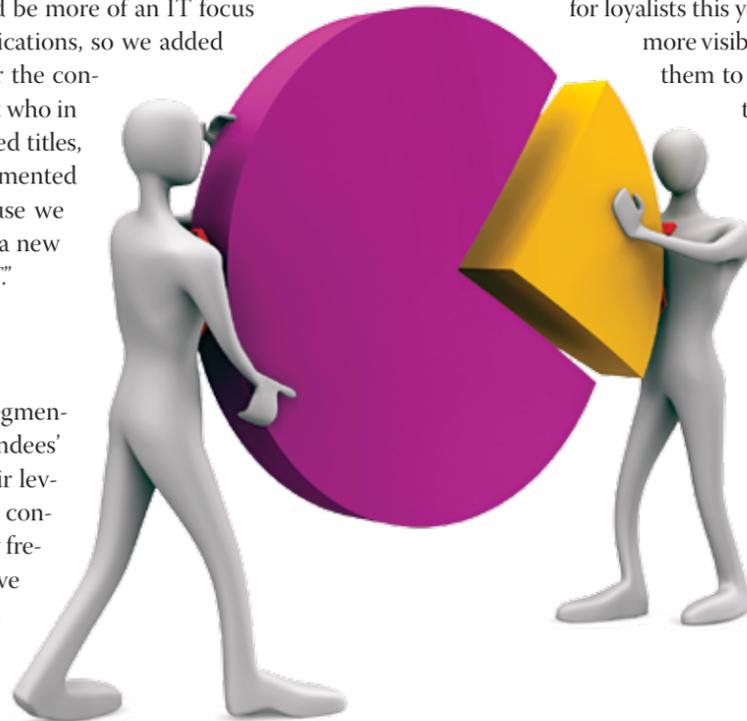
Dave Martin
V.P. Marketing and Content
Electronic Retailing Association
Washington, DC

pages, etc., to essentially recognize loyalists and one-timers,” says Martin. “So we’re using smart content: If it’s a paid loyalist, use this message; if it’s a one-timer, use this other message. If we put out a blog post, we’re able to schedule messages (about the post) through LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.” Overall, HubSpot has been “transformational in how we do our marketing. I’ve found it very easy to use,” he adds.

While HubSpot facilitates the execution of a segmented marketing strategy, a Message Map is a tool that helps define that strategy for all staff members involved. For the purpose of marketing a convention, the map would identify the different segments and the benefits of attending for each, as well as the messages or “speaking points” that apply in each case. Holliday also recommends that the messaging deploy images wherever possible. “You can change the photos based on the segments you’re targeting. So if you’re trying to get young professionals, use them in your photos,” she says. Conversely, marketing materials using photos depicting a certain demographic can have an exclusionary effect if they reach members who are not part of that demographic. “Many of our members have changed careers at a later age, so new members aren’t necessarily young members, and we’re careful not to make them feel excluded,” Mackay says.

PERSONALIZED MESSAGING

A thoughtfully created segmented marketing campaign works for the simple reason that people are more apt to respond to personalized messaging. Members need to have a sense that the convention will help them meet their particular goals and will be welcoming to those of their age group, experience level, career specialty, and so on. The association itself, not just the convention, is promoted through such a campaign, which shows that the organization is attuned to its membership in a more fine-grained way. But no variety of marketing will ensure a well-attended convention year after year without the event itself delivering on the promotional promise, Holliday stresses. “You can get them there one year, but you’re never going to get them back without the right event strategy and execution,” she says. “Marketing alone is not a magic bullet; it can be if everything else is in place.”





JOHNSON

The Louisville (KY) Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Lauren Johnson** as convention sales manager. She formerly served as group sales manager at Churchill Downs. **Brooke Newton** was promoted to national sales manager. Her most recent position was convention sales manager.

Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, Texas, has named **Carissa Smith** as director of sales and marketing. She most recently served as director of sales and marketing for the Omni Austin Hotel Downtown.

The Renaissance World Golf Village Resort and Convention Center in



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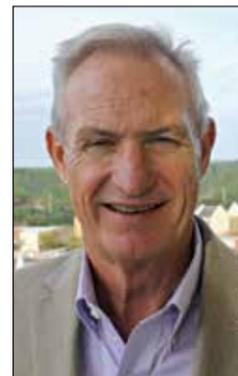
Jacksonville/St. Augustine, Florida, has named **Paul Dake** and **Jacqueline Bassett** as national sales managers. Dake previously served as director of sales at Amelia Island Plantation, Florida. Bassett was national sales manager at The Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina.

Occidental Hotels & Resorts has named **Jason Kycek** as vice president of sales and marketing, USA. He most recently was director of sales and marketing for Capella Marigot Bay in St. Lucia.

Doug Phillips was named director of sales and marketing for Town and Country Resort & Convention Center,



SMITH



DAKE

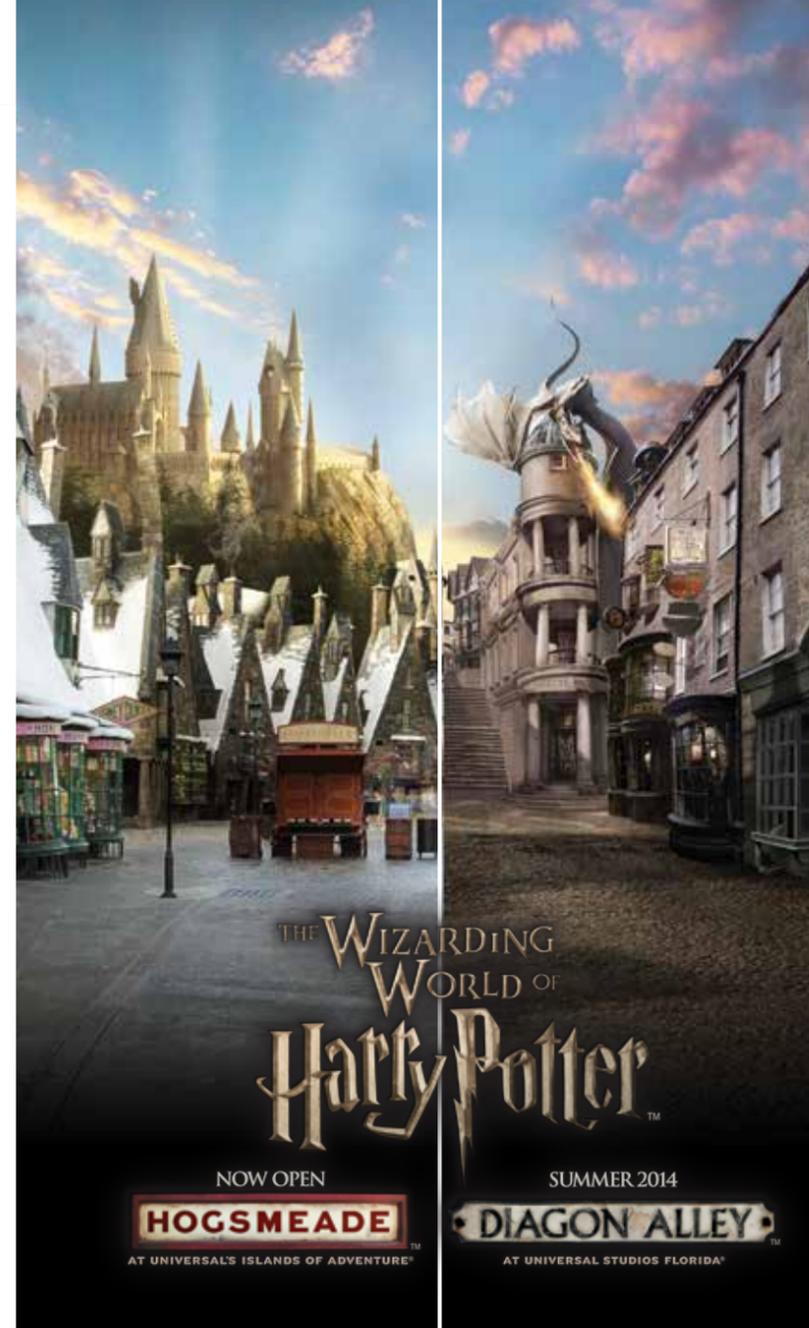
by Destination Hotels, in San Diego, California. He was regional director of sales and marketing for Destination Hotels in Seattle.

The Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Todd Bertka**, CASE, as vice president of convention sales and marketing. He most recently was vice president of sales and service with VisitGreenville, South Carolina.

The Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Carla Jean-Thomas Carroll** as national sales manager. She formerly served as national sales manager for Kona Kai Resort & Marina in San Diego.



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