

# www.TheMeetingMagazines.com

# A ASSOCIATION

# CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

FEBRUARY/MARCH  
2015

THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT



## The Art of Managing VOLUNTEERS

Make the Experience a  
Win-Win for Everybody  
PAGE 30

**CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD/VIEW  
TABLET VERSION**

ISSN 21628831 USPS 003500  
 A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION  
 www.TheMeetingMagazines.com  
**ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES**  
 THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT  
 February / March 2015 Volume 8 • Number 1

## ViewPoint

- 8 Inside Cuba**  
 A Look at the Existing Challenges for Meetings  
 By Phelps R. Hope, CMP
- 10 The New Rules of Event Marketing and PR**  
 5 Ways to Boost Audience Enthusiasm and Awareness  
 By Scott Steinberg
- 14 Portable Charging Stations**  
 The Best Way for Attendees to 'Power Up'  
 By Rachel Portela



## Features

- 16 Show Them the Money**  
 Fresh Ideas to Generate ROI for Exhibitors and Sponsors  
 By John Buchanan
- 20 Citywides**  
 How to Transform Major Challenges Into Phenomenal Meetings and Events  
 By John Buchanan
- 24 Responsible Meetings**  
 How to Go From Green to Greener  
 By Karen Brost
- 30 The Art of Managing Volunteers**  
 Make the Experience a Win-Win for Everybody  
 By Patrick Simms

## Departments

- 4 Publisher's Page**
- 6 News & Notes**
- 7 Snapshots**
- 34 Career Track**
- 34 Reader Services**

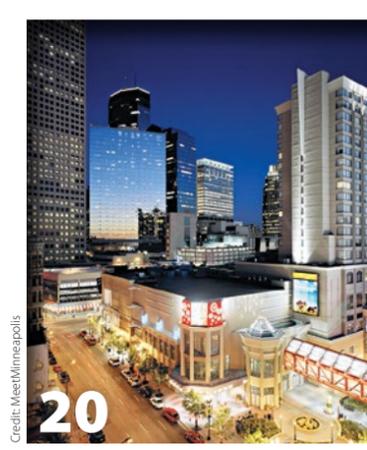
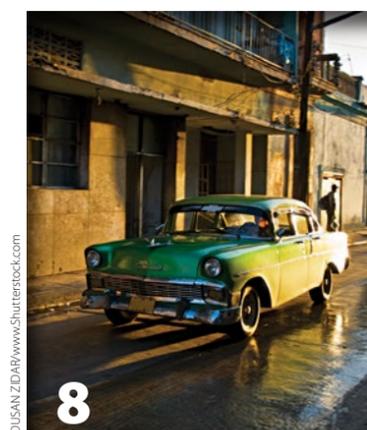
Association Conventions & Facilities is published bi-monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies \$13.00 U.S.A. only. Yearly subscription price is \$65.00 in the U.S.A. Canada and foreign is \$135.00. Back copies \$14.00 plus shipping and handling, U.S.A. only. Distributed without charge to qualified personnel. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send Form 3579 address changes to Association Conventions & Facilities, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Nothing contained in this publication shall constitute an endorsement by Coastal Communications Corporation (Association Conventions & Facilities), and the publication disclaims any liability with respect to the use of or reliance on any such information. The information contained in this publication is in no way to be construed as a recommendation by AC&F of any industry standard, or as a recommendation of any kind to be adopted by or to be binding upon any advertiser or subscriber. Reproduction of any portion of this publication by any means is strictly forbidden. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited photographs or manuscripts. Subscribers: Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: Circulation Department, Association Conventions & Facilities, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Provide old and new addresses including zip code. Enclose address label from most recent issue and please allow five weeks for the change to become effective. Printed in U.S.A. © 2015.

Surprise your attendees with more than just a meeting.

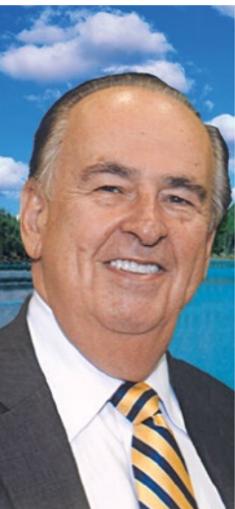
Have you met Jacksonville? It's the city that makes a meeting feel like an outing; where your attendees can get a clear view of your presentation while overlooking the ocean or the river. And a place that's known for its fresh seafood, warm smiles, and endless supply of outdoor adventure. So what's missing? Your group.

Visit **Jacksonville** and the Beaches

Go to [visitjacksonville.com/meetings](http://visitjacksonville.com/meetings) to explore Jacksonville's meeting options!



## The Volunteer Spirit



"Volunteering and civic engagement are the cornerstone of a strong nation." That's according to the National Conference on Citizenship and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Their annual Volunteering and Civic Life in America research released in December showed that 1 in 4 Americans volunteers through an organization. The report also stated, "Altogether, 62.6 million Americans volunteered nearly 7.7 billion hours last year. Based on the Independent Sector's estimate of the average value of a volunteer hour, the estimated value of this volunteer service is nearly \$173 billion."

Those are impressive numbers.

Associations regularly mine this rich source of volunteerism from within their own ranks to enrich their meetings and conventions. In our cover story, planners tell how they strive to make the experience a win-win for both the organization and the volunteer. The association gains much more than "free" logistical support — there's intellectual capital to be had: "We open up feedback from all the volunteers because if we don't understand what they're thinking, how can we improve?" says Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, director of learning experiences for the National Speakers Association. And Tonia Fykes, CEM, CMP, managing director, operations, conventions and conferences department for the Biotechnology Industry Organization, notes that the engagement and positive experience will pay dividends going forward: "Volunteering does help with our future year registration," she says.

Especially for new volunteers, the key is to ensure a positive experience, which begins with proper training and clear expectations, and culminates with potentially life-changing career benefits: "We try to promote to them what the opportunity provides," says Bill Gibbs, conference manager for the Institute of Industrial Engineers. "It shows their willingness to contribute to the industry, and they're meeting people that some day may be their boss." Learn more win-wins in "The Art of Managing Volunteers" on page 30.

The spirit of volunteerism is embedded in the DNA of every association, whether it's on the receiving end or the giving end: Our feature "Responsible Meetings" details the voluntary commitment associations such as the American Chemical Society make to sustainability. For their March national meeting at the Colorado Convention Center, they've extended a "Take the Greener Meeting Challenge" to attendees. Find out more starting on page 24.

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

www.TheMeetingMagazines.com  
**ASSOCIATION**  
CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES  
THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT  
A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

**PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**Harvey Grotsky**  
harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

**Mitch D. Miller**  
mitch.miller@themeetingmagazines.com

**MANAGING EDITORS**

**Susan W. Fell**  
susan.fell@themeetingmagazines.com

**Susan S. Gregg**  
sue.gregg@themeetingmagazines.com

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

**Karen Brost**  
**John Buchanan**  
**Sara Churchill**  
**Gabi Logan**  
**Christine Loomis**  
**Derek Reveron**  
**Patrick Simms**

**PRESIDENT & CEO**

**Harvey Grotsky**

**VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS**

**David A. Middlebrook**  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES**

2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120  
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394  
561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509  
advertising@themeetingmagazines.com

**CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME  
NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 109 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**FLORIDA/CARIBBEAN/BAHAMAS**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 109 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**AL, GA, MS, NC, OK, SC**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO  
ND, NE, OH, SD, WI, WV**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**CO, LA, TN, TX**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

**AZ, CA, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY**

**Marshall Rubin**  
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907  
marshall.rubin@themeetingmagazines.com

**ALASKA/CANADA/MEXICO/INTERNATIONAL**

**David Middlebrook**  
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com



OMNI UNDERSTANDS

# Spectacular

In a city full of lights and luxury,  
no other event shines brighter.

Congratulations to the Omni Dallas Hotel, winner of *Corporate & Incentive Travel's* Award of Excellence for 2014. Voted by event professionals, this award honors hotels that offer the world's best venues, amenities and service. Discover our standard of excellence by booking an event today.

Download the **Omni LIVE** app\* to watch this ad come to life and unlock special meeting offers.

Call for special offers.  
800-788-6664 • omniunderstands.com/dallas

\*Omni LIVE available for iPhone, iPad and Android devices.  
©2013 Omni Hotels & Resorts

OMNI HOTELS & RESORTS  
dallas



## IAEE Updates 'Future Trends in the Exhibitions and Events Industry'

**DALLAS, TX** — The International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) released an updated version of its white paper "Future Trends Impacting the Exhibitions and Events Industry," created by the IAEE Future Trends Task Force, chaired by Francis J. Friedman, president of Time & Place Strategies Inc.

"Trends that we reported in last year's white paper are now maturing and appearing more consistently at exhibitions and events," said Friedman. "We recommend referring to last year's report for what is happening now and using this

updated version to prepare for what's coming over the next three years."

Friedman noted that one of the major updates in the 2014 edition addresses the area of data, mainly in the capturing, converting and use of data obtained from attendee onsite activities. The use of mobile apps, NFC (Near Field Communications), RFID badges and iBeacon to capture data are becoming more prevalent. Once the data has been captured, however, the challenge becomes organizing the data in a format that allows for maximum use of the infor-

mation. The final step of the process then involves converting the data into tactical and strategic plans for future shows.

"The Future Trends white paper is a wonderful resource for exhibitions and events professionals wanting to relate our industry's business market to the overall global business market," says IAEE President & CEO David DuBois, CMP, CAE, FASAE, CTA. "Show organizers in particular will want to take a look at how all this information can be used to maximize the overall experience for attendees at their event." [www.iaee.com](http://www.iaee.com)

## Starwood Convention Collection: Multiple Meetings, Singular Service

**STAMFORD, CT** — The Starwood Convention Collection gives professional meeting planners the option of booking multiple meetings at once to save time and money. The Starwood Convention Collection makes it easy to plan and contract multiple meetings across venues, years and destinations. The collection has offerings in North America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In addition there is a single point of contact to make sure everything goes perfectly.

The North America collection includes 27 Sheraton and Westin hotels with more than 3 million sf of meeting space, 30,000 guest rooms and 1,000 meeting rooms. For the brochure, go to <http://www.starwoodhotels.com/Media/PDF/SPGPro/North-America-convention-collection.pdf>.

The Europe, Africa and the Middle East collection spans 26 cities with more than 1,800,000 sf of meeting space, more than 16,000 guest rooms and 700 meeting rooms. For the brochure, go to <http://www.starwoodhotels.com/Media/PDF/SPGPro/EAME-convention-collection-brochure.pdf>.

## JW Marriott Austin Debuts

**AUSTIN, TX** — JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts recently opened its first property in Austin. The 34-story JW Marriott Austin is not only the largest hotel in Austin but also the largest JW Marriott in North America and the second-largest JW Marriott in the world.

The hotel will boast a fifth-floor pool deck and bar, some of the largest guest rooms in the city, a full-service Starbucks and more. The hotel also will feature three restaurants — Osteria Pronto, Corner and Burger Bar.

The JW Marriott Austin has a distinct local feel. Key interior design elements were incorporated to celebrate the spirit of Austin and the state of Texas. The JW Marriott Austin is designed to host large conventions and meetings, with more than 112,000 sf of event space, 42 meeting rooms and 1,012 guest rooms.

The hotel is located within walking distance to major attractions. All guest rooms and suites will feature 48-inch HD LED Smart TVs and high-speed Internet access. The hotel offers 24-hour room service, a fitness center and other amenities. [www.jwmarriottaustin.com](http://www.jwmarriottaustin.com)

## CEIR Report Reveals How the Exhibit Dollar Is Spent

**DALLAS, TX** — The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) President and CEO Brian Casey, CEM, has announced the release of "How the Exhibit Dollar is Spent." The report provides a breakdown of how exhibitors allocate spending by the following categories: exhibit space, exhibit design, show services, shipping, exhibit staff training, travel and entertainment, pre-show promotions, onsite promotional materials, off-show-floor promotions, onsite sponsorship and advertising, and lead management and measurement. Additionally, the total forecasted exhibitor direct spending estimate for 2014 is provided in nominal dollars.

"The data in this report is a hotly sought-after resource tool for exhibitors who need an understanding of whether their spending allocations are balanced with general exhibitor spending practices," said Casey.

Online survey results are based on a study conducted by CEIR this fall, polling a sampling of exhibitors from lists provided by Freeman, GES and Shepard Exposition Services. A total of 641 exhibitors responded. [www.ceir.org](http://www.ceir.org)



Credits: 1 ICCA, 2 ADME International, 3 & 4 ICMA, 5 Jason Thomson, 6 MamaRazi Foto Inc.

**1** Martin Sirk (c), CEO of International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), joins colleagues in Malaysia in the city of Kuching at the Sarawak Cultural Village during a "Drumming in Ceremony" in preparation for the ICCA 2016 Conference. The ICCA 2015 Annual Congress will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October. **2** New ADMEI President Bent Hadler, DMCP, CIS, of Hadler DMC Scandinavia with ADMEI Director Amberlee Huggins, DMCP, of Capitol Services Inc. at the ADME International Conference in Los Cabos, Mexico. **3,4** Attendees at the Religious Conference Management Association's Emerge 2015 Annual Conference held at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center in Birmingham, Alabama. **5** Participants enjoying the 2015 Recognition Professionals International Annual Conference at Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas. **6** Tampa Convention Center hosted meeting planners for a two-day fam of Tampa, which included the Annual Gasparilla Pirate Fest Invasion.

# Inside Cuba

## Hospitality's New Frontier



Phelps R. Hope, CMP

## A Look at the Existing Challenges for Meetings

Havana has long been the forbidden fruit for American vacationers and business elites alike — an off-limits cultural time warp of antique cars and cigars — situated in a beautiful climate almost within reach. To the meetings industry, it's been mostly a moot point. But with the surprise thaw in diplomatic relations in December 2014, meetings insiders are scoping out the potential for bringing events to Cuba.

Meetings qualify as one of the 12 categories of travelers who can travel now without seeking formal permission. But the organizer has to make sure they are correctly displaying the education/business side of the conference and not promoting the tours/fun activities so it cannot be misconstrued as a tourism activity. (Go to [www.commerce.gov](http://www.commerce.gov) for a Cuba sanctions fact sheet; and [www.treasury.gov](http://www.treasury.gov) for FAQs.)

It still would be premature to put Cuba in the meetings rotation — but it's worth a look at the infrastructure and other potential hurdles separating our industry from a potential new hot spot. Here's a look at a few of the immediate challenges.

### GETTING THERE

The airports are there. And they aren't bad. In fact, by international standards, the Jose Marti International Airport in Havana is considered fairly modern and comfortable. The unknown is whether Havana's three airports (as well as scattered airports throughout the island) have the capacity to take on a potential influx of new travelers.

Safety upgrades alone pose a challenge for Cuban airports. Many of the country's runways and taxiways are in need of restoration. That means new signage, better lighting, pavement repairs and other improvements to come into compliance with international standards. Even the terminals themselves require some repairs if they are to take on an increase in foot traffic.

### YOU'RE THERE. NOW WHAT?

Once you've landed in Cuba, is it easy to get around? Is there an obvious path to your final destination, whether it is a designated convention center or a business/tourism

district? By many accounts, Cuba's highway system has fallen into deep disrepair since the country's 1959 revolution. The Havana government's Business Construction Group has indicated that more than three-quarters of Havana's roads are in poor condition and require "complex" repairs.

For the meetings industry, this is a major snag. For meeting-goers, it's more than an eyesore. In this industry, travel time is money, and you can't host a successful event if attendees are stuck on the side of the road changing a tire.

And then there are cabs and other ground transportation needs to consider; if the culture hasn't adapted to be commuter-friendly, then it will have to do so now in order to accommodate new travelers. While there are local Destination Management Companies (DMCs) who can assist with the planning and delivery of a group's ground transportation needs, do not expect the equipment to be new or even on par with traditionally expected standards in the Caribbean.

In recent years, the Cuban government has attempted to upgrade its roads — with such developments as a planned eight-lane divided super highway connecting Havana to Santa Clara. Whether it sets the island nation's standard for future highway infrastructure remains to be seen.

### CUBA'S EXISTING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Cuba wouldn't exactly be starting from scratch when it comes to on-the-ground hospitality. But it has a long way to go if it wants to compete with the likes of Jamaica, Puerto Rico or Mexico.

By and large, Cuba's hospitality industry is a patchwork of small local operators and chains run by European companies, primarily Spanish. For example, the most notable hotel chain names for business meetings and conferences are Spain's Melia Hotels International, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts and Occidental Hotels and Resorts. And the smaller venues face daunting challenges, such as aging (and downright dangerous) infrastructures and incredibly restrictive bureaucracies limiting possibilities for expansion.

New hotels could have a hard time breaking into the existing Havana market. And while eager to take advantage

of miles of undeveloped beachfront, hotel executives aren't exactly chomping at the bit to dig in. By some estimates, the presence of a five-star resort or USA brand-name hotel in Havana is probably a decade or more away.

That said, there is an existing go-to in the meantime. The Havana International Convention Center was built in 1979. While not quite the envy of the international meetings

Fluctuations in the food supply caused by Cuba's economic situation mean that restaurants and hotels can sometimes run short on ingredients. Also it's important to note that imports of certain foods are restricted due to the U.S. embargo. Because of that, the same platters will appear time and again, and it's rare to find a restaurant that can actually serve everything on the menu. However, to make up

*Cuba wouldn't exactly be starting from scratch when it comes to on-the-ground hospitality. But it has a long way to go if it wants to compete with the likes of Jamaica, Puerto Rico or Mexico.*

industry, it's in a nice location with potential for upgrades — especially in light of the new opportunities resulting from eased travel restrictions.

### SERVICE LEVELS

And then you come to the service itself. Even if the desired infrastructure is in place, without employees trained in hospitality service, it won't deliver the experience you plan on for your attendees.

The communist regime and planned economy took a toll on Cuban society in general and employees of the commercial and services sectors in particular. This has led to a business orientation centered on production versus sales or services. However the increase in foreign investment is trying to change the bureaucratic value system to an entrepreneurial one. Through exposure to new training, employee focus is evolving in a way that soon could mean quality service. Western best management practices can produce significant results; however, hotel management practices in Cuba are constrained by a state-imposed political context.

### FOOD QUALITY/VARIETY

In this industry, every detail matters. And food availability is a big deal.

for the lack of variety, portion sizes tend to be massive.

Among the different types of restaurants in Cuba, hotel restaurants are your best bet. State-run restaurants vary widely in food quality. Restaurants that only accept American dollars are likely to have better food. Many Cuban cafés are heavily influenced by American fast food, and pizza is as common on menus as any Cuban dishes.

One would not expect Cuban cuisine to be bland; however, Cuba does tend to display a culinary blandness primarily as a result of a pervading conservative attitude to food with seemingly little desire to experiment with flavors and ingredients. That said, local produce is usually fresh and often organic.

In all, it will be an exciting transition to watch from a meetings perspective. Cuba almost certainly will seize on this opportunity to bring in new tourism and meeting money. The questions right now are, when will visitors get there and what degree of difficulty will they face.

*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](mailto:phope@kellencompany.com) or 678-303-2962.*

# The New Rules of Event Marketing and PR

Scott Steinberg



## 5 Ways to Boost Audience Enthusiasm and Awareness

Meeting planners looking to connect with potential attendees and get them excited about upcoming events often turn to traditional marketing and outreach methods such as trade advertising, online banners and direct email solutions. But it also bears noting that a number of additional cost-affordable and easily implemented promotional vehicles are available that can help any association better capture the audience's attention and spread word-of-mouth pass-along as well. Following are several ways to help raise awareness for conferences and get-togethers, none of which requires massive expenditures or effort, yet all of which can drastically boost public enthusiasm and interest.

**1. Connect with your community.** Want to get audiences excited and enthused about your event upfront, and hammer home why the special occasion will speak to their specific needs directly? Get attendees involved in meeting programs upfront by inviting them to help steer programs, submit comments and suggestions, or contribute multimedia content via internal, online, social media, strategic partners or other readily available distribution channels. Submissions can be used to help select program and track topics, questions and insights incorporated into speeches and presentations, and content easily saved and repurposed for other initiatives. Similarly, conducting advance surveys and polls, then revealing surprise findings at your gathering, also can be a great way to heighten interest while incorporating participants' input. All present a wealth of potential opportunities to encourage audiences to speak up, share news about and get involved with upcoming programs, giving them more reasons to engage with your event and tell others about it.

**2. Partner with program speakers.** As noted thought leaders and industry personalities, speakers frequently can help drive event awareness and boost potential audience reach. Don't be afraid to ask them to share blog posts, spread mentions on social networks or provide videos, podcasts and original articles for sharing with guests or for publication and promotion, e.g., in industry trades.



Always look for ways to connect presenters with audience members and drive added learning for all parties prior to actual presentations. Meet-and-greets, breakfasts, teleconferences, group videoconferencing sessions, and other live or online programs present ample opportunity for speakers to engage with audience members, share expert insights and gain feedback that can help better shape and inform presentations. All provide a forum for experts and attendees to ask vital questions, interact and get to know each other better before, during and after the big show, helping raise ongoing interest for your programs.

**3. Capitalize on content marketing.** Search engines have become the new initial frontline for customer interaction. And in a world where organizations are defined more and more by their online footprint, industry pros must realize that, today, we're all in the publishing business. Given content's increasingly disposable nature, the Web's explosive growth and the boom in mobile devices, content marketing efforts should be an ongoing part of every association's promotional efforts. Happily, not only is your own organization filled with subject matter

experts who can serve as ambassadors via blogs, newsletters, podcasts or similar outreach channels, events provide the perfect opportunity to tap experts, executives and community leaders for learning, insights and advice, which can be used to generate added value and help raise awareness all year long for ongoing events and special occasions. As part of programs, workshops and events, ask all to share best practices, hints and tips, and offer support or inspiration. Quotes and commentary then can be incorporated back into newsletters, mailers, trailers and more, providing year-long benefit.

**4. Create reasons for attendees to keep up with you and keep coming back.** If you want to keep audiences abreast of upcoming events or sessions year-round, give them reasons to voluntarily seek out more information about your programs by giving them a constant stream of

also to keep them coming back. When your event is over, don't be afraid to promote social sharing and engagement by asking how you can make the next one even better. Go beyond simple surveys and questionnaires by reaching out to participants and speakers via your wiki, Web page, email newsletters, surveys or social channels to find out what they loved and would like to see more of in the coming months. Encourage them to suggest future topics and program setups, provide feedback on their experiences, and brainstorm even better ways to share event highlights and learning. As a key part of any winning events team, it bears reminding — it's never too early to get audience members involved.

In short, a little advance planning and creativity combined with everyday off-the-shelf technologies, tools and solutions can help you create more effective ways to

*A little advance planning and creativity combined with everyday off-the-shelf technologies, tools and solutions can help you create more effective ways to market and promote any event.*

value-adding material. Luckily, there are dozens of ways to take content you've already been creating via your event programs to establish an ongoing thought leadership position. For example: Already been sharing hints and tips captured at meetings and conferences on your organization's blog? Compile it into an eBook or guide as a unique takeaway that also cements your organization's expertise. For added impact, consider updating material and adding new chapters to prior works, then promoting media awareness around the launch of new editions. You might also design an audio or video podcast series hosted on your event or association's website that offers new episodes on a running basis.

**5. Collect and respond to fan feedback.** Make a point to connect with audiences and build loyalty and word-of-mouth interest after events have concluded as well. After all, the point isn't just to create satisfied customers, it's

market and promote any event. Best of all, there's more than one way to skin a cat: Mix and match ideas, and you'll find that many can combine to create heightened awareness before, during and after your special occasions. Association event planners are encouraged to experiment with any and all of the above ideas. When it comes to keeping audiences interested and excited to spread the word about current and future programs, you may find many of the most effective solutions hiding in plain view.

Scott Steinberg, a best-selling leadership and innovation speaker, is a regular on the international lecture circuit, and heads management consulting and corporate training firm TechSavvy Global. A top-rated provider of keynote speeches, workshops and seminars, and best-selling business author, he's been seen in 600+ outlets from CNN to NPR. For more, visit his website at [www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com](http://www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com).

# MEET L.A.

BECAUSE YOUR PLAN CRAVES STAR POWER.

Studio tours, private movie screenings and celebrity encounters. Just a few ways to make your meeting in L.A. shine. Visit [discoverLosAngeles.com/meetLA](https://discoverLosAngeles.com/meetLA) today.



#meetLA

Universal Studios Hollywood<sup>SM</sup>



# Portable Charging Stations

Rachel Portela



## The Best Way for Attendees to 'Power Up'

There is no contesting that attendees stay glued to their phones, tablets and laptops even while participating in conferences, meetings and events. Not only do they use these devices for note-taking, trading contacts and emailing the office, it's pretty hard these days to unplug from family and friends.

Increased device dependency results in a greater need for battery charging on the fly, especially when high usage and heavy network traffic cause the battery to drain faster than usual. In response to this growing trend, portable charging station towers can make you the hero at your next event. Ideal for lobbies, media centers and conference entryways, these towers are equipped to recharge a wide range of devices by offering iPhone and Android cords (for those attendees who may have left their cords at home or in a hotel room), USB ports and standard outlets for laptops and tablets.

### THE NEED IS GREAT

It's a common sight at conferences and events to see people in business suits sitting on the floor, camped out next to a power outlet while their phone charges and other people wait their turn. However, with an increasing number of conferences and events utilizing every power source available, whether it's for a booth, a video display or other electronic device, outlets are becoming a scarce commodity.

Though metroConnections provided power cords in the past, it soon became apparent that another solution was necessary. Enter portable charging station towers, which essentially kill two birds with one stone: not only are charging cords available, they are on display in an attractive, unobtrusive manner that also provides a workspace for attendees during breaks.

According to a study done by comScore, total U.S. Internet usage increased 93 per-

cent from May 2010 to May 2013. Smartphones were the driving force behind this growth, accounting for a whopping 381 billion minutes of online time, up from 81 billion three years prior.

A virtual non-entity when the study was first done in 2010, tablets accounted for 100 billion minutes of Internet usage in 2013. As users drift more towards handheld devices, it's crucial for event organizers to keep up, whether it's creating apps for a conference, encouraging social media interaction at conventions or providing a place for users to recharge, both literally and figuratively. With about 95 percent of business travelers carrying smartphones, it is no longer a luxury to have an opportunity to charge your device — it's a necessity.

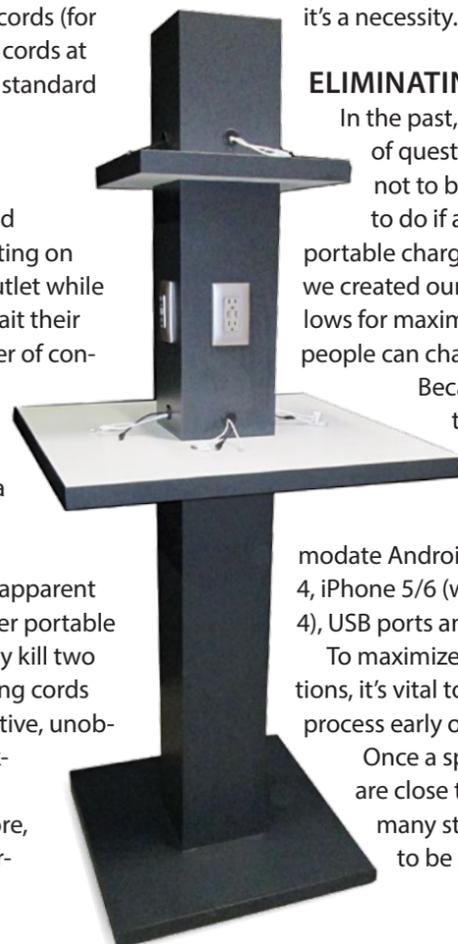
### ELIMINATING CORD MANIA

In the past, providing power cords alone raised a lot of questions — where to place them, whether or not to bring in tables to display them and what to do if attendees walked off with one? However, portable charging stations solve those issues. At metro we created our own four-sided tiered design, which allows for maximum usage at minimum space: up to four people can charge two devices.

Because it's so important to cater to every type of electronic device attendees might bring to an event, research the tower's specs when trying to incorporate a charging station. You'll need to accommodate Android devices (a universal micro USB), iPhone 4, iPhone 5/6 (which use different cables than the iPhone 4), USB ports and normal three-prong electrical outlets.

To maximize the value of portable charging stations, it's vital to integrate them into the planning process early on.

Once a space is chosen and attendee numbers are close to confirmed, start the discussion on how many stations are needed and where they ought to be set. A good rule of thumb is to plan on



Charging stations near music at a themed event (l) keep attendees entertained, and the above charging station blends into the lobby décor.

one or two stations for a group of from 100 to 200 attendees and up to four for a group of around 1,000. However, this also can depend on your conference theme: An electronics event will definitely require more charging stations than a conference on historic penmanship.

Although it seems ideal to have the charging stations in the middle of busy areas, it's important to keep in mind that power sources are typically located on the walls, and you

You can also get creative with it: One metroConnections client created a "Tech Zone" in the foyer at their conference, providing charging stations, iPads on coffee tables, comfortable furniture, a 70-inch touchscreen for attendees to check on their company's social media outlets and a modern jukebox for fun. You also could include TVs that highlight the conference agenda, making this spot a one-stop shop for attendees and their technology needs.

As phones, tablets and other devices become exponen-

*Increased device dependency results in a greater need for battery charging on the fly, especially when high usage and heavy network traffic cause the battery to drain faster than usual.*

want to avoid running cords in the middle of the foyer. Your best bet would be to place them out of the way in high-traffic areas such as snack stations, lounges or restrooms.

### BEST PRACTICES

Having a successful experience with a portable charging station can be achieved in a variety of ways. Signage is helpful, both to direct attendees to the charging station, and then, once they're there, to encourage them to use it. Make an announcement about the stations in the general sessions and breakouts to inform people who might have missed seeing them. If you have a map for attendees, note where the charging stations are located; if you offer an app for the convention, make sure to indicate where attendees can recharge.

tially more integral to events, stay at the forefront of the technology trend — and win over some grateful battery-depleted attendees. Once portable charging stations are incorporated into your conference or event, you'll never look back.

Rachel Portela began her career at metroConnections within the Event Services division in 2009. In 2011, she transitioned to the fast-growing division of Production Services with the title of show producer. In 2014, she was promoted to director of production services, co-directing and overseeing the division with Sr. Technical Director Bill Sather. Rachel utilizes her industry experience and leadership position to guide and encourage her team, develop and apply processes, and instill the core values of service and quality in all aspects of the division. Contact the metroConnections production team at [production@metroconnections.com](mailto:production@metroconnections.com).

# Show Them the Money to Keep Them Coming Back

By John Buchanan

Over the last few years, as exhibition and sponsorship budgets have slowly recovered from the depths of the Great Recession, the rules have changed when it comes to delivering what participants who are paying heftier prices for their involvement want. Today, the suppliers and vendors that support major association trade shows look for more from their investments than ever before. That means that retaining exhibitors and sponsors over the long haul also has become more challenging than ever before.

However, both the underlying cause of the increasingly intense competition for exhibitors and sponsors and the easiest way to ensure ongoing success share a surprisingly simple common denominator.



David Poulos  
Principal  
Granite Partners  
Sparks, MD

*“The most important element in an exhibitor-sponsor retention strategy can be defined by a single word. And that word is relevance.”*

## Fresh Ideas to Generate ROI for Exhibitors and Sponsors

“The most important element in an exhibitor-sponsor retention strategy can be defined by a single word,” says David Poulos, principal at Sparks, Maryland-based Granite Partners, which consults with associations on how to attract and retain exhibitors and sponsors for their major shows. “And that word is relevance. If you’re not able to attract attendees that are actual buyers for your exhibitors, they will go away in droves. That’s because exhibitors are no longer interested in fluff or in just being at a show to be there. They’re interested in closing sales. It means you have to act more like a business and less like a membership club.”

### ATTRACT THE RIGHT ATTENDEES

Poulos, who also has experience as an association show organizer, counsels his clients to do extensive research on who attends their events. “We start every engagement with primary member research. If you don’t know who attends your show and why they’re there, you’re never going to be able to serve your exhibitors and sponsors properly. So you have to make sure you have good primary research in place and that data is properly analyzed — before you move forward with any kind of marketing approach or plan.”

The most fundamental reality today, Poulos says, is that “You have to give exhibitors and sponsors a reason why being involved with your show is going to help their business. And it’s no longer enough to say, ‘Your competitors are going to be there.’ You have to be able to show real reasons why your show will generate ROI for the companies that participate.”



Janet McEwen  
Director of Corporate Relations  
American Society of Radiologic  
Technologists  
Albuquerque, NM

*“The ability to articulate the value to the exhibitor or sponsor of who our members are and what they do is what has really made the difference for us.”*

The mistake that many associations make is that they do not dig deep enough into their analysis of attendees, Poulos says. “The other thing I see often is that they do not segment their analysis enough. The power of the computer today and the software that allows you to sift through data and make analyses allow you to be very, very specific about your marketing approach, as opposed to just fishing for attendees to come to your show. And the thing that too many associations still do not understand is that the attendees you target to come to your show are the flip side of the right kind of exhibitors you should be attracting. And no matter how much booth space or sponsorships you sell, if you attract people with the wrong job titles, you’ve missed the boat. And if you attract a lot of people, but they can’t make buying decisions, you’re going to have an awful hard time getting those exhibitors and sponsors to come back next year.”

Janet McEwen, director of corporate relations at the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, agrees wholeheartedly with Poulos’ assessment. Although competition is fiercer than ever for exhibitors and sponsors, ASRT has done very well since the recession. “For our annual meeting, we have been able to exceed our budgets for the last two years,” McEwen says.

She attributes that success to the fact they “have been smarter about collecting information from our attendees as far as their ability to make decisions,” she says. “As a result of that, we’ve been able to do a better job of describing exactly who attends our meeting and what their roles are in their organizations. And that means we’re better able to say, ‘It might be a small meeting, but of the people there, three-quarters of them are thought leaders within their organizations in key areas. The ability to articulate the value to the exhibitor or sponsor of who our members are and what they do is what has really made the difference for us.’”

Warren Plank, director of sales and marketing at Turnersville, New Jersey-based A. Fassano & Company, which consults with

An Exhibitor Talkback session was held immediately after the ASAE Springtime Expo last May at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. Post-show intelligence gathering gives ASAE the opportunity to make changes to improve the show for exhibitors.





Beth Hecquet, CMP, CMM  
Director of Meetings and Events  
National Association of Sports  
Commissions  
Cincinnati, OH

***“Our goal is to have an ongoing relationship with our exhibitors and sponsors, so we always try to go above and beyond what is expected. And that means that we do a lot of hand-holding — before, during and after the meeting.”***

Beth Hecquet, CMP, CMM, director of meetings and events at the National Association of Sports Commissions in Cincinnati, Ohio, has come up with a fresh idea that replaces traditional session sponsorships with room sponsorships. That means that all attendees who attend a session in a particular meeting room are exposed to the sponsor’s messaging over the entire duration of the meeting. “It gives the sponsor a better chance of reaching many more of all the attendees at the meeting,” Hecquet says, “rather than a much smaller fraction from just one session.”

McEwen uses a mobile app developed by Cvent’s CrowdCompass to do “push” promotions on behalf of exhibitors and sponsors. “For example, we’ll push out a message that says, ‘Make sure you visit XYZ sponsor in their booth during our next break,’” she says. “Since the recession, we’ve also used contests to build booth traffic.” There is no cost to exhibitors, except the cost of whatever prizes they give away.

“Those kinds of ideas came out of the realization that we had to do more to attract attendees into the exhibit hall,” she says. “And all of that thinking really started during the recession, when we were all struggling to retain our exhibitors and sponsors.”

McEwen also sends tweets, with photos, from exhibitor booths. “I show photos when the booth is busy so that other people get the impression they have something interesting,” she says. “And I also give those photos to the exhibitors so they know we are doing everything we can to create traffic for them.”

#### **AFTER THE SHOW**

The end of a major meeting or exposition is a critically important time for assessing the experiences of exhibitors and sponsors and pushing for their continued participation in the future.

Hecquet leads sponsor surveys to see how the process can be improved. “We ask them for the good, the bad and the ugly,” she says. “And we really take that feedback to heart and do our best to make improvements in the way our sponsorships work.”

ASAE conducts an even more aggressive exercise in post-show intelligence gathering, says Director of Expositions and Registration Allison Wachter. Immediately after the exhibit hall

***“It’s about building a genuine relationship. And you can’t do that just by sending e-mails. You have to talk with people — early and often. That’s the real key to long-term success.”***



Warren Plank  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
A. Fassano & Company  
Turnersville, NJ

the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) for its major spring and fall meetings, notes that in order to be truly useful, attendee research must be very specific and should be collected as part of the registration process.

“The more information you get, and the more specific it is, the better,” Plank says. “Exhibitors now want as much information as they can possibly get. And by slicing and dicing the data you collect, you can give exhibitors a very clear and detailed picture of who will be attending your show.”

Such increasingly granular attendee information is now more critical than ever before, Plank says, because participation by exhibitors and sponsors in shows is primarily driven by the tangible promise of a demonstrable return on investment. “If you can’t prove a value proposition and if your exhibitors and sponsors don’t believe they got a good ROI from being on your trade show floor, they will not be back. That means that retaining exhibitors and sponsors requires a lot of extra work these days.”

#### **INNOVATIVE THINKING**

After making sure that your event is attracting the right kinds of attendees, the next most important consideration is finding new and creative ways to lure sponsors who pay a premium for a higher profile in order to reach those attendees.

Innovative ways to engage sponsors in the presentation of content are a sure-fire way to generate enthusiasm, McEwen says. “We’ve done a really good job recently to allow companies to sponsor individual educational tracks,” she says. “And when they do that, someone from the company gets to introduce the speakers. And that means they get to introduce themselves and let people know they have a booth in the exhibit hall. For the first time ever, we also worked not long ago with a specific company to have them sponsor a continuing education course on a topic of their choice. Our only requirement was that it be CE-worthy. And we worked closely with them to make sure it was CE-worthy, but then we touted it as ‘the Varian hour’ because Varian, an equipment manufacturer, was the company that sponsored it. And we promoted it in places like our conference newspaper and other advertising.”

closes on the final day of the meeting, Wachter and her colleagues — including ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE — host an Exhibitor Talkback session in the convention center.

“We give them all the final attendance numbers and days, then open the floor to allow them to share the good, the bad and the ugly about their experience at the show,” Wachter says. “And that’s important, not only because a lot of exhibitors are simply not going to take the time to fill out a post-show survey, but also because their perceptions and reactions are fresh in their minds right after the show closes. And for us, that session has become a very good source of immediate feedback. We do everything we can to use that feedback to make improvements in the show from one year to the next. And the really good thing about the feedback session is that we can act to change things immediately. So if someone comes up with a good idea that will make the show better for exhibitors, I can just say ‘Done.’”

#### **RECAP REPORT**

At the end of her annual meeting, Hecquet sends out a detailed sponsor recap report. “And those reports are customized for each sponsor,” she says. “They remind the sponsors of all the exposure they had. We also have a wonderful photographer that we use, and we include images that are related to what they did as a sponsor, such as hosting a luncheon with their logo in the background or people eating cookies with their logo on them. But we also make sure to outline, in detail, the overall promotional value they received as sponsors. And that includes statistics on attendance, as well as who the attendees were.”

After the show, the obvious follow-up is to see whether exhibitors and sponsors met their own expectations. “And you need to ask specific questions,” Poulos says. “Asking ‘Did the show work for you?’ is a good start, but you also have to ask, ‘Did you get the 30 leads you wanted?’ or ‘Did you get the 20 new customers you were hoping for?’ or ‘Did you launch your new product successfully?’ Those are the more granular kinds of questions you need to be asking. And if the answers are not good, you’re going to have a hard time getting that exhibitor or sponsor back next year.”

And it’s best to have that conversation face-to-face at the end of the meeting, rather than on the phone later, Poulos says.

Hecquet stresses that meeting planners and show organizers should think in terms of relationship-building and not just booth sales. “Our goal is to have an ongoing relationship with our exhibitors and sponsors, so we always try to go above and beyond what is expected of us,” she says. “And that means that we do a lot of hand-holding — before, during and after the meeting. But we also ask for input and feedback. We don’t just tell them, ‘Here’s what we’re doing.’ We ask them to get involved in the process, even though we do, of course, make it clear that we are the ones actually organizing the show. But we also want to engage them at

***“The really good thing about the feedback session is that we can act to change things immediately. So if someone comes up with a good idea that will make the show better for exhibitors, I can just say ‘Done.’”***



Allison Wachter  
Director of Expositions and  
Registration  
ASAE  
Washington, DC

every step of that process, and I definitely think that is one of the things that has helped us maintain our healthy retention rates.”

#### **TALK EARLY AND OFTEN**

Plank advises a sincere commitment to ongoing communication. “My best advice is to talk early and often,” he says. “Most communication today is done by e-mail. Real engagement of an exhibitor or sponsor on the phone, in a conversation, has become more and more rare. Not only do you need to be doing that, but you also have to provide them with all of the information they need to make the decision to continue to be involved with your show. And you also need to be very clear about all the things you’ve done to keep your promises. It’s about building a genuine relationship. And you can’t do that just by sending e-mails. You have to talk with people — early and often. That’s the real key to long-term success.”

Poulos agrees. “Part of your retention strategy actually has to start before the show. When you’ve approached somebody to sell them a booth to begin with, you should have made very serious inquiries into what their specific goals are for their participation in a show. You not only have to know exactly what they want to get out of a show, but also why they’re choosing to be a part of your show. Right from the beginning, you have to understand why they’re going to be there, what their goals are, and how they will measure success.”

Poulos adds one essential factor to the equation: the time-honored proposition that in all things, honesty is the best policy. “If you know your show doesn’t actually attract the kinds of attendees — by title or decision-making responsibility — the prospective exhibitor or sponsor says he or she wants, then it’s better to be frank and admit, ‘This probably isn’t the show for you,’” he says.

How many associations have the courage and good sense to actually practice that?

“It’s probably down in the single digits,” Poulos says. “Very few associations turn people away, even when they know they’re not right for the show. The thing more associations have to understand is the difference between selling somebody a booth or a sponsorship and actually helping them to do more business.”

# Citywides

By John Buchanan

## How to Transform Major Challenges Into Phenomenal Meetings and Events

Citywide meetings — the lifeblood of many associations because of their generation of revenue and their broad, clear educational and promotional benefits to attendees and their industries — are prospering again after facing attendance and budget challenges during the depths of the recession.

At the same time, however, the rules have changed in ways that can make planning a citywide event more difficult for planners.

“What has really changed in the market...is availability,” says Amy Ledoux, CMP, CAE, senior vice president, meetings and expositions, at ASAE The Center for Association Leadership. “And related to that is the change from a buyer’s market to a seller’s market.”

A significant market change that many planners are seeing, Ledoux says, “is that they might be looking at cities that they might be interested in going to, but those cities might not have availability on the dates they want or at the rates they need. There is more demand than there has been in the past.”

As a result, planners now face the dilemma that a seller’s market creates.

Heather Rhoderick, CMP, CAE, vice president, events and education, at the American Composites Manufacturing Association (ACMA) in Arlington, Virginia, agrees with Ledoux that availability of convention venues and dates are now key issues. “Things like the total space or the number of meeting rooms are issues that

relate to specific convention facilities and whether they’re right for your meeting,” Rhoderick says. “Then you also have the issue of dates and whether you can get the right facility in a particular destination when you need it.”

Likewise, Rhoderick says hotel availability and rates in a market driven by resurgent and still increasing demand are another challenge — one based on demand versus available inventory, a formula that is driving rates up quickly. “Everybody is raising their rates now,” she says.

“And in many cases, rates are considerably higher than they were two years ago.”

She also finds that some large, major meeting hotels are now showing a preference for meeting business that stays in-house rather than using the local convention center. In turn, once a planner expresses an intention to host meeting sessions at the convention center, that makes negotiations with the hotel more difficult be-

cause they attempt to extract every possible dollar from room rates, a continental breakfast, function space and so on.

In turn, Rhoderick says, that puts more pressure on her total budget and ability to maintain the overall standards her attendees are used to. “We’ve always been consistent with what we deliver for the registration fee,” she says. “And that’s important, regardless of what city you’re in or what your budget is.”

To deal with budget and revenue challenges, ACMA has adopted a multi-level registration plan. “Instead of taking anything away, we decided to offer options.” Those include a premium category that includes “absolutely everything an attendee could want,” Rhoderick says. “But we’ve also given them options below that if they think a premium registration costs too much.”

As one way of dealing with budget and availability issues, more and more associations are booking their citywide meetings years — and sometimes as much as a decade — in advance. As a result, more and more major destinations are seeing more and more future business on their books. And that, too, can lead to availability and date issues, even if the meeting is being planned well into the future.

“There is always going to be someplace to put a meeting,” Ledoux says. “But if you have a large meeting — one with 5,000 to 20,000 people — sometimes those locations are harder to find now.”

### THE BUDGET CONUNDRUM

Although the association meeting market has largely returned to its prerecession health and well-being, budgets remain flat for many of them. That means that in many cases, they must increase registration or exhibition fees to cover increased costs.

“It’s becoming more expensive for the organization to put on a meeting,” Ledoux says. “We’re just not able to get the room rates anymore that we got during the recession. But because of those low rates back then, a lot of planners have become accustomed to room rates that are under \$200. However, now that there is more demand, hotel rates are getting back to where they were before the recession. and it’s difficult for an organization to explain that to their mem-

*“We’ve always been consistent with what we deliver for the registration fee. And that’s important, regardless of what city you’re in or what your budget is.”*



Heather Rhoderick, CMP, CAE  
V.P., Events and Education  
American Composites  
Manufacturing Association  
Arlington, VA

bers. Even if the association keeps its registration rates the same, the attendee is probably still going to be paying more, because air travel is costing more these days, too.”

As a result, many associations have to adjust their agendas in a way that will reduce costs, but not diminish the value of the meeting. “For example, they might do away with some things, like providing breakfast or coffee break,” Ledoux says. “Or they cut their grandiose buffet by \$10 a person.”

Food and beverage costs also are becoming an issue for many planners, says Steven Stout, CAE, director of meetings and special events at Hospitality Financial Technology Professionals (HFTP) in Austin, Texas.

In general, he says, convention centers have held the line on pricing. “But F&B prices at hotels have skyrocketed.” And the main culprit is increased service fees, which have reached unprecedented levels of more than 20 percent in some high-demand meeting hotels in A-list destinations.

There also are extreme examples of price hikes, such as the cost of a gallon of coffee, Stout says. “I saw one hotel recently where the cost of coffee was \$110 a gallon.”

As a result, many meeting planners, including Stout, now look



The Los Angeles skyline.



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

***“Most sponsors today want to see more unique and different types of engagement opportunities. They’re not so sold on just sponsoring a coffee break. They want to make sure that the things they do really reflect their brand.”***

first at the cost of coffee as a predictive metric of other hotel costs for the meeting. “We even put the cost of coffee on our RFPs now,” Stout says.

As a result of rising meeting costs, sponsorship revenues have become more important than ever. And thankfully, corporate budgets have largely returned to normal, meaning that money is available again.

But at the same time, the process is evolving. Sponsorship dollars, once fairly generic, are now being targeted at specific elements of a meeting, whether that’s content or entertainment.

“Most sponsors today want to see more unique and different types of engagement opportunities,” Ledoux says. “They’re not so sold anymore on just sponsoring a coffee break. They want to make sure that the things they do really reflect their brand. For example, the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau brand is very much linked to music. So they like to sponsor events that relate to music as part of their branding. So more and more, it’s a matter of matching the needs of the sponsor to the meeting. There’s a lot more of that going on now. Sponsors want to see more of a return on their investment.”

And although sponsorship budgets are nearing pre-recession levels, Ledoux says, there is much more competition for those dollars.

### DESTINATION SELECTION

Challenging market conditions also are prompting planners more than ever before to consider second- and third-tier destinations as a cost-cutting measure. “And sometimes second- and third-tier cities are willing to offer concessions, whether that be at the convention center or on hotel rates,” Ledoux says. “So a lot of associations are now exploring more options when it comes to destinations than they might have before.”

That, in fact, she says, is one of the most significant changes over the last few years — to the dramatic benefit of second- and third-tier destinations, which have gained more market share than at any time in the past.

Budget pressures have motivated Rhoderick to start to consider second-tier destinations. In 2016, she will host her annual meeting in Salt Lake City. “And that’s a destination we probably would not have considered before,” Rhoderick says. “But in terms of everything we looked for — except for the airlift, which is usually the challenge with second-tier cities — Salt Lake City has all of the things we were looking for.”

And, she adds, bang for the buck was a key factor in the decision. Stout is very willing to look at second-tier destinations. “We’ll go wherever the deal takes us,” he says. “Of course, we take other things into account. But if we get a really great deal from a particular destination, even if it’s second-tier, we’re not afraid to go back if we had a really good experience and also got a good deal.”

Stout met in Minneapolis one year, and the following year HFTP convened in Austin. “They’re both fantastic destinations,” Stout says. “And once attendees arrive, they just love being there.”

He also hears anecdotally more frequently now from peers that more and more association planners are increasingly open to second-tier destinations. “It’s interesting to see that destinations like Minneapolis, Austin and Raleigh, North Carolina, have been getting more business than I would have ever thought possible,” Stout says.

In turn, the challenge for planners and organizations is the potential effect on attendance. “That means it’s on the organization to sell the meeting and not the destination,” Ledoux says. “If there’s enough value in the meeting itself, people shouldn’t really care where the meeting is taking place. But the truth is, a lot of people



Sixth Street — a historic street and entertainment district in Austin, Texas, the live music capital of the world.

Credit: Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau

do. There’s a certain allure to certain destinations. But I also think that what associations are finding is that when they go to second- or even third-tier destinations, the experience that is delivered in many of those cities is really quite exceptional. And they’re finding that their attendees have an exceptional experience. And part of that is being treated like a big fish in a small pond. The attention of the entire city is on your meeting, to make sure that it’s successful. And when an association can have an experience like that and say,

‘Wow, that was a phenomenal meeting,’ that really opens their eyes to second- and third-tier destinations.”

Many second- and third-tier destinations have fascinating histories, interesting local architecture, unique local cuisines and other factors that are natural lures if investigated. “So I think highlighting what is unique about those kinds of cities and helping attendees embrace and explore the city is another thing that’s driving the interest in those destinations,” Ledoux says.

“And because of that, some associations end up going back because the experience was so good.”

### TECHNOLOGY

Somewhat surprisingly, technology — which has transformed meetings for both planners and attendees over the past decade — often presents challenges for large citywide meetings.

One issue is bandwidth at convention centers and cost of wireless. “Those are definitely things we look at now and discussions we have with the convention center,” Rhoderick says. “Attendees expect to be connected now, with good Wi-Fi, no matter where they are.”

Because he plans the annual meeting for a technology-based association, Stout says the topic is always an important one for him. “We’re a big technology show, so Internet at the venue is always a big issue for us,” he says. “We always try to make a pre-emptive strike before the event, and we have an entire meeting with the convention center that is just based around Internet service to talk about our needs. We do that because in the past we’ve told a facility what we need and they’ve said, ‘Oh, that’s no problem.’ And then there’s a problem.”

He agrees that a shocking number of major convention centers have fallen behind in terms of the bandwidth required to meet today’s demand for multiple devices from the typical attendee.

“That kind of surprises me and it kind of doesn’t, because our members are primarily technology people from hotels,” Stout says. “And a lot of hotels have the same issue, which is bandwidth for their guests.”

Based on that, in fact, HFTP hosted a session at their meeting in Los Angeles on how to improve technology for hotel guests.

Like other associations, in the recent past he has experienced sessions that were down because of technology issues and digital signage that didn’t work properly. “Then we realized that the hall downstairs was down when the show opened,” he says. “And that’s really bad for us, because a lot of our exhibitors don’t have physical products to show. They do that on the Internet. And they were down for an hour and a half.”

Concerns over the quality and consistency of Internet service at his meeting is now “a constant issue,” Stout says, “so much so that it can determine where we’re going.”

### A ‘BIG HEADACHE’

Another issue that Stout finds troubling and frustrating is what

***“We’ll go wherever the deal takes us. But if we get a really great deal from a particular destination, even if it’s second-tier, we’re not afraid to go back if we had a really good experience and also got a good deal.”***



Steven Stout, CAE  
Director of Meetings and Special  
Events, Hospitality Financial  
Technology Professionals  
Austin, TX

he calls “housing pirates,” often questionable companies that contact his exhibitors and attendees and represent themselves as the housing bureau for the event. “That seems to be a real trend now, not just with my group, but with many groups,” he says. “They call people and say, ‘Make sure you book your room with us. We have great rates.’ And people get confused and think these companies are the official housing bureau, but they are not.”

HFTP has encountered serious issues with housing pirates. “For example, we had a company that booked with one of these companies and gave them their credit card information and showed up onsite thinking they had a block of 20 rooms for their team,” Stout says. “And the hotel had no record of their reservations.”

They ended up paying for hotel rooms twice. And they’re still trying to recover the money fraudulently charged to their company credit card. It’s not even known whether the perpetrators are in the U.S.

Now, Stout says, HFTP asks attendees and exhibitors to forward all solicitations to them for independent assessment of legitimacy and potential for legal action.

### INTERNATIONAL ATTENDEES

A positive trend that Stout, along with Ledoux and Rhoderick, see in the market is a steady increase in international attendance.

Growth in international attendance is one of healthiest things happening for U.S. associations since the recession, Rhoderick says, especially with domestic attendance flat at best for many associations.

Like many associations, ACMA enjoys a growing number of international attendees for their big show. “And that’s one of the reasons why we chose Orlando for our meeting,” she says. “It has good international airlift.”

HFTP expects to set a new record for attendance. And a big part of that milestone, Stout says, will be international attendance. “That has really helped build our show,” he says. “And it has also helped make our show floor more international, which makes the meeting much more interesting for people.”

AC&F

# Responsible Meetings

## How to Go From Green to Greener

By Karen Brost

**O**rganizations that are committed to making their meetings more environmentally responsible are generating some impressive results. Take the IMEX show held at the Sands Expo in Las Vegas, as an example. According to the most recent Sustainability Report prepared for the event by the consultancy firm MeetGreen, show officials were able to divert 90 percent of the show's waste from the landfill. In addition, the organization was able to reduce water consumption by 16 percent from the previous year and achieved 72 percent of Level One compliance with the APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Event Standards, an increase of 10 percentage points from the previous year.

### GREENER CONVENTION CENTERS

Convention centers also continue to green up. In October, the



Volunteers sort donated food for the Oregon food bank during a Food Services of America Trends Show at the Oregon Convention Center.

New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center hosted the first ever "net zero" convention center expo area when it proved that exhibit booths can unplug from the utility grid and operate from power generated by solar panels. This accomplishment was achieved at the Greenbuild Conference and Expo presented by the U.S. Green Building Council. The convention center has implemented a series of energy-saving measures, which combined, have allowed the facility to reduce its monthly electric bill by half.

In 2014, the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) achieved LEED Silver certification, making the 3.9-million-sf facility the world's largest LEED-certified convention center. GWCC is approximately 27 percent more energy efficient than an average building of similar size and characteristics. The facility also recently installed an electric vehicle charging station and offers incentives that have enabled its employees to reduce their commutes to the building and the associated air quality issues by 47 percent through a combination of using mass transit, carpooling, compressed work weeks and telecommuting.

The Minneapolis Convention Center, the largest convention center in the Upper Midwest, has achieved Level One certification to the ASTM Standard pertaining to the Evaluation and Selection of Venues for Environmentally Sustainable Meetings, Events, Trade Shows and Conferences. The standard includes specific criteria for staff management, communications, waste management, energy, air quality, water, procurement and community partners.

In 2004, the Oregon Convention Center (OCC) became the first convention center to earn LEED certification. The center achieved LEED-EB (existing building) certification in 2008 and was designated LEED-EB Platinum in 2014. It is one of only two convention centers in the country to do so.

The LEED-certified Anaheim Convention Center (ACC) implements an extensive list of green initiatives, including the use of solar energy, onsite composting and non-toxic cleaners. All of the facil-

### Greener Exhibits

GreenBiz.com is an online resource dedicated to advancing "opportunities at the intersection of business, technology and sustainability." Included in its recommended steps for greening up meetings are specific tips for exhibits and exhibit managers:

- Ask exhibitors to minimize paper collateral materials or use recycled materials and vegetable-based inks.
  - Encourage the use of recycled materials such as aluminum and polyester in booth design.
  - Insist on carpeting made from recycled fibers such as soda bottles.
  - Provide the exhibitor and booth assignment list as a PDA download.
  - Lighten the load with careful choice of materials and crates. A lighter exhibit means better truck fuel economy and lower drayage costs.
  - Minimize giveaway literature. The Center for Exhibit Research estimates that 65 percent goes into the trash rather than the suitcase.
  - Consider a thumb drive with company or product logo as a giveaway. Pre-load literature/sales sheets that would have been printed for the exhibit.
- GreenBiz also recommends using every communication sent to exhibitors as an opportunity to reinforce the fact that the exhibit is going green. — KB



The Greenbuild Conference and Expo in New Orleans last October featured the first "net zero" exhibit space.

ity's lobby carpet is certified green, and it has a green roof with a 2,000-sf garden. The ACC also partners with Aramark, the facility's onsite catering company that is committed to maintaining proactive recycling practices and serving sustainable cuisine.

### THE GAME PLAN FOR GOING GREEN

According to the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC), planning green meetings requires a multiphase approach that includes creating a plan, engaging internal stakeholders in supporting that plan, engaging vendors in the process, tracking performance and communicating the results, and celebrating success. GMIC offers a Sustainable Event Professional Certificate program, which combines online learning, working in small groups and hands-on participation at GMIC's annual Sustainable Meetings Conference.

The mission of the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) is to support event and convention service managers in their quest for excellence. Two of ESPA's goals are to make its annual conference more sustainable as well as to educate members about sustainability initiatives they can employ. "We want to set the right example for our CSM attendees," explains Lynn McCullough, executive director for ESPA. "To that end, we are also now expanding our sustainability initiative into hosting a Green Week in April where we will be encouraging our members to incorporate green practices within their own facilities."

For its 2015 conference at the Sheraton Chicago Towers & Hotel, ESPA implemented a number of green practices. These included replacing bottled water with water stations, reducing paper usage by uploading speaker presentations to the My ESPA Portal and partnering with EventMobi to create an event mobile app.

ESPA also introduced BYOB — Bring Your Own Bag. "We all know that we receive convention bags and have a pile of them sitting in our offices," McCullough comments. "In order to eliminate the waste of materials as well as the manufacturing and shipping of these products, ESPA encouraged our attendees to 'Bring Your Own Bag' to use throughout the conference. Once the conference is over, we encouraged our attendees to donate the bags and we provide them to a local charity."

In the past, ESPA also has used sustainable centerpieces. "Instead of using centerpieces that only have a use during the conference, ESPA displays items on the center of the tables that are then donated to a local charity. Not only are we able to eliminate waste of the centerpieces, but we are also giving back to the local community. For example, toys for children's charities or a bowl of fruit for a local food bank," McCullough explains.

*"We are now expanding our sustainability initiative into hosting a Green Week in April where we will be encouraging our members to incorporate green practices within their own facilities."*



Lynn McCullough  
Executive Director  
Event Service Professionals  
International  
Princeton Junction, NJ



***“The Washington State Convention Center satisfies our criteria for size, scope and flexibility, but also promotes a sustainable environment that resonates strongly with our members.”***

Deene Alongi  
Director of Conferences & Meetings  
American Planning Association  
Chicago, IL

When asked what advice she would have for planners who want to green up their meetings, McCullough responds, “First I would always suggest that they talk to their CSM to get recommendations at the local venue. CSMs often have very creative ideas and many past experiences with other events so they are a wealth of knowledge. Also, the CVB’s website will often describe green initiatives at the city level. Of course, there is always a need to reduce, reduce, reduce (i.e., digital/electronic communications over paper), give-aways, signage and (using) pitchers of water versus bottles of water, as the impact of that can be huge.”

#### CHOOSING A VENUE THAT’S THE RIGHT FIT

Choosing a venue that is not only sustainable, but that meets the goals and objectives of the meeting can require a balancing act, and the American Planning Association (APA) found the right fit for their needs. APA is an education and membership organization dedicated to building communities that enrich people’s lives, and sustainability is an important area of focus for its members. So APA chose the Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) in Seattle as the site for its next national conference. “Seattle is a vibrant planning city, ensuring our attendees have limitless learning opportunities,” explains Deene Alongi, APA’s director of conferences and meetings. “The Washington State Convention Center satisfies our



The Anaheim Convention Center’s green roof features a 2,000-sf garden.

Credit: Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

criteria for size, scope and flexibility, but also promotes a sustainable environment that resonates strongly with our members.”

The Washington State Convention Center has been focused on conservation and recycling for more than two decades. Its green initiatives include sustainable culinary practices, energy-efficient lighting and the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, in addition to its recycling and composting program. The WSCC offers a Green Meetings Guide on its website, [www.wsc.com](http://www.wsc.com).

#### GETTING ATTENDEES INVOLVED

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) has developed a creative way to get its members involved in greening up the organization’s annual meeting. AAA offers members a discounted registration rate if they’ll agree to use an e-reader-formatted program, an online personal scheduler and/or the AAA annual meeting mobile app to navigate their way through the conference.

“In the past two years, we have offered a green registration fee, which was a \$5 reduced registration fee for attendees who did not want to receive a printed final program onsite,” explains Ushma J. Suvarnakar, MTA, CMP, director, meetings and conferences for AAA. “Since we started this program, we have had close to a 25 percent adoption rate by our attendees (not including exhibitors). AAA encourages the use of our mobile application that contains all of the information found in the program. We find that our attendees have mixed reviews to relying solely on the mobile app, however those who have resisted change in the past acknowledge that going paperless is inevitable and are learning to adjust. With the push to use the mobile application, AAA has found that offering complimentary Wi-Fi at our meeting venues is critical to the success of this initiative.”

In addition to greening up the meeting, this initiative has resulted in cost savings. “We have also been able to reduce the quantity of our printed final program,” Suvarnakar notes, “and hope to be able to continue to lower the quantity in future years.”

Suvarnakar discussed her plans to further enhance her green initiatives in the future. “My hope is that we can continue to improve our mobile application to provide for additional features to the attendees through real time surveys, gamification, networking, etc. This would incentivize more attendees to want to use the app versus flip through our 500+ page final program.

“My ‘pie in the sky’ is to make our annual meeting as paperless as possible,” she continues. “We are researching various options of producing hybrid events that can lessen the carbon footprint of the attendees traveling to the meeting without the fear of them losing out on the content.” AAA’s annual meeting draws approximately 6,500–7,000 attendees and 100–150 exhibitors. The organization’s 114th annual meeting will take place in November at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver.

The American Chemical Society (ACS), which will host its 249th national meeting and exposition at the Colorado Convention Center in March, gets its attendees involved by encouraging them



## MORE ROOMS WITH A VIEW THAN ANY OTHER HOTEL IN BOSTON.

### Newly Renovated Guest Rooms Unveiled.

Harbor views, city views, garden views. The Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center in Boston has them all – and more of them than any other major hotel in Boston. With 8 ballrooms, 42 meeting rooms, outdoor gardens and terraces plus seven private dining rooms, Seaport has the space you need for your next meeting or event. And we’re the easiest hotel in Boston for access, minutes from Logan Airport and downtown Boston via our own MBTA Silver Line stop, water taxi and car. Call us to find out more at 617.385.4212.

Named by Fodor’s As One of North America’s Greenest Hotels | Complimentary WiFi | 24-Hour Business Center



SEAPORT  
HOTEL & WORLD TRADE CENTER

SEA THE DIFFERENCE™

One Seaport Lane | Boston, MA 02210 | 617.385.4212 | [www.seaportboston.com](http://www.seaportboston.com)

## Green Resources

Many resources are available for planners who want to start making their meetings more environmentally friendly or who want to ramp up the green initiatives they already have in place.

The gold standard, so to speak, of guidance for green meetings is the **APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Meeting Standards**, which are available for purchase from the Convention Industry Council (CIC). It is billed as “the industry’s first and only comprehensive standards for environmentally sustainable meetings,” and includes standards in nine areas:

- Accommodations
- Audio-visual and production
- Communications and marketing
- Destinations
- Exhibits
- Food and beverage
- Meeting venue
- Onsite offices
- Transportation

The standards can be purchased individually or as a complete set through the CIC website, [www.conventionindustry.org](http://www.conventionindustry.org).

CIC also has partnered with Avila Government Services Inc. to offer their online tool for sustainable meetings, the **Sustainable Meeting Planning Program (SMPP)**. The tool is designed to help planners navigate the APEX/ASTM standards and make it easier to implement them. CIC has posted a discount code on its website to enable planners to purchase the SMPP tool at a 50 percent discount.

**The Green Meeting Industry Council** offers a Sustainable Event Professional Certificate program, and provides case studies, best practices, a resource library and a directory of green suppliers on its website, [www.gmicglobal.org](http://www.gmicglobal.org).

**MeetGreen** offers a free sustainability policy template, a glossary of green terminology and tips for meeting green on its site, [www.meetgreen.com](http://www.meetgreen.com).

— KB

to “Take the Greener Meeting Challenge.” Some of the steps ACS recommends include taking advantage of linen reuse initiatives at the hotel, declining delivery of unread newspapers and turning off the lights when away from their hotel room. ACS also suggests using the meeting’s mobile app instead of the printed onsite program. And for attendees who choose not to walk to the convention center, ACS suggests using their carbon-offset shuttle service. They also recommend bringing a reusable water bottle to avoid the cost and waste associated with disposable, petroleum-based plastic water bottles.

### SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND BEVERAGE CHOICES

Food and beverage choices also can play a key role in making a meeting or conference greener. The London-based nonprofit organization Sustain serves as an advocate for better food and farming, and enhancing the health and welfare of people and animals. So it’s only natural that an organization dedicated to sustainability would have a detailed set of guidelines for caterers who handle its own events. These guidelines could easily serve as a template for all types of meetings.

Among its catering requirements, which can be viewed in their entirety at [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org), Sustain requests vegan and vegetarian options; organic meat or meat raised to high standards of animal welfare; tea, coffee and sugar that is Fairtrade-certified (as well as any dried fruit, nuts, juice and chocolate that are used); and whole-grain bread. If fish is on the menu, Sustain requires that the species chosen are not in danger of extinction and should be certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council ([www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)). Sustain also requests a selection of seasonal fresh fruit, preferably

*“My hope is that we can continue to improve our mobile application. ...This would incentivize more attendees to want to use the app versus flip through our 500+ page final program.”*



Ushma J. Suvarmakar, MTA, CMP  
Director, Meetings & Conferences  
American Anthropological  
Association  
Arlington, VA

locally grown and organic, or fruit that is Fairtrade-certified if it is imported. The organization does not serve soft drinks or bottled water (unless the bottles are refillable) and prefers to order fruit instead of cakes, cookies or salty snacks.

### EVERY STEP COUNTS

As the online resource *GreenBiz.com* reports, “Whatever you do will make a difference.” It gives the following example of going greener on printed brochures: “In a typical brochure run, using paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council or recycled paper and soy-based inks, you can save 47 trees, enough water for 1,100 eight-minute showers, 75 large cans of garbage and equivalent exhaust emissions to driving a car for 5,322 miles.” They add, “If enough companies progress beyond thinking green to actually being green, we’ll all breathe and live easier.”

AC&F

# MEETINGS & MUSIC

HAVE BEEN OUR BUSINESS

Since 1897

JUST AS THE RYMAN REMAINS A REVERED REMINDER OF OUR HOSPITABLE HISTORY, we add new chapters of Nashville neighborliness daily as company comes calling. From eager arrival to fond farewell, prepare for a visit filled with music and memories you just won’t find anywhere else. Call today to book your meeting in the city that music calls home.

NASHVILLE CONVENTION & VISITORS CORP  
615.259.4730 or 800.657.6910 | VISITMUSICCITY.COM

STARTED IN 1897  
& STILL REFINING

Gaylord  
OPRYLAND

Nashville  
MUSIC CITY

Music City  
CENTER

# The Art of Managing Volunteers

Make the Experience a Win-Win for Everybody

By Patrick Simms

**V**olunteer programs for association meetings can certainly be “win-win” situations. The association saves the money needed to pay additional support staff onsite, while the volunteers get various rewards for their time. In order to maximize the win for the organization, volunteers must be well-trained and placed in the right roles at the convention, whether they are part of the association’s professional membership, students in the field or local individuals sourced through the CVB, for example. In order to maximize the win for the volunteers, they must have the opportunity to do work that they are comfortable with and that fits their schedule. In addition, they should receive some kind of “compensation,” at the very least appreciation (perhaps a thank-you gift) from the association. But many associations opt for a more tangible reward in order to incentivize potential volunteers.



At the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) International Convention, for instance, volunteers receive one day of free registration for each day of service, granting them access to sessions, the exhibit hall and receptions. The American Historical Association goes a step further, providing its student volunteers free registration to the meeting if they work eight hours, as well as an hourly wage. While the monetary compensation may stretch the definition of “volunteer,” it does optimize students’ participation and cooperation with requests, according to Debbie Doyle, coordinator, committees and meetings. In addition to the earnings, students also have a vantage point on the conference work of a professional historian, especially when they assist speakers. “I think it’s good for them to see that senior faculty are just as panicked when they give a presentation as anyone else,” says Doyle.

## PROMOTE CAREER BENEFITS

Indeed, there also can be career value to volunteering, an aspect that should be conveyed to prospective new volunteers. “We try to promote to them what the opportunity provides,” says Bill Gibbs, conference manager with the Institute of Industrial Engineers. “It shows their willingness to contribute to the industry, and they’re meeting people that some day may be their boss. A lot of the Fortune 500 companies are represented at the conference, with hiring managers in attendance. So that first impression (as a volunteer) may be what gets them the job down the road.” The IIE Annual Conference typically has an attendance of about 1,700 with roughly 10 percent of the attendance figure being student volunteers from different industrial engineering programs. They receive a reduced registration rate in addition to the career opportunities and a bit of prestige in representing their school. “Interestingly enough, it’s been a little competition between the different schools (in terms of) the number of volunteers they can provide; typically when they’re working they’ll wear shirts from their schools,” he adds. “It’s sort of an ongoing process where we’ll have, for example, 10 students from XYZ university one year and we may have 20 the next year once they realize what they can get out of the conference.”

Many of the volunteers at the National Speakers Association’s (NSA) annual meeting, Influence, are “aspirational speakers,” those who are not professional speakers but rather gaining exposure to the field and gauging their own ability/interest. Volunteering allows them to do that. “We really want them to understand what it means to be a professional speaker from a craft and business perspective,” says Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, director of learning experiences for the NSA. “Many times they serve as our host procession so they can get up close and personal.”

*“We try to promote to them what the opportunity provides. It shows their willingness to contribute to the industry, and they’re meeting people that some day may be their boss.”*

Bill Gibbs  
Conference Manager  
Institute of Industrial Engineers  
Norcross, GA

## ESTABLISH ROLES AND DUTIES

Apart from promoting the tangible and intangible value to volunteering, it’s important to have well-defined roles and duties for the participants. These vary depending on the association, but they can be grouped into the following categories:

**“Intellectual” volunteering:** In some associations, members volunteer to review paper submissions for the conference sessions, which is a good way for those who cannot attend onsite to lend assistance. “They’re involved in that whole backend process where they don’t have to go to the event if they’re unavailable, but they still volunteered their time,” says Barbara S. Spain, events program manager with SPE (Society of Plastics Engineers). Intellectual volunteering also can be done onsite, where SPE members chair sessions, establish moderators and work with Spain to “determine how large an audience is going to be for a particular session so that I can get them placed in large enough rooms,” she explains. That judgment requires knowing the “draw” that a given speaker or topic will have. “If we’re doing a session on new technology, such as 3-D printing in the plastics industry, we know our audience is going to be 100–200 in the room,” she says by way of example.

Members also can offer counsel on the overall design of the convention. “We look to our professional speaker volunteers to help make the meeting what it should be for the people who are coming,” says Martin-Bilbrey. “They help us target the biggest trends and industry highlights that we should be putting out there, because they are going to everybody else’s events throughout the year, so it really helps us to pick and choose the most fun and cool items. Last year we had a volunteer devote a considerable amount of his own money in order to do a hologram experience on the main stage. Another year we had a Cirque du Soleil performer who flew in especially (for us) from Canada to share her talent and make our opening reception pop. Those events are all volunteer-driven. You just never know what the volunteers will think of, and they challenge us to go further.”

**Destination familiarization:** Volunteers who fill this role can be sourced through the local CVB, but they can come from other sources as well. The NSA works with local volunteers from communications colleges or those recommended by nonprofits

***“We do a solid three months of training with our volunteers, and that includes staff as well, because we want to make sure that everybody who is representing us onsite has the information to succeed.”***

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey  
Director of Learning Experiences  
National Speakers Association  
Tempe, AZ

at the meeting destination. Oftentimes they are Gen X or baby boomer professional speakers in the area. Their presence effectively provides “local flavor,” says Martin-Bilbrey. Influence 2015 will be held at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park, “so we want to feature people from Maryland, D.C. and Virginia,” she says. “They’re going to know the ‘insider secrets’ for local entertainment and dining. “Last year one of the local volunteers organized a ‘yacht day’ in San Diego, for example.”

**Onsite logistical assistance:** This is a major area where volunteers are deployed, and the duties are many and varied, including bag-stuffing, greeting and providing directions to delegates, and plenty of miscellaneous work in the session rooms, such as passing out handouts and evaluations. “They scan people as they go into the session rooms so we can get good demographic information, and help people get seated for keynotes,” says Tonia Fykes, CEM, CMP, managing director, operations, conventions and conferences department, BIO.

“Mainly we rely on them to check all the meeting rooms,” says Doyle. “They go around to make sure that the AV equipment is there, that the speakers don’t need anything, that it’s not too cold or too hot, that the water is refreshed at the meeting table, and then we send them around to take attendance after the session starts.”

During especially popular sessions or other activities, there may be a dearth of volunteers, as many will have set their schedules to attend that session. In that scenario, many planners will rely on what are known as “floaters.” “We absolutely do have days where people prefer to do something other than volunteer,” says Fykes. “So on any given day we’ll have up to 20 floaters, and their responsibility is to just step in whenever and wherever they can. The day that they’re floating is considered their volunteer day, and something always comes up.”

Doyle, who also works with floaters, concurs: “You just never know until you get onsite what you’re going to need help with.”

#### **MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION**

In order to get the best performance from volunteers and

ensure they have a pleasant experience (that “win-win” situation), associations must strive to make a good impression on the participants by laying out exactly what their time commitments will be and what certain roles entail. Whether or not they are vocal about it, volunteers will get a “bad impression” of the association if they end up thinking, “This isn’t what I signed up for” once onsite.

“We go through an application process where we explain to them what their assignments are going to be,” says Fykes. “And there are times when they say, for example, that they don’t want to do surveys in the exhibition hall and would rather do a session room. And we try as much as we can to make those changes.”

#### **TRAIN WELL**

After the position has been accurately established and accepted, the next step is training in that role, where they also are introduced to their “supervisor” and fellow volunteers. That’s the first opportunity planners have to cultivate a team mentality among the volunteers and perhaps discover which ones will work well together. The NSA strongly emphasizes the training process for new volunteers. “We do a solid three months of training with our volunteers, and that includes staff as well, because we want to make sure that everybody who is representing us onsite has the information to succeed,” says Martin-Bilbrey. “Especially in an organization where you’re peer-to-peer, you never want to feel like you have to say, ‘I don’t know that, and I don’t know how to find the answer.’ It doesn’t look professional.”

#### **SET TIME LIMITS**

During their work, volunteers should be extended the same courtesies and respect as a staff member, but as much as possible, their work should feel more like volunteering than paid labor. One way to achieve that is to limit shifts to a reasonable length, allowing them more flexibility with their time. “My rule of thumb for volunteer activities is no longer than four hours,” says Martin-Bilbrey. They also can be reminded of everything they

***“I expect that there will be a number of volunteers from this year’s Philadelphia meeting that may say, ‘This is worth me paying the registration rate to go out to San Francisco for the BIO convention next year.’”***

Tonia Fykes, CEM, CMP  
Managing Director, Operations, Conventions and Conferences Department  
Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)  
Washington, DC



## Hiring Temps

In addition to volunteers, many associations also will hire temporary workers for logistical assistance onsite. For cost savings, it may seem preferable to always utilize volunteers if they are available (even if volunteers receive a wage, it will typically be less than what temps are paid). But there are certain tasks that may be more suitable for temps, notes Tonia Fykes, CEM, CMP, managing director, operations, conventions and conferences department, BIO. “We have a large temporary staff pool that we pay for, and over the years we’ve kind of figured out that there are certain (duties) that it’s better to have a paid individual do, such as sitting at an information desk for the three days. Because volunteers have that one day on, one day off schedule, it would be difficult to train a different one every day to manage the desk,” she explains. “And usually volunteers want to experience the convention and participate in the sessions, and so we typically give them (jobs that allow them to do that).”

Debbie Doyle, coordinator, committees and meetings at the American Historical Association, feels that temps are also a better choice for the registration desk: “You can be much more directive (with them), and you’ll often get bonded temps who can handle money,” she says.

The National Speakers Association takes the same approach: “We work with some registration desk (temps) who are going to help us ensure that customer service is the best it can be,” says Director of Learning Experiences Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey. “That’s an area where we could use a volunteer, but it takes away from them being able to interact (with delegates) in the ways they want to.”

Accordingly, student volunteers are generally better suited to roles that involve greeting and assisting delegates and speakers.

“I think the volunteers do a great job of making the meeting feel more welcoming because they’re young and eager,” Doyle observes. “They’re trying to make a good impression, as it’s the profession they’re training for.” — PS

can do during their off time, as some may get too wrapped up in the volunteer role. “We encourage them to go to the sessions when they’re not working, let them know they can attend the presidential reception and take advantage of all the opportunities that the meeting presents,” says Doyle. For a few years, the American Historical Association was awarding a \$100 gift card to the best volunteer in each work area, but there are many less expensive ways of appropriately thanking volunteers.

“Make sure that you’re featuring them online, in print and all the different ways you can do it, whether they say they need recognition or not,” says Martin-Bilbrey. “And add those little touches (one year we did cookies dropped off in their room) that say, ‘I value what you’re giving the organization; I know what you’re giving up, and without that we couldn’t do it.’”

#### **PICK BRAINS AND CULTIVATE ENGAGEMENT**

It’s also important to keep in mind that logistical volunteers can sometimes be “intellectual” volunteers: They can have valu-

able ideas on how to improve the conference, based on their observations. “We open up feedback from all the volunteers because if we don’t understand what they’re thinking, how can we improve?” says Martin-Bilbrey. For example, due in part to feedback from some younger volunteers over the years, the NSA has adopted more interactive, shorter learning experiences within “learning lounges.” “We had always done the traditional 60-minute breakouts as well as the main session. This year the learning lounge features Ignite sessions, five-minute bursts.”

Perhaps the greatest “win” for an association is when positive volunteer experiences lead to longtime engagement with the organization and convention. “We’ve had some that have attended the conference years after they were student volunteers,” says Gibbs. “Volunteering does help with our future year registration,” Fykes confirms. “I expect that there will be a number of volunteers from this year’s Philadelphia meeting that may say, ‘This is worth me paying the registration rate to go out to San Francisco for the BIO convention next year.’”

AC&F



**BULLOCK**

**Jim Bullock** was named director of sales and marketing for Streamsong Resort in Streamsong, Florida. He most recently served as vice president of group sales for Sandals and Beaches Resorts.

Visit Orlando has named **Barbara Balaguras** as senior national account executive.



**DEL GALLO**

She most recently served as director of corporate sales at Choose Chicago.

The Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau in Louisiana has named **David Bradley** as vice president of sales and services. He was director of convention sales for the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau in Pennsylvania.

**Donna Del Gallo** was named director, city-wide accounts for the San Francisco Travel Association, based in Washington, DC. She was associate vice president, convention sales in the DC office for Discover the Palm Beaches Florida.

Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center, Scottsdale, Arizona, has named



**CONNORS**

**Patrick Connors** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing at The Wigwam in Phoenix, Arizona.

The Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau has appointed **Neal Carter** as convention sales manager responsible for the Florida association and corporate markets. He was a group sales manager at The Doubletree Palm Beach Gardens and Executive Meeting Center, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau has named **Tim Haggerty** as vice president of sales. He most recently was director of sales and marketing for the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown. AC&F



**CARTER**



**HAGGERTY**

ReaderServices / AdIndex

PAGE	ADVERTISER	PHONE	WEB ADDRESS	CONTACT	E-MAIL ADDRESS
COV IV	Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	562-495-8333	www.visitlongbeach.com	Iris Himert	irish@longbeachcvb.org
12-13	Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board	213-624-7300	www.discoverlosangeles.com	Kathy McAdams	sales@LATourism.org
COV III	Mexico Tourism Board	202-265-9021	www.visitmexico.com/meetings	Cecilia Cruz	ccruz@visitmexico.com
29	Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.	615-259-4739	www.visitmusiccity.com	Kay Witt	kayw@visitmusiccity.com
5	Omni Dallas Hotel	214-744-6664	www.omnihotels.com/dallas	Harold Queisser	hqueisser@omnihotels.com
27	Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center, The	617-385-4212	www.seaportboston.com	Group Sales	sales@seaportboston.com
COV II	Visit Jacksonville	800-733-2668	www.visitjacksonville.com/meetings	Marcia Noon	convsales@visitjacksonville.com

MAKE YOUR  
POINT

MEXICO THE MEETING POINT

With top resorts including hotels certified with Five Diamonds, world-class services, luxury accommodations and scenic views, Los Cabos is the ultimate destination for stress-free business meetings.

**Los Cabos**

**México**  
LIVE IT TO BELIEVE IT  
visitmexico.com/meetings

The Urban Waterfront Playground

# Experience Unconventional

Meet the City that doesn't do Ordinary. Chic. Casual. Modern. Retro. Hot, sunny days. Bright, electric nights. It's the unmistakable contrasts and sweet contradictions that make Long Beach a city apart from the rest. So when hosting your next event, go where a world of possibilities await just a few sandy steps from your beach towel – because in Long Beach, whatever you do, you're in for the unconventional. [visitlongbeach.com](http://visitlongbeach.com)



LONG BEACH  
CALIFORNIA™