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Learning to Succeed

The Changing Landscape of Continuing Education and Certification

PAGE 32

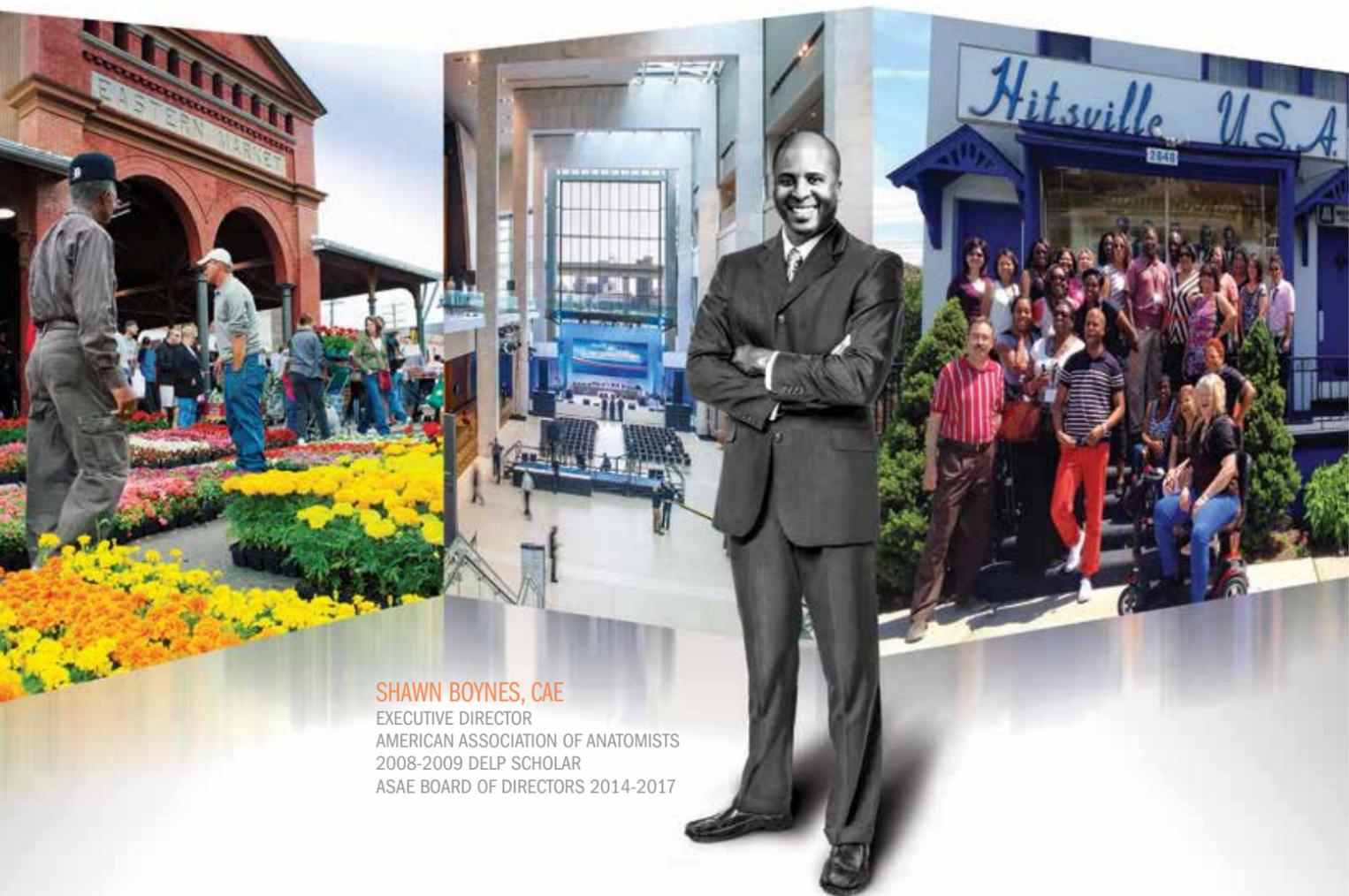
The Big Draw

Content Marketing Strategies That Drive Attendance PAGE 28

Andrew Darmohraj, Executive Vice President & COO, American Pet Products Association. The 2015 Global Pet Expo in Orlando attracted nearly 7,000 attendees.

**CLICK HERE TO
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TABLET VERSION**

Credit: American Pet Products Association



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Learning Never Ends



"Just when I learned all the answers, they changed all the questions." That's a saying that rings true now more than ever in our rapidly changing world, especially when it comes to content marketing strategies. It doesn't seem so long ago that the U.S. Postal Service and/or a telephone call were the only available methods of outreach and promotion. Now, the same call to action must be repackaged and customized for the many different digital ways people receive information — if not, meeting and convention attendance will suffer. Today, getting the message across to the widest audience requires a sort of carpet-bombing of e-marketing methods.

But some associations find that, to cover all their bases, traditional practices should remain in the mix. For example, the American Pet Products Association (APPA) uses direct mail along with e-marketing to reach their independent retailers, many of whom are small business owners. "Obviously everyone has smartphones and computers now, but we're never sure which touchpoint is going to be the one that gets them to pay attention," says Andrew Darmohraj, executive vice president and COO of the APPA, who appears on our cover. "So we want to make sure that we take every opportunity to get our content in front of them. I've actually seen people come into the building with those seminar brochures in their hand, so they definitely use them."

The APPA's approach has been successful: The Global Pet Expo's Academy, which offered 29 sessions, attracted 7,000 pet product retailers. "The Academy has definitely grown," says Darmohraj in our feature "The Big Draw" on page 28. "In 2015 we had more than double the sessions that we had in 2013. That's (based on) a direct response from the retailers. They're coming to the show not only to see product, but they're also looking for ways to improve their business and the way they run their business."

The core membership of course comes first, but marketing means also keeping an eye toward new markets and future growth: One of the more popular educational sessions at the Global Pet Expo was "Marketing to Millennials Using Social Media." Read on in our feature to learn how other meeting professionals are keeping the buzz going.

Our feature "Learning to Succeed" on page 32 explores the changing landscape of continuing education and certification. Another area where planners who thought they "learned all the answers" are now educating themselves on the new learning styles of active engagement and continuous learning.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Detroit Hosts 5,400 for ASAE's Annual Meeting

WASHINGTON, DC — More than 5,400 association professionals and industry partners attended the 2015 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition, August 8–11, in Detroit. Attendees participated in more than 130 education sessions, networked in the exhibit hall and took part in Detroit Destination Tours and EduTours. The ASAE Foundation sold more than 2,000 tickets to The Classic, held at Detroit's Fox Theatre, which is the

John H. Graham IV



highest attendance in its history.

The final attendance breakdown includes: 2,812 executives, 1,799 exhibitors, 790 others including guests, spouses, press, volunteers, vendors and staff, for a grand total of 5,401.

A total of 431 companies representing 684 booths exhibited in the expo hall this year, which resulted in a strong ratio

of 61 percent buyers (association staff) to 39 percent sellers (industry partners).

"Eighty-seven percent of attendees had not held a meeting in Detroit in the last 15 years, so this provided Detroit Metro CVB a great opportunity to reveal the newly renovated Cobo Center and different meeting locations throughout the city," said ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE. "Attendees were buzzing about Cobo, the wonderful hospitality and great content at this year's event."

During the Opening General Session, Josh Linkner, CEO and managing partner of Detroit Venture Partners, provided five "obsessions" of innovative thinkers as well as strategies attendees can use back in the office. He discussed the importance of being curious, craving what's next, doing a "judo flip," finding solutions in unorthodox ways, and pushing the boundaries.

Josh Linkner



During the Closing General Session, Sherry Turkle, an MIT professor and author, outlined how technology is impacting our conversations and creating a crisis in empathy that can be cured with having face-to-face conversations.

ASAE raised \$35,000 for Alternative for Girls, which helps homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation. Participants made bookmarks, read to the girls and packed hygiene kits. ASAE raised money through volunteer efforts, city tours, 5K Fun Run/Walk fees and individual donations.

The 2016 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 13–16. www.asaecenter.org

Music City Center Has Unprecedented Fiscal Year 2015

NASHVILLE, TN — Nashville's Convention Center Authority announced that the preliminary operating results of the Music City Center for fiscal year 2015 show operating revenues of more than \$32.5 million and expenses of \$30.9 million, which greatly exceed the budgeted operational projections. The Music City Center currently has more than \$45 million in reserves.

"Convention centers commonly operate at a deficit so the fact that our operating revenues exceeded expenses in our second year is a true testament to how incredibly well not only the MCC has performed this year, but the entire convention market in Nashville," said Charles Starks, president/CEO of the Music City Center. "Our team has done an incredible job these first two years of operation, and we are excited to see what the future holds."

www.visitmusiccity.com

Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort Unveils New Era

MARCO ISLAND, FL — The Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort, Golf Club & Spa has re-opened, following a three-month closure, to kick off the start of their major \$250 million property transformation and brand conversion. The resort will convert to a JW Marriott brand resort in 2017 during the third and final phase of the project. The second phase of renovations will continue over the next 16 months. Expanded pool decks, refurbished lobby, a new porte cochere and grand front entrance to the resort are complete. The transformation of guest rooms include refreshed décor and furnishings, along with a redesign of the guest room bathrooms allowing for larger shower, vanity and private water closet.

On-property restaurants including Quinn's, Pazzi's, Korals and Café San Marco will reopen as will both resort pools. The property will move forward into its second phase of enhancements through December 31, 2016.

www.marcoislandmarriott.com

Orlando Named No. 1 Meeting Destination by Cvent

ORLANDO, FL — Cvent, the leader in cloud-based enterprise event management solutions, has named Orlando the No. 1 destination for meetings and events in the United States for 2015. This ranking is developed and based on meeting-and-event booking activity in Cvent's national supplier network of more than 200,000 hotels and special event venues.



Aguel

"We are honored to be named No. 1 and ahead of strong competitors such as Las Vegas and Chicago," said George Aguel, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. "This recognition is truly another testament to the investment that Visit Orlando and our Central Florida tourism partners make in marketing and selling Orlando as the ideal location for meetings and conventions at all levels."

Aguel added, "Ranking at the top of one of the world's largest, most accurate databases of detailed venue information is something our community can be proud of, as countless meeting planners will rely on this endorsement when considering our destination as the site for their next successful meeting or convention." www.orlandomeeting.com

ASAE Board Passes Budget, Receives Updates on Major Initiatives

WASHINGTON, DC — Before the official opening of the 2015 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition, held August 8–11 in Detroit, the ASAE Board heard updates on the business models and infrastructure development and the launch of the new website Association CareerHQ. The board passed the budget that includes Fiscal Year 2016 (FY 16) Program of Work and specific projects in all areas of ASAE and the ASAE Foundation.

ASAE discussed its new hybrid membership model, content strategy, the new .org website coming in January, and infrastructure projects. The new Association CareerHQ website is a hub for job postings and job search. It also provides "jobs plus," featuring a vast resources area to help professionals manage their association careers and assist association HR departments and staff supervisors in managing and developing their teams.

"The business models and infrastructure updates from ASAE provided great insight for the board, and these initiatives will help ASAE enhance its offerings, engage its members, and increase awareness of ASAE with new audiences," said ASAE Chair Susan K. Neely, CAE, president and CEO of the American Beverage Association.

"ASAE continues to be a leader in developing new research and projects that will help members understand and implement new strategies inside their organization. ASAE continues to advocate on issues that will impact its members and continually educates policymakers on how these initiatives will impact the global community," said Abe Eshkenazi, CSCF, FACHE, CPA, CAE, CEO of APICS, who will become chair of the ASAE Board. www.asaecenter.org, www.associationcareerhq.org

New Study: Trends in Meetings and Events Risk Mitigation

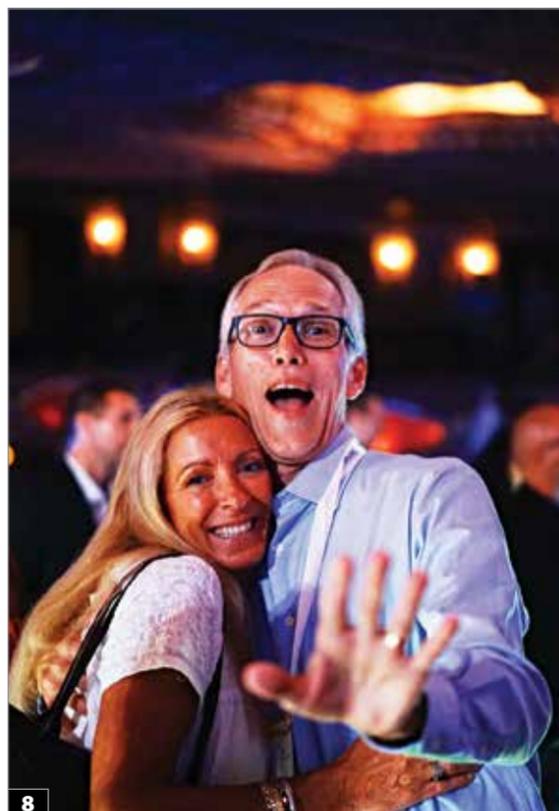
NEW YORK, NY — New research released by American Express Meetings & Events explores risk mitigation, including areas where lack of business controls, technology and operations around meetings and events can lead to diminished profits and fines from failure to adhere to regulatory requirements.

The white paper specifically focuses on the Life Science vertical including Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology/Biological Products and Health Care Equipment & Supplies, growing industries that rely heavily on meetings and events to connect and reach their stakeholders. The white paper titled "Protect Your Profits: Mitigating Meetings Risk in Life Science Companies," surveyed leaders who oversee meetings activity as well as administrative professionals who plan meetings. The paper demonstrates the importance of risk mitigation as a company works to achieve education, awareness and expansion goals.

Key findings include:

- An impressive 70.1 percent of respondents agree their company has a formal meeting policy.
- Crisis preparations guidelines only exist 60 percent of the time.
- Nearly one-quarter of those surveyed do not know whether such crisis preparations guidelines exist at all.

"In order for companies to properly prepare for potential risk, planning ahead and establishing a meetings policy that adheres to regulatory requirements is critical," said Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events. "Our white paper explores top meetings management trends, including how companies are implementing tighter controls, embracing risk management techniques, evaluating risk levels and determining gaps in process and plans. At the same time, we found a disparity in views between meeting leaders who have direct or indirect responsibility for a meeting and those doing the actual planning. With this knowledge, companies can review their policies and determine the appropriate courses of action to minimize risks, balance the attendee experience and the focus on realizing the business objectives of their meetings and events." www.amexglobal-businesstravel.com/meetings-and-events



Credits: 1-16 Jason Keen, 17 Visit Orlando

The 2015 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition was held August 8-11 in Detroit. More than 5,400 attendees participated in more than 130 education sessions, networked in the exhibit hall and took part in Detroit Destination Tours and EduTours. **1-6 & 8** More than 2,000 tickets, the highest number ever, were sold to The Classic. The event, starring Lionel Richie (pg. 12), was held at Detroit's crown jewel — the magnificent Fox Theatre. **7** ASAE raised \$35,000 for Alternative for Girls, which helps homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation. **9, 16** At the opening party, attendees at the Henry Ford Museum posed with an Oscar Mayer Weiniemobile and an old-fashioned bike. **10** ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE and ASAE Chair Susan K. Neely, CAE, president and CEO of the American Beverage Association, presented Paul Pomerantz, FASAE, CAE, CEO of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, with this year's Key Award. **11, 12, 14** Attendees enjoy a reception at Hart Plaza in front of the GM Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit that includes the **15** Dodge Memorial Fountain. **13** Participants in the 5K Fun Run/Walk. **17** Visit Orlando hosted a client event — a journey back to the Motown era — and listened to the music of The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, Smoky Robinson and more while enjoying the spectacular views of the Detroit River and Windsor, Canada.

The New Branded Sponsorship

Mary Smith



How to Build Meaningful Exhibitor/Attendee Relationships

The NASCAR approach is out. No longer are nonprofit organizations plastering sponsors' logos throughout events. Instead, sales teams are creating unique sponsorship experiences that are resulting in increased event attendance and engagement for both exhibitors and attendees.

These new branded sponsorships and other event sales opportunities are focused on building meaningful relationships. For example, a sponsor might provide a tangible product or service that connects to the event's theme and adds value to the overall experience. Another sponsor might offer an activity that encourages attendee interaction and, in the process, makes a lasting impression on potential customers.

INNOVATIVE BRANDED SPONSORSHIPS

Because sponsorships must be memorable, you should make them unique to the sponsor. SmithBucklin's sales teams are always helping our client organizations match the right type of exclusive opportunity to the individual sponsor. Our list of sponsorship ideas is constantly growing and evolving. Following are some examples of innovative branded sponsorships:

- **Host an open bar tab.** Invite attendees (with specific interests or demographics) to a happy hour celebrating

a specific topic, such as welcoming new members. The sponsorship would cover the bar tab for the first hour. A popular spinoff is a hosted night cap in the hotel lobby bar. This activity is especially effective on a night when there is no dinner or event scheduled because it brings attendees back together to share their adventures while out on the town.

- **Share the local fun.** Each city or setting boasts its own unique activities, such as hiking, fishing, boating or even skeet-shooting. These are excellent opportunities for sponsors to help attendees make lasting memories from the event. For example, one sponsor offered batting practice at a baseball stadium. Another provided yoga on the beach. These experiences can range from short, early-morning exercises to half-day excursions.
- **Join them on game day.** A challenge for event planners whose attendees are sports enthusiasts is how to keep them engaged during the "big game." Don't fight them, join them. One client organization and a sponsor brought in big-screen televisions, couches and beer, transforming the exhibit hall into a sports bar. Instead of going out to watch an NFL playoff game, the attendees stayed at the event, networking and sharing their common interests in football.



One of the many ways new branded sponsorships are helping to build meaningful relationships is a sponsored open bar where members can network.



Credits: SmithBucklin

Branded sponsorships that help event attendees make meaningful connections and come away with memorable experiences are more likely to achieve the sponsors' goals.

- **Provide VIP status.** Create an "exclusive guest" experience by treating attendees like VIPs. Upon arrival at the hotel, usher attendees into a VIP line for check-in, hand out goody bags filled with swag and offer welcome cocktails — all provided by sponsors. Ask another sponsor to host group transportation to and from the airport. By making attendees feel special on arrival, the sponsors help set the tone for a positive experience throughout the event.
- **Go for comfort.** Sponsorships can be as simple as creating several areas on the trade show floor for attendees to relax and charge their phones. Rather than using folding tables and chairs, bring in sofas, lounge chairs and foot stools. Some sponsors also offer food and beverages. Besides providing a comfortable place for networking, these lounge areas also serve to keep your attendees engaged in the exhibit hall.
- **Be true to their brand.** Sponsors want highly customized experiences created just for their products or services. For example, a company that sells a product to clean vegetables and fruits wanted to demonstrate its benefits for senior living communities during a conference for the communities' managers. As part of a regular breakfast event, we created a live demo that incorporated product usage into the meal. Naturally, the product became part of the conversation at the tables, and the sponsor was thrilled with the opportunity to engage directly with attendees. Branded sponsorships that help event attendees make meaningful connections and come away with memorable

experiences are more likely to achieve the sponsors' goals. Additionally, the lasting impressions that the sponsorships create will benefit your organization as attendees and sponsors commit to returning year after year for this must-attend event.

AC&F

Mary Smith is a Director, Event Services, at SmithBucklin. She leads a team of experienced event management professionals who deliver highly effective meetings, conferences and trade shows for client organizations. She specializes in creating and developing partnerships to increase event engagement. Contact Mary at mmsmith@smithbucklin.com.



A battery recharging station is a simple way that a sponsor can provide a beneficial and meaningful service to conference-goers.



Sponsor-provided big-screen TVs, couches and beer encouraged these attendees to stay at an event and network when the "big game" was on.

Full Speed Ahead

SMERF Meeting Planners Seek 'Instagram-worthy' Experiences With a Close Eye on Budgets

By Maura Keller

A record-breaking 2,000 attendees found plenty of "Instagram-worthy" experiences as they snapped away at The Classic starring Lionel Richie at Detroit's Fox Theatre — a highlight of the 2015 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition.



As the economic recovery lurches along, one thing's for sure: Meeting and event planners in the SMERF arena are riding the recovery wave with a close eye on their clients' purse strings. And, after satisfying the basics of the planning process, SMERF meeting and event pros continually seek creative and innovative ways to dazzle and inspire attendees. After all, a major goal is to entice attendees to come back year after year.

FISCALLY FOCUSED

Social, Military, Educational, Religious and Fraternal groups exhibit varying degrees of budget sensitivity. According to Diane

Tighe, meeting planner and director of conference services at the Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club, the military, religious and educational groups with whom she helps plan events tend to be the most sensitive and require the most creativity when working with concepts to fit their budget.

As Tighe explains, they typically utilize the most basic meeting packages offered and have very little wiggle room to add extras if needed. One avenue they use to stay within budget is providing their own audio-visual support. These groups also will be more creative when scheduling around meal periods, typically offering a half-day event that either includes a breakfast or lunch, avoiding breaks or beverage replenishment.

While secondary education and fraternal groups also have sensitive budgets, they tend to be slightly higher and will utilize more sophisticated packaging when it comes to the use of audio-visual options in their programs. This segment also tends to have more flexibility in catering compared to their SMERF partners. They will schedule full-day meetings and offer breakfast and lunch, as well as beverage breaks.

"Social groups don't always present themselves to be budget-sensitive and may have more in their allocations than other SMERF organizations, however they definitely want to see creativity to get the most for their dollar," Tighe says. "Social groups' budgets will vary as widely as the options available to them."

"Our membership numbers are at a record, and that requires more educational opportunities accomplished through face-to-face meetings."



Sidney Dunn
Executive Director
Fraternity Executives Association
Carmel, IN

As Cassie Brown, CSEP, chief experience officer at TCG Events in Charlotte, North Carolina, explains, SMERF events traditionally have smaller budgets than other corporate events, but not always particularly in the social or education segments. "SMERF markets tend to need to stretch every dollar," Brown says. "And SMERF market planners sometimes are less experienced planners than individuals planning more traditional corporate events. These planners can be much more hands-on and DIY."

Joan Eisenstodt, owner of Eisenstodt Associates, a meetings and hospitality planning firm, agrees. She explains that SMERF is such a broad category, encompassing groups that employ professional meeting planners, who may have one paid staff who does it all, those that employ management companies, and those that rely on volunteers to plan and manage the meetings.

"The budgetary concerns are often because of a lack of knowledge of planning and the consequences of not knowing the right questions to ask and all the provisions for the contract," Eisenstodt says. "Attrition may be an unknown factor to an occasional planner. Or they may not understand that in addition to the room rate that sounds reasonable, there may be multiple taxes and other charges such as hotel or resort fees. They may also not know that meals will incur a taxable service charge, and may have an administrative fee added on. So it's not a matter of different charges; it's knowing or not knowing what those charges may be and budgeting for them."

According to Sidney Dunn, executive director of the Carmel, Indiana-based Fraternity Executives Association, who helps with meeting planning for the association, meetings and events within the fraternal market have grown, somewhat because the fraternal organizations are in a boom period with double-digit growth.

"This requires more regional meetings, larger conventions and leadership academies, more president's retreats, etc.," Dunn says. "Our membership numbers are at a record, and that requires more educational opportunities accomplished through face-to-face meetings." Dunn plans meetings for a group of physicians with an international membership, but the basics of the meetings remain the same.

"Good facilities, good programming and good food and beverage are universal in any type of meeting," Dunn says. "Fraternal



Cassie Brown, CSEP
Chief Experience Officer
TCG Events
Charlotte, NC

“Venues will have to provide facilities that are both friendly to the aging body but also entertain the millennials. Remember, they are looking for something that is Instagram-worthy.”

organizations consider their meetings to be a professional outgrowth of the campus experience.”

Dunn explains that budgets also are always a concern for not-for-profit groups and in the fraternal market, since so many involve college undergraduates, and money is very tight.

“Still, the leadership of chapters attend these meetings because of a need to learn about policies and the social interaction beyond the chapter that such a meeting engenders,” Dunn says.

UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS

While every segment within the meeting and events arena has its own nuances, the basic planning is the same for all types of meetings — including SMERF meetings. The “what” and “where” meetings are held is very much based on the audience, agen-



Credit: GreekYearbook

At the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Joseph Cohn of F.I.R.E. (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education) discusses campus speech codes and more.

da, goals and budget. That’s where the similarities end within the SMERF arena.

“The variables are plentiful between each of these market segments, and a planner needs to be able to understand the entire event and then orchestrate the best setting and food style for the market they’re handling,” Tighe says.

In planning events, organizers have to first identify the pur-

pose of the event and what the client wishes to achieve from hosting it. The planner has to be nimble in order to offer the best environment for the group to achieve their goals.

“These separate SMERF market areas often vary in seating arrangements, presentation styles and overall catering needs,” Tighe says. “Seating arrangements differ widely between the organizations, just as they differ between the types of events. Social events tend to focus more on the look of the room with tables, linen and centerpieces. The other SMERF market segments tend to focus on the seating variables for better discussions and presentation viewing. For presentation events you need to be able to offer time breaks and food delivery and understand that any interruption in a speaker’s presentation will throw off his timing. However in a social event food often is the focus and events are entirely planned around a food theme.

“For each of the types of SMERF meetings — each very different from the others and even different from those in the same broad category — one has to know those factors before considering where to hold the event and how to design and budget for it,” Eisenstodt says.

“It is important to determine the key objective of the meeting and make planning decisions to facilitate that objective,” Brown says. “If networking is the goal, sticking people in a meeting room seated at classroom tables for eight hours doesn’t meet the objective.” Likewise, if an event is geared toward the needs of social or religious organizations or associations, certain modifications may need to meet the specific attributes of that group.

For Brown, SMERF market planning can require more patience from a planner. The decision time can be longer, as many times decisions have to go through layers of people.

“People planning for SMERF organizations also may need more educating on contracts, expectations and vendors,” Brown says. “SMERFs can be more sensitive to every line item of a budget.”

And when it comes to the type of booking, these days short-term booking windows are the norm, and traditionally SMERF markets tend to plan a little earlier than meeting and event professionals have seen in traditional corporate events as of late.

“It isn’t uncommon to see a social event plan a year to a year and half out,” Brown says. “We almost never see that with a corporate event anymore unless it is an annual event.”

As Eisenstodt explains, the educational market is sometimes lumped into education associations that are calendar-dependent based on academic years. For them, booking farther out may mean they are more likely to get the dates and location they want or need. That said, SMERF groups also have to factor in changing conditions, such as the economy that may prohibit people from attending.

“The farther out, the more favorable the cancellation provisions may be for the group,” Eisenstodt says. “The shorter term, cancellation provisions may go into effect immediately on booking.”

Dunn further explains that there are equal advantages and disadvantages with both short and longer booking windows. If the meeting is large and you are required to be in a specific part of the country that year, booking in advance can be a necessity so as not to be shut out. However, for some smaller meetings, one can often find a “window of opportunity” at a particular property or area that matches well with the type of meeting to be held.”

Fraternal organizations typically are very rate sensitive due to the large college undergraduate component and so gravitate to Southern-tier cities in the summer with their conventions. “They also look for cities with good transportation, more competitive room rates and food and beverage pricing,” Dunn says.

Often with SMERF, the extensive involvement of volunteers in the planning and management also plays a key role in the meeting and event planning for these groups.

As Tighe explains, social events do tend to have a longer planning process as there are often many hands in the planning pot and several committees involved. This requires more time to make decisions on overall event needs. The other market segments vary depending on how much space they require with their meeting needs. Often groups require several breakout rooms to fit their meeting requirements. This will add to a longer booking window, simply to find a location that can offer the variety of options to fit their program. The simpler the event in any of these markets can equate to a shorter booking window.

“Volunteers also need to be trained in the nuances of how hotels operate, why costs are what they are, and the time lines for each aspect of planning and execution,” Eisenstodt says. “With one client for whom I helped design two meetings a year, as part of the planning process, we created a game for them to guess and learn the price of meals and AV equipment. It allowed some fun to be built into the ‘how’ and ‘why’ that helped the group plan better with more information.”

Another issue with some SMERF groups is the political climate. Some SMERF groups would be unable to meet in cities or hotels that pass laws that are unfavorable to the position that group represents. Or, for example, in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, there may be military reunion groups that might find meeting at the hotels branded by one candidate objectionable.

“SMERF groups need to consider more than rates, dates and space when booking and look at the implications of who they are, what they do and stand for, and where they meet,” Eisenstodt says.

AN EYE ON THE HORIZON

As social, military, education, religious and fraternal organizations strive to thrive in our nation, many recognize that they need to attract millennials and other younger members to keep afloat. So what are SMERFs doing to attract the younger demographic to their events or their organizations as a whole?



Credit: Deborah Triplet

Attendees woke up their bodies and their brains during an educational session at a SMERF event staged by TCG Events in North Carolina.

“People will always want to connect for milestone events. But as the population ages, the ability to accommodate multigenerational needs will become increasingly important,” Brown says. “Venues will have to provide facilities that are both friendly to the aging body but also entertain the millennials who are constantly looking for a new active experience. Attracting millennials is all about providing a unique experience. Remember, they are looking for something that is Instagram-worthy.”

Eisenstodt recently read that millennials have overtaken boomers in population numbers and hotels are now catering to millennials.

“Finding a venue that is suitable for multiple generations is not easy since boomers and some veteran and silent generation people will continue to attend meetings,” Eisenstodt says. The challenge for SMERF planners — where the audience is likely to be employees who will be more in the similar age range — include:

- Finding a balance in programming and entertainment that meets the needs of multiple generations.
- Ensuring that venues are more than ADA-compliant.
- Staying relevant to the needs of changing demographics — beyond generation, looking at religious and ethnic differences as the population changes.
- Pricing sensitively, as many millennials are paying off college loans; while many boomers are living solely on Social Security.

Of course fraternities and sororities have attracted millennials for the past 15 years. It is the age group that is filtering through their ranks right now.

“Soon, the next generation, post-millennial, will be on our campuses,” Dunn reminds. “The challenge will be to engage them with programming that meets their heightened use of technology with the same information that all groups need about the organization. Ours is a people business, and without human interaction, the fraternal experience is diminished.

The goal is to get people to your meeting and make it interesting and informative,” says Dunn. “Quality programming brings people to meetings, good facilities make it easier to attract, and ease of travel would be the ‘third leg’ of the meeting planner’s stool.”

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CONVENTION CENTERS

- Cobo Center**
Detroit, MI
- Colorado Convention Center**
Denver, CO
- Hawaii Convention Center**
Honolulu, HI
- Las Vegas Convention Center**
Las Vegas, NV
- Miami Beach Convention Center**
Miami Beach, FL
- Music City Center**
Nashville, TN
- New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center**
New Orleans, LA
- Orange County Convention Center**
Orlando, FL
- Phoenix Convention Center**
Phoenix, AZ

HOTELS AND RESORTS

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- The Broadmoor**
Colorado Springs, CO
- Caesars Palace Las Vegas**
Las Vegas, NV
- Foxwoods Resort Casino**
Mashantucket, CT
- Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center**
National Harbor, MD
- Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center**
Nashville, TN
- Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center**
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- Hyatt Regency Orlando**
Orlando, FL
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Las Vegas, NV
- MGM Grand Hotel & Casino**
Las Vegas, NV
- The Mirage**
Las Vegas, NV
- Mohegan Sun**
Uncasville, CT
- New York Hilton-Midtown**
New York, NY
- Omni Dallas Hotel**
Dallas, TX
- Omni Nashville Hotel**
Nashville, TN
- The Palmer House Hilton**
Chicago, IL
- South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa**
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- The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino**
Las Vegas, NV
- Wynn Las Vegas**
Las Vegas, NV



Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

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305-539-3071 or 800-933-8448 x 3071 • info@MiamiMeetings.com • www.MiamiMeetings.com

CITYWIDE FACTS & FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 48,000
Meeting Space: 150,000 sf
+500,000 gross sf of exhibit space.

SPECIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES

Miami International Airport boasts new terminals and a high-speed train to whisk travelers from plane to baggage claim and on to our new intermodal center for rental cars, taxis and limos, and public transportation in one convenient place. New Metrorail service goes directly to downtown Miami.

Miami is the place for your event if you want your attendees to love their time with you and rave about it back home.

Miami has the best weather, the hottest restaurants, the hippest shops, the most accommodating hotels and the most beautiful people anywhere in the world.

Everywhere you turn there's something to explore — a colorful burst of rare and exotic orchids, a brightly colored macaw, a brand new Spanish restaurant, a thought-provoking art exhibit. Miami is the only city in America with two sparkling new performing arts centers, and the downtown Miami area is a cultural hub — home to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and the new Pérez Art Museum Miami.

The Miami Beach Convention Center renovation and new 60,000-sf ballroom will be completed by January 2018 with a proposed 800-room hotel by January 2019; and the new Marriott Marquis Miami Worldcenter project in downtown Miami will be starting soon with a planned 1,800-room hotel and 100,000 sf of exhibit space. So if you're looking for exciting new venues, we're the only city you should be considering.

Imagine the meeting your attendees will want to come to. It's so Miami.

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New 60,000 sq. ft. ballroom • 81 breakout rooms with more than 190,000 sq. ft. of space
500,000 sq. ft. of renovated exhibit space • 800-room headquarter hotel

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Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

301 East Ocean Boulevard, Suite 1900, Long Beach, California 90802
Steve Goodling, President and CEO • steveg@longbeachcvb.org • 562-495-8350
Fax: 562-435-5653 • www.visitlongbeach.com

Nestled along the Pacific Ocean in the center of Southern California, Long Beach is a watersport paradise. All of the attractions of Los Angeles and Orange County — downtown LA, Hollywood, Universal Studios and Disneyland — are just minutes from Long Beach's scenic downtown waterfront.

WORLD-CLASS ATTRACTIONS

Long Beach features its own world-class attractions: The Queen Mary and the Aquarium of the Pacific, Rainbow Harbor, The Outlet Center at the Pike, Shoreline Village, plus four distinctive museums, two historic ranchos and nearly 12 miles of scenic beachfront, inland waterways and bays.

Long Beach is pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly and is ranked as one of the "Most Walkable Neighborhoods in America." Long Beach Transit also offers free Passport shuttle buses throughout the downtown area.

LONG BEACH CONVENTION & ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

Located in the center of the city's downtown waterfront, the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center features more than 400,000 sf of modern, flexible exhibit and special event space. Within eight blocks surrounding the center, visitors discover attractions, shopping, entertainment, nightlife and more than 125 quality restaurants serving cuisines from around the world. Well-lighted walkways and promenades provide

stunning oceanfront vistas where visitors can enjoy the vibrant blending of big city amenities alongside the casual and welcoming atmosphere of a seaside resort.

A recent \$40 million modernization of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center has created a new model for the contemporary convention center of the future. This dynamic repositioning is designed to give guests a warm, stylish and welcoming social experience. With the needs of today's convention attendees in mind, the center's lobbies and hallways have been enhanced to create mini meeting spots and networking pods where attendees can sit, talk and socialize. Free Wi-Fi in these public areas allows attendees to go online to work and connect with their offices.

HOT NEW EVENT VENUE

The Pacific Room in the Long Beach Arena has become one of Southern California's hottest new meeting and special event venues. With 45,000 sf of floor space and a built-in professional LED stage lighting and sound system, the Pacific Room provides an intimate environment for dinners, concerts and special events for up to 5,500 people, and it is fully customizable to match any planner's imagination.

GETTING THERE IS EASY

Getting to Long Beach has never been easier with service from three major airports. LAX and Orange County Airports are less than 30 minutes away, and Long Beach Airport, which recently underwent a \$140 million renovation, is 10 minutes from downtown.

AC&F



CITYWIDE FACTS & FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 4,688
Hotels/Resorts: 24
Meeting Space: Hotels: 219,000+sf / Offsite: 500,000+sf

CONVENTION CENTER FYI

Total Square Feet: 400,000
3 Exhibit Halls: 224,000 sf
Meeting Rooms: 34
Pacific Room: 45,000 sf
Grand Ballroom: 20,456 sf
Promenade Ballroom: 13,200 sf
Seaside Ballroom: 6,317 sf
Terrace Theater: 3,000 seats
Center Theater: 800 seats
Long Beach Arena: 13,000 seats



The Waterfront Collection

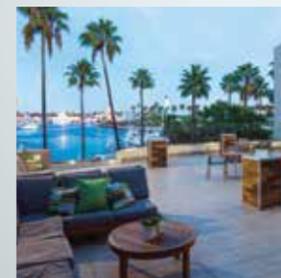
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AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC



THE PACIFIC ROOM



QUEEN MARY



New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau

2020 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70130

Cara Banasch, MBA, Senior Vice President of Business Development & Strategy

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Imagine meeting in a city where cultures collide in a brilliant explosion of flavors, emotions and sounds.

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, home to Creole cuisine and a place rich with history and culture.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS & IMPROVEMENTS

As New Orleans approaches its tricentennial in 2018, the city is bustling with new developments and improvements.

From the expanding Bio-Medical District to the historic French Quarter, New Orleans is one of America's most walkable cities boasting more than 22,000

hotel rooms within a two-mile radius of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (MCCNO).

Take advantage of the 1.1 million+ sf of contiguous exhibit space at MCCNO or host your event in one of New Orleans' one-of-a-kind venues such as Blain Kern's Mardi Gras World or The National World War II Museum, which is nearing completion of a \$320 million expansion.

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has embarked on a major redevelopment of 47 acres of property upriver from the center.

The Convention Center District Development Project will feature a linear park, headquarters hotel, music venue and much more. The project will revitalize the area benefiting residents and visitors alike.

Louis Armstrong International Airport continues to add new direct flights as it expands to add a new world-class terminal on the north side of the existing airport. The \$826 million project is slated for completion by the city's tricentennial celebrations in 2018.

A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

After an engaging day of sessions, networking and education, take to the streets and absorb all that New Orleans has to offer.

Take a haunted history tour, enjoy one of more than 140 festivals throughout the year or head out to the swamp for an alligator encounter. Step outside the French Quarter and Follow Your NOLA through the up-and-coming Bywater, Faubourg Marigny and Uptown neighborhoods. And don't miss out on the 1,400 restaurants throughout the city.

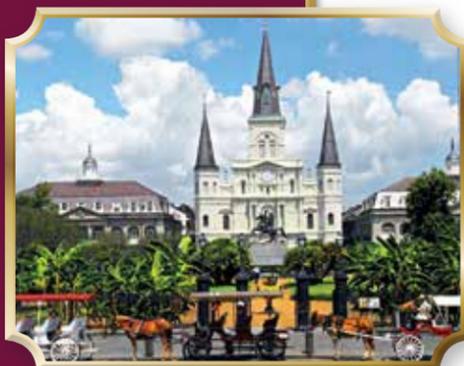
Be sure to come early or stay late. Take the kids to the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas or enjoy a romantic cruise on the mighty Mississippi River. From rich flavors of culinary excellence to the intoxicating sounds of jazz, funk and blues music flowing through the streets, the Crescent City is truly a feast for the senses.

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

In New Orleans, you will always find a little *lagniappe* — something extra — to go alongside your meeting. Whether it's a brass band welcoming your guests in the airport or a second line out of your closing session, meet in New Orleans and *laissez les bon temps rouler* — let the good times roll!

Your attendees will thank you.

AC&F



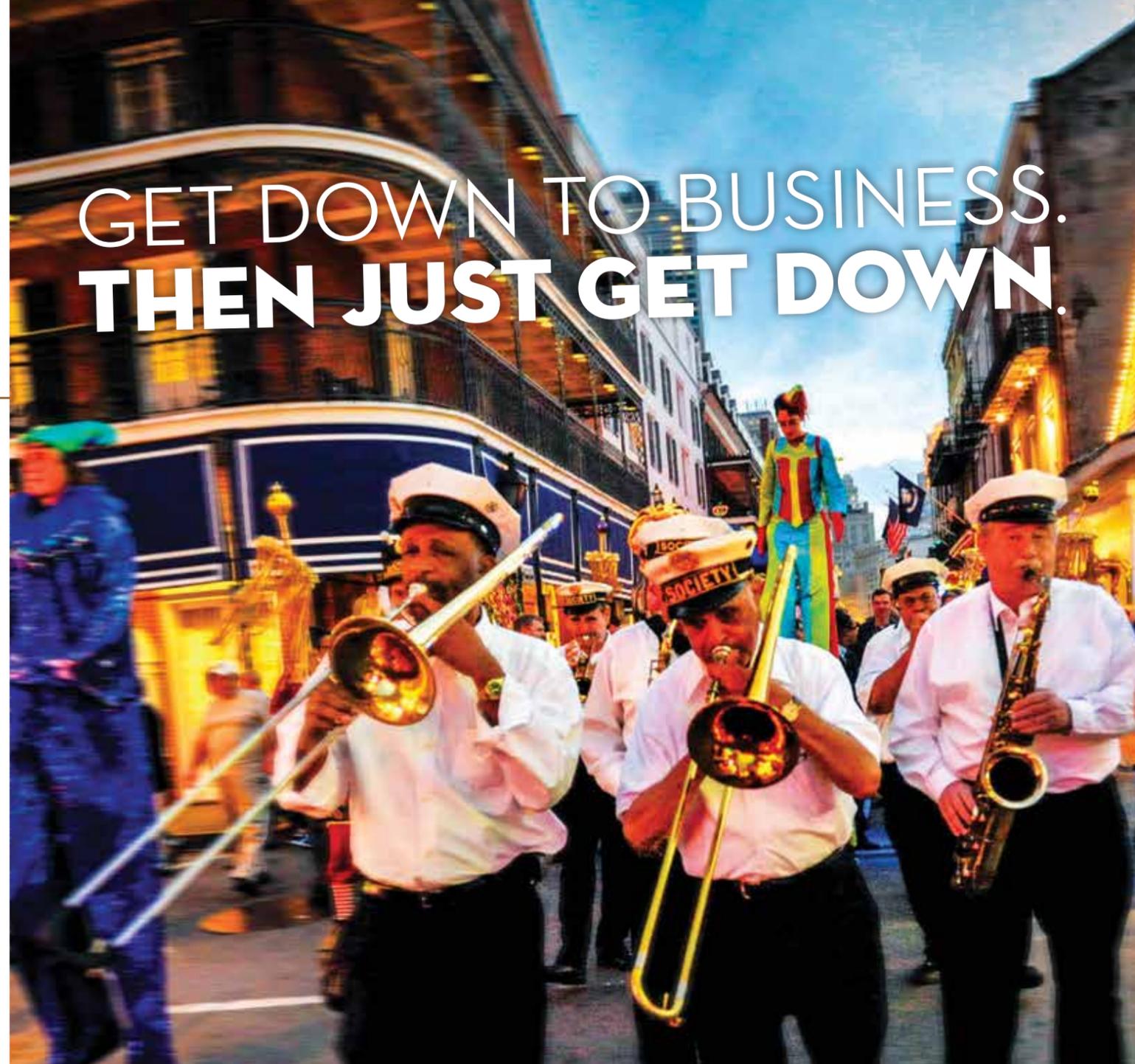
CITYWIDE FACTS & FEATURES

ORLEANS PARISH

Guest Rooms: 24,185
Hotels/Resorts: 124
Meeting Space: 4 million+ sf
(including MCCNO)

SPECIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center District Development Project will revitalize 47 acres of the surrounding area and feature a new linear park, headquarters hotel, venue space and much more.



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Bringing your meeting or convention to New Orleans means you have access to one of America's largest exhibition spaces—over 1.1 million contiguous square feet. It means coming to a city that knows how to do big events. It means staying in some of the nation's finest hotels with meeting spaces designed just for you. It means you're coming to the home of the hospitality pros. And it also means when business is done, you can loosen your tie or kick off your heels in a city like no other. It means a walkable city with world-class cuisine and a chance to toast your success in the place that does business better than anywhere else.

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San Jose is experiencing explosive growth. The internationally diverse city will surprise attendees and visitors with the destination's cuisine, vibrant nightlife, major sporting events and unique attractions. Explore San Jose with the travel app Utrip, catch an Earthquakes soccer game at the new Avaya Stadium and grab a craft cocktail at one of the new lounges in the SoFA District. San Jose offers attendees the quintessential Silicon Valley experience: serious business done in a relaxed atmosphere. Attendees will experience a range of post-convention activities in downtown San Jose with more than 250 dining and nightlife options, contemporary museums, edgy galleries and vibrant performing arts and entertainment — all within walking distance from the recently renovated San Jose McEnery Convention Center.

The convention center's \$130 million makeover introduced an additional 169,957 sf of flexible ballroom and meeting space with a hip, modern design and state-of-the-art technology — bringing the new grand total to 367,526 sf of flexible space.

THREE REASONS TO MEET IN SAN JOSE

1. Wicked Smart and Wickedly Fast — Upon arrival to San Jose, attendees are imbued by the contagious energy of innovators, thinkers and dreamers acting as the driving force behind America's smartest city. The capital of Silicon Valley is home to 6,600 technology companies and has helped San Jose forge an unrivaled culture as the epicen-

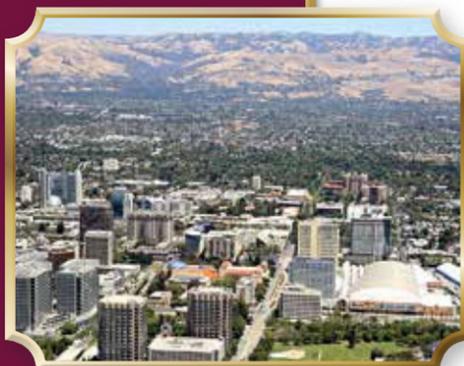
ter of innovation. Maximize your connectivity capabilities with Wickedly Fast Free Wi-Fi at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC) and within downtown San Jose.

2. Bright Ideas Beyond the Breakouts — Great ideas come in unexpected places, and San Jose's revitalized downtown offers a wealth of stimulating attractions and social settings to charge the conversation beyond the breakout session. With a vast selection of alfresco restaurants and cultural spaces, downtown's atmosphere cultivates innovative thinking.

3. Sustainably Savvy San Jose — San Jose's visitor industry is putting its best carbon footprint forward with sustainable contributions from the convention center, airport (SJC) and downtown hotel properties. San Jose is an environmentally progressive city, and Team San Jose-managed facilities recycle, reuse and repurpose 89 percent of all material waste.

HOTEL & VENUE UPDATES

From sold-out soccer matches to international sporting events and corporate affairs, the 18,000-seat **Avaya Stadium** accommodates groups of all sizes. **SoFA Market** anchors the SoFA District, the visual arts and entertainment district of downtown San Jose. **The Westin San Jose** brand has unveiled an adaptive reuse of the historic Sainte Claire Hotel. The 171-room hotel is equipped with 10,000 sf of meeting space. **Fairmont San Jose** completed a \$524,000 upgrade to its main building breakout rooms and **Hilton San Jose** completed a \$50,000 renovation to the hotel's patio area. AC&F



CITYWIDE FACTS & FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 8,000
Hotels/Resorts: 50+
Meeting Space: Combined meeting space of 550,000 sf

SPECIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES

San Jose is the gateway to Northern California and provides attendees with central access for visiting San Francisco, wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains, sandy beaches and world-class golf courses.



Grows On Trees **HERE**

Smart people meet in San Jose, the smartest city in America - as named by the Today Show. San Jose leads the nation in patent generations, and the Valley's palpable sense of innovative dreams turned to revolutionary realities, are enough to inspire any group visiting the Capital of Silicon Valley.

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SanJose
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Anaheim's temperate, year-round climate creates the perfect opportunity to take advantage of outdoor space, day or night.

The Anaheim Convention Center's Grand Plaza is an outdoor environment that can be utilized year-round for a wide variety of events, meetings and gatherings. Here, groups can dine alfresco, listen to concerts or attend receptions and exhibitions. The 100,000-sf Grand Plaza enhances the open, campus-like space surrounding the Anaheim Convention Center (ACC) and flows between the Hilton Anaheim and Anaheim Marriott hotels. The area also features a special Transit Plaza for efficient transportation flow.



CITYWIDE FACTS & FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 20,000
Meeting Space: 1.6 million sf at the Anaheim Convention Center

SPECIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES

The Anaheim Convention Center is situated at the epicenter of a walkable campus, connecting the convention center to multiple hotels, offering a secure and comfortable environment for attendees.

NEW ANAHEIM HOTELS

Anaheim hotel development is moving at a vigorous pace. Three hotels opened in 2014 with five more scheduled to open later in 2015. The new additions will offer Anaheim area convention and leisure travelers a diverse range of options.

ANAHEIM CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION

This spring, the Anaheim Convention Center broke ground on a 200,000-sf expansion that will add flexible space giving groups with multiple tracks a variety of meeting, exhibit and dining options. The construction is set for completion in 2017.

While the expansion is underway, the Anaheim Convention Center offers plenty of configuration options for indoor and outdoor events, with 1.6 million sf of space and 51 meeting rooms.

The ACC is one of the first centers in the country to offer free wireless Internet in all areas of the facility and has partnered with Smart City Networks on a multimillion-dollar network system upgrade that will make it one of the most technically advanced convention centers in the U.S. Go to www.accexpansion.com/learnmore for additional information.

COMPLIMENTARY ONE-STOP-SHOP SERVICES

When you work with Visit Anaheim, you'll find everything you need under one roof. The sales and client services teams provide customized support to assist you with every aspect of planning. You can find help with securing necessary permits, finding the right contractors, getting the best rates and making sure attendees get VIP treatment.

Best of all, Visit Anaheim's services are completely free, no strings attached. Visit Anaheim is ready to help and ensure that planning is painless, and your meeting is a success.

DOWNTOWN ANAHEIM

Downtown Anaheim is enjoying an epic revitalization, adding unique dining and entertainment options to the destination.

The Anaheim Packing District includes a restaurant and brewery in the restored Packard Building, a former car showroom; the beautiful two-acre Farmers Park; and the restored citrus Packing House featuring 20+ artisan eateries with live music on the Mezzanine Stage every weekend.

Cooks Chapel, located inside the Anaheim Packing House, is a community kitchen and private event venue.

AC&F

200,000 sq. ft. of flexible, multipurpose space on two levels

100,000 sq. ft. of column-free space on level two

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Anaheim
2017



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Wynn Las Vegas and Encore

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Steve Wynn's pair of award-winning resorts continues to set the highest standard for luxury experiences on the Las Vegas Strip, offering the latest and most sophisticated options in accommodations, fine dining and entertainment.

Discover more than 260,000 sf of expertly planned event space throughout Wynn Las Vegas and Encore; uniquely configured meeting rooms and ballrooms that easily can be tailored to the requirements of groups large or small. Whether you choose their plush, state-of-the-art conference rooms or more expansive spaces that offer dramatic floor-to-ceiling windows and open-air terraces adjacent to the Tom Fazio-designed Wynn Golf Club, you'll quickly discern that Wynn's highly talented Convention Services team has anticipated every need.

your meetings have concluded. Catering choices are likewise considered, with a wide-ranging, customizable menu of restaurant-quality dishes that will have you rethinking conference cuisine.

SO MUCH MORE

Looking out through the floor-to-ceiling windows of your meeting room, perhaps you'd like to escape the convention floor and lounge next to the crystal-blue waters of the resort's eight swimming pools, or host a lunch party in an adjacent private cabana? If you're longing to indulge in a bit of shopping, don't miss Manolo Blahnik, Rolex, Hermès, a pair of Chanel boutiques and so much more. And schedule that much-needed massage at one of the resort's two award-winning spas.

And when the sun goes down, get ready to be truly dazzled. Treat your clients to Steve Wynn's ShowStoppers, a thrilling song-and-dance spectacle that celebrates the best of American musical theatre; or be awestruck by *Le Rêve – The Dream*, the in-the-round aquatic wonder that combines dreamy fantasy with breathtaking acrobatics. For the ultimate in Las Vegas nightlife, finish your evening at XS, the most celebrated nightclub on the planet.

Sumptuous, spacious and well appointed—these are the thoughts that will spring to mind when you first glimpse any of the 2,716 rooms and suites at Wynn or the 2,034 rooms at the all-suite Encore at the end of a busy day. The latter is currently updating each room to include larger nightstands, 55-inch HD televisions and pop-up tech consoles for easy access to plugs and USB ports to effortlessly charge devices. This refreshment will be complete in the fall of 2015.

FINE DINING

Chief among the reasons Wynn and Encore have garnered more *Forbes Travel Guide* Five Star Awards than any casino resort in the world is the slate of spectacularly talented chefs helming a tantalizing array of casual- and fine-dining restaurants. Whether you're craving luscious (and certified) Kobe beef at SW Steakhouse, freshly caught Hawaiian fish at Lakeside, langoustines plucked from the Mediterranean at Bartolotta Ristorante di Mare, or Steve Wynn's favorite pizza at Allegro, Wynn and Encore's boundless menu of culinary options will create memories you'll savor long after



FACTS & FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 2,716 rooms and suites at Wynn and 2,034 at Encore
Meeting Space: 260,000 sf

SPECIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES

Wynn and Encore offer high-tech support, a full-service business center, high-speed Internet access, spacious sunlit meeting spaces, state-of-the-art audio-visual capabilities and three technically supported stages.



FOR US,
BUSINESS WILL ALWAYS
BE PERSONAL.

Wynn | Encore
LAS VEGAS

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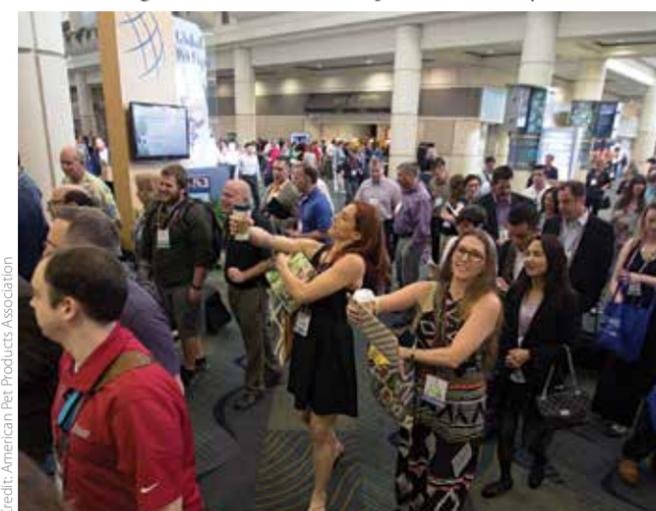


1-3: The International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis began soliciting survey feedback from Congress attendees last year "to see exactly where we should be trending." 4,5: Around conference time, The American Society on Aging promotes "one particular topic that we know is going to be a big draw."

much of the upcoming convention's content. "Lately we've been trying to focus on one topic at a time," says Linda Jones, marketing director, educational events, American Society on Aging (ASA). "We have our weekly newsletter, and also around conference time we'll do an extra promotion, and in those materials we'll focus on one particular topic that we know is going to be a big draw. Then we note the sessions and events that are going to be addressing that topic, with links to more information." Among the topics that are receiving strong attention in the field of aging are Medicare-related issues, elder abuse, preparing for an aging population at social and governmental levels, and Alzheimer's. "Alzheimer's is always a big topic at our conference, and I will do specific (marketing) messages (for sessions) on Alzheimer's or other types of dementia," says Jones. "I will also ask for help from our partners at the Alzheimer's Association or send to lists of Alzheimer's care facilities to segment (the messaging) to that particular audience, and that tends to work fairly well."

CONTENT INPUT

Reflecting the content decision process of many associations,



The American Pet Products Association's Global Pet Expo in Orlando last March drew nearly 7,000 pet product retailers.

the ASA relies on a call for papers and peer review to determine the sessions at its Aging in America Conference. "Every once in a while we will override the peer reviewers' decisions, but only if we see a really critical topic that needs to be addressed or if we happen to know a certain presenter is really good," says Jones. Some associations also rely on member surveys for input on assembling highly relevant content.

The APPA, for example, supplements its call for speakers with a post-show attendee survey to determine topics for next year's Academy. "We have about 6,000 buyers that come into the show, and we get a couple hundred survey responses. It's not a huge number, but the people who take time to fill out the surveys really are interested in giving their feedback and helping us form the show, so we get some pretty strong ideas from them," Darmohraj explains.

Keeping these questionnaires relatively brief is one key to maximizing participation. "We got to a point, seven or eight years ago, where our post-show survey was 40 questions, and we're down to 20 now," he says. "We found that we get a much better response when we drill down and ask the questions that we feel are the most important." Some well-intentioned attendees may start to complete the survey, but if they don't see the progress meter on the screen move fast enough, they may abandon their effort, Darmohraj observes. Surveys also send an implicit message to members that

"In 2015 we had more than double the sessions that we had in 2013. That's (based on) a direct response from the retailers. They're coming to the show not only to see product, but they're also looking for ways to improve their business."



Andrew Darmohraj
Executive Vice President & COO
American Pet Products Association
Greenwich, CT

The Big Draw

Patrick Simms

Planners Reveal Content Marketing Strategies That Drive Attendance

Even at trade shows, where the exhibition component is the major draw, educational content remains a strong attendance-builder — but only if planners have a comprehensive — and strategic — marketing and promotional plan in place to keep the buzz going.

The American Pet Products Association's (APPA) Global Pet Expo, which took place in March at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center, includes an Academy with 29 sessions covering numerous topics of interest to the nearly 7,000 pet product retailers who attend. "The Academy has definitely grown," remarks Andrew Darmohraj, executive vice president and COO of the APPA. "In 2015 we had more than double the sessions that we had in 2013. That's (based on) a direct response from the retailers. They're coming to the show not only to see product, but they're also looking for ways to improve their business and the way they run their business."

Session topics at the 2015 Academy included The Ten Commandments of Merchandising, Pet Food Information, Going Green, and Surviving and Thriving in Retail. Why Competition Is Good For You was a particularly hot topic, "because it's very easy to say that big-box retailers can be damaging to independent retailers, but if you run your business the right way, you can be just as competitive," Darmohraj explains. Also very well attended was Marketing to Millennials Using Social Media, given the timeliness of the topic.

ONE TOPIC AT A TIME

While a broad spectrum of relevant content is definitely a selling point to potential attendees, content marketing must be focused on the topics and speakers that are likely to most spark the interest of the core membership, or a particular segment. It is quite possible to overwhelm one's audience with messages that promote too



Louise Bannon
Director, Marketing & Membership
International Society on
Thrombosis and Haemostasis
Carrboro, NC

“We are able to evaluate the success of our tactics via online analytics and statistics from those who open our emails and click through to additional information, and evaluating where most of our traffic comes from to the meeting website.”

the organization values their opinions and is deeply interested in meeting their educational needs at future conventions.

Lisa Astorga, CMP, director of meetings at the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH), sees the survey as a “formal communication” from meeting presidents to the membership. About a year ago, the ISTH sent out its first survey, which received “a great response,” she says. “The meeting presidents are keen on being very inclusive, which means reaching out to all of those that are contributing to the field to see exactly where we should be trending.”

ADDRESSING DIVERSE INTERESTS

Achieving a balanced mix of topics is easier for some associations than others.

In general, the more professionally diverse the membership base, the more challenging it will be to answer to everyone’s interests. The Global Pet Expo, for example, focuses its content mainly on the independent retailers, who comprise the segment of the membership “most looking for education,” notes Darmohraj, “so pretty much all of our content is geared toward them. We have distributors, international buyers and mass-market retailers. We might do one or two sessions geared toward those attendees, but the majority are for the independents.”

In contrast, the ASA members looking for education are much more diverse. The Society’s 5,000 members include practitioners, educators, administrators, policymakers, businesspeople, researchers and students. The multidisciplinary audience is concerned with various aspects of aging: physical, emotional, social, economic and spiritual. “That’s my blessing and my challenge,” says Jones. “The multidisciplinary aspect is actually something that interests a lot of people because they do like to (engage) other points of view. So people really like that about our conference, but at the same time it is difficult to be everything to everyone. It definitely is challenging to make sure we get a good mix across the board of sessions that represent all of our members’ interests.”

NEW MARKETS AND MARKETING CHANNELS

From a marketing perspective, the ASA often faces the chal-

lenge of making a case for the value of education on aging to professionals in a variety of fields. “It’s about working with those core audiences, but it’s also about looking for new audiences, new markets that might be interested in our content,” says Jones. “We try to convince them that this is important information: Even though you don’t necessarily see yourself in the ‘aging field,’ this is something that’s probably going to impact you at some point in your career, and it’s good to know.” Among the types of professionals the ASA has reached out to are elder law attorneys, financial professionals and recreational professionals, as well as physicians and healthcare administrators. “It’s just a matter of seeing who would really benefit from this content, and in which cases are we just spinning our wheels. There is a lot of trial and error,” she says.

Invariably there also will be some trial and error in exploring marketing channels for educational content, as an association has to determine the best avenues to reach its members and potential members. Unlike many associations, for example, the APPA continues to use direct mail along with e-marketing. The independent retailers receive a brochure with educational session descriptions and speaker bios. Many are small-business owners, and the association has found that the physical pieces still resonate with them. “Obviously everyone has smartphones and computers now, but we’re never sure which touchpoint is going to be the one that gets them to pay attention,” says Darmohraj. “So we want to make sure that we take every opportunity to get our content in front of them. I’ve actually seen people come into the building with those seminar brochures in their hand, so they definitely use them.”

For some organizations, direct mail is eschewed for budgetary reasons, and digital marketing takes the spotlight. “We’re definitely doing more with social media,” says Jones. “We’re looking into LinkedIn advertising, for example, and we’re definitely increasing our presence on Twitter and Facebook as well. That’s something I continually research.” E-marketing has been honed into an art form by many associations, and like social media, it is an immediate way to get the conference content in view of potential attendees. “We’ll start to market the information as soon as we have it,”

“Obviously the first components that are placed are the plenary session speakers, so as soon as they’re confirmed we start to promote them in our email as well as on our website.”



Lisa Astorga, CMP
Director of Meetings
International Society on
Thrombosis and Haemostasis
Carrboro, NC

says Astorga. “Obviously the first components that are placed are the plenary session speakers, so as soon as they’re confirmed we start to promote them in our email as well as on our website.”

Louise Bannon, director of marketing and membership for ISTH, shares her top three tips for email marketing:

1. Quality content is key; and don’t underestimate the power of a well-crafted subject line.
2. Choose the right format for the e-communication (HTML vs. rich text, limited use of images, visual appeal).
3. Look for measurable results with the use of trackable links.

“These tips have allowed us to continue to build our program and increase the number of attendees at meetings, participation in educational opportunities and overall member engagement.”

E-communication is just one channel in the multipronged approach the ISTH uses to promote its conference content, along with a multitude of social media sites, websites (ISTH and meeting-specific), advertising, online calendar inclusions and collateral.

The importance of tip No. 3 in guiding the marketing strategy can’t be overemphasized. “We are able to evaluate the success of our tactics via online analytics and statistics from those who open our emails and click through to additional information, and evaluating where most of our traffic comes from to the meeting website,” says Bannon. “Based on those numbers, we make marketing discussions accordingly.” The ASA also tracks the success of promotions through discount codes, making use of them “as much as possible,” says Jones. “So we have special messages going out to particular groups, and then we’ll be able to track who actually registered based on that particular promotion.”

PROMOTIONAL MESSAGING

Promotional messaging from the association itself is, of course, indispensable, but some of the most impactful messages come from other sources, such as “evangelist” members and conference speakers. The ASA, for example, seeks to feature conference marketing messages from its board members and broader membership base. “We will ask each board member to send (a message) digitally to their contact list,” says Jones. “Sometimes they want to customize it and have it in their own words, saying ‘I went to the session and this is what I got out of it.’ But many times, especially in the case of members beyond the board, I’ll craft a message for them. And nine times out of 10 they send it out verbatim. I’ve learned that you’ve got to make it as easy as possible for them.”

To introduce members to conference speakers and whet their appetite for the content, the APPA sends out short video previews created by some of its speakers, discussing their upcoming session. “We also have some of the speakers blog so that the retailers can see what they’re going to be talking about, and then the blogs are very prominently located on our website once we have the full content in place,” says Darmohraj. It is not generally a challenge, he notes, to get speakers to contribute to the promotional effort in

“It’s about working with those core audiences, but it’s also about looking for new audiences, new markets that might be interested in our content.”



Linda Jones
Marketing Director
Educational Events
American Society on Aging
San Francisco, CA

these ways. “Because a lot of them are already in the pet industry, they’re very excited to be part of the program, and they feel very strongly about their session. So (they’re very amenable) to doing a couple of hundred words for a blog post, or to record themselves for a minute or two. We’ve actually gotten a really good response.”

Post conference, sessions captured on video are a convenience to members, who can access sessions they missed or review the content. But they also serve a promotional function, allowing those who did not attend, including those who have never attended the convention, to become engaged with the kind of content offered. Care should be taken, however, in selecting the most engaging sessions for this purpose. Jones observes that “sometimes a speaker who is really dynamic in person is not always going to have that same (impact) in the online format. So we’ve had a few cases where we’ve tried to convert sessions, and sometimes it’s successful, sometimes it’s not.”

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

While associations work hard to develop and promote engaging content for their target audience, they need not work in silos. Forging partnerships with each other can certainly be advantageous, where such a partnerships would lead to improved content offerings for both memberships.

The APPA, for example, runs the Global Pet Expo along with the Pet Industry Distributors Association. “The content people on our side get together with the content people on their side, and we decide which sessions we’re going to do the following year,” Darmohraj explains.

The ISTH has partnership-building as an ongoing goal: “We place a huge importance on building relationships with related societies and those organizations in relevant specialties that would fit naturally with our mission and would offer opportunities for cross-educational offerings and more,” says Bannon. And the ultimate goal goes beyond education and content delivery: “Our primary focus is to build a collaborative community of clinicians, researchers and educators from around the world who are interested in exchanging ideas, insights and information in the quest to improve patients’ lives.”

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Learning

to Succeed

The Changing Landscape of Continuing Education and Certification

By Karen Brost

Annual conferences present the ideal opportunity for attendees to gain new knowledge and learn about the latest developments in their industry or profession. But the challenge for conference organizers is to find the best way to reach those attendees and help them get the maximum benefit from their educational experiences. For Clark Ebbert, director of conference education for the National Apartment Association (NAA), the key is offering a variety of options that will accommodate multiple learning styles. “Our programs include sessions with different durations,” he explains. “The majority are 60 minutes long, but we also offer deep dive sessions (half day) and some short, 30-minute sessions.”

CONTINUING EDUCATION VS. CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Mike Doane is the marketing manager for CadmiumCD, a company that builds technology for educational conferences. He makes a distinction between continuing education and continuous education. “Continuing education is what everyone calls adult learning. It kind of has this stiff connotation that you’re going to a classroom, you’re going to sit there and someone is going to speak at you. You’re going to write some notes, then you’re going to go take a test or something like that afterwards. That’s not really learning. That’s just taking classes and then regurgitating knowledge, whereas continuous education is more about being involved with the learning. It’s about active engagement with other adults or other continuous learners. It’s not only about memorizing a bunch of material. It’s more about knowing where to find the knowledge that you need and collaborating with others.

“A couple days at a conference yields far too much information to be memorized and retained,” Doane explains in his company’s white paper on the subject. “Attendees take part in so many sessions that much of the information is soon forgotten or lost after they return to the office. This is where continuous education comes in. Continuous education is the idea that, in a society founded upon communication and technology, knowledge is available and accessible at any time.” He says that today’s attendees want content that’s stored in the cloud so it is instantly accessible from their smartphones, tablets and PCs anywhere at any time.

KEEPING ATTENDEES ENGAGED

Ebbert described how he keeps attendees involved in the sessions. “Our presenters engage attendees with polling, Q&A and other techniques, right from the start of the session. I see that other associations are using software platforms, and I see NAA moving in that direction within the next 18 months.”

“We’ve been expanding our (event) app to include live polling so attendees can interact with different questions a speaker puts

“One trend we are seeing is that organizations are now adding complementary certificate programs to enhance the value of their overall membership and address some skill areas that are not suitable for testing via a certification examination.”



Christine Murphy Peck
Senior Director
Education and Learning Services
SmithBucklin
Washington, DC

up on the screen in real time,” Doane explains, adding that the app also can be used to conduct a survey after the session.

He says that gamification, such as the use of a scavenger hunt or trivia contest, offers another way to keep attendees engaged. “Technology is crucial to continuous education, but things like that aren’t just fun and games,” he notes. “It’s really about getting people talking to each other, engaging with the material at your conference, whether it’s material from your sessions or your trade show. (Gamification) needs to have a purpose.”



CadmiumCD’s “Knowledge Hunt” gamification and live polling event apps enable active participation, enriching the attendee experience.



Michael Doane
Marketing Manager
CadmiumCD
Forest Hill, MD

“It’s about active engagement with other adults or other continuous learners. It’s not only about memorizing a bunch of material. It’s more about knowing where to find the knowledge that you need and collaborating with others.”

they’ll know where to get it. It’s a vast network and social media is part of that. You can connect with people on LinkedIn and you can be part of a group, and that becomes a resource in itself.”

THE CALL FOR PAPERS

Ebbert says that one of the key challenges his organization faces is to get call-for-presentation submitters to clearly understand what types of sessions NAA is looking for. “It helps to be prescriptive on the front end, and I usually provide data from our post-conference surveys to help submitters better understand who our attendees are (age, gender, years of experience, position within the industry, what topics are they interested in, etc.). I engage multiple committees who focus on key issues to get them to submit through my call for presentations.”

CadmiumCD offers a product called Abstract Scorecard that streamlines and simplifies the process of calling for papers. “Conference organizers can set up something like a checklist for their reviewers and have people submit abstracts,” Doane explains. “The abstracts go into a database, and you can assign reviewers to different categories, different sessions and different types of papers, and they can go in and see the review crite-

ria. You can have a team of five reviewers or 50 reviewers, and the chairperson or head of that review group can go in and see an overhead view of what grade each reviewer gave each abstract and make selections from there. It gets away from all of the email and spreadsheets. It can be a real hassle doing it the old-fashioned way.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Professional certification programs also are a critical component of conference education programs, and these are evolving, as well. Christine Murphy Peck, senior director, education and learning services for SmithBucklin in Washington, DC, shared some insights into their importance.

“Since professional workers are facing increasing job complexities and more demands on their knowledge base, they are turning to their representative associations to provide education with demonstrated proof of learning. In short, they want certification,” she says. “Certification provides credibility, signifying that professionals are competent in their respective fields and were successfully tested in specific subject matters. Through a structured continuing education program, certificants can

document they have maintained their knowledge base in a given industry.

“Accredited certification programs also help protect the public’s safety by ensuring that the commission members who grant the certifications are also currently certified and knowledgeable in that particular field and subject area,” she continues. “For the organization, certifications offer options for a long-term revenue stream via certification preparation and continuing education offerings, and there is the potential for establishing a program approval process for organizations wishing to be recognized as continuing education providers.”

In addition, she says, “Certification also has impact on your members’ professional growth and development, including the potential for promotion and increased salary.”

Peck describes some of the changes she’s seeing in association certification programs. “One trend we are seeing is that organizations are now adding complementary certificate programs to enhance the value of their overall membership and address some skill areas that are not suitable for testing via a certification examination. Other things going on in the industry include looking towards remote proctoring, where the candidate takes the exam from home

LEARNING FROM FELLOW ATTENDEES

Attendees learn not just from the sessions they attend — they also learn from each other. “Attendee-to-attendee connections and interactions are more important than going to hear a speaker that’s popular or something like that,” Doane explains. “What you’re going to be able to take away with a connection to another attendee is that you can reach out to that other person that you met at the conference, and say, ‘I need a different perspective on this, what do you think?’ If they don’t have the answer, maybe

10 Trends in Conference Education

Jeff Hurt, executive vice president, education and engagement for Velvet Chainsaw Consulting in Dallas, says, “Attendees are tired of conferences full of production, pageantry and performance. They don’t want to passively consume anymore with the exception of those that love theater. As sociologist and professor Josh Packard’s research has shown, audiences want to participate. They want to be actively involved. It’s time for conferences to invest in active audience participatory experiences like they invest in slick production experiences!”

Hurt shared some thoughts he documented in a blog post titled “Ten Industrial-Strength Awesome Trends Poised to Disrupt Your Conference Education”:

- 1. Transformational learning instead of informational learning.** Informational learning increases knowledge, including facts and figures, about a specific subject matter, but attendees want transformational conference education sessions where they can reflect, discuss, examine, explore and discover practical ways to apply the content with like-minded peers, then apply it when they’re back in the office.
- 2. A focus on adaptable challenges, not technical challenges.** Too often, speakers and sessions provide black-and-white answers to technical challenges, but the challenges that the work force faces today do not usually have clear, black-and-white answers. Adaptable challenges are those that deal with the mix of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of conditions and situations.
- 3. Lossless learning.** Hurt says that research shows that the traditional lecture leads to a loss in learning. Effective education sessions require some type of feedback to know if the audience understands the topic. Lossless learning is the pursuit of perfect feedback loops between learners and speakers.
- 4. Appointment learning mixed with just-in-need opportunities.** Instead of having to show up on a specific date, at a specific time and at a specific location to listen to a speaker, attendees want to time-shift learning opportunities. They want a mix of scheduled and available just-when-they-need-it opportunities. This means conferences need to repurpose some sessions into smaller chunks of time, tag them appropriately for SEO and make them available online.
- 5. Micro-learning opportunities before, during and after the conference.** These are small, contextual content nuggets and small capsules of facts or information that attendees can find quickly when needed to solve their problems. These opportunities can be accessed on all mobile devices and are delivered before, during and after the conference.

“The boundaries between a meeting planner and education professionals are blending. Effective conference education requires a professional who knows, understands, applies and coaches others to apply the current learning research to adult education. Scheduling speakers is no longer enough.”

Jeff Hurt, Executive Vice President, Education & Engagement
Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, Aurora, OH



- 6. Competency-based sessions instead of compliance-based.** Simulations, scenario-based exercises and real-world applications rule in 21st century conference sessions. Online companies like Flat World are giving organizers the ability to use adaptive learning, analytics and competency-based tools instead of just knowledge-based assessments for certifications.
- 7. Post-conference job aids and learning prompts.** The goal of most education sessions is to provide relevant takeaways that we apply back on the job. But our brain can’t recall everything. Research by learning professionals such as Dr. Will Thalheimer show that if we provide some type of post-conference aid or learning prompt, our audiences are more likely to remember and apply their learnings.
- 8. Radically revised smile sheet evaluations.** Hurt says that few conferences actually provide adequate evaluation strategies and that some use “smile sheet” strategies that are grossly biased, as Dr. Thalheimer has proven.
- 9. The conference content-weaver.** The traditional emcee role is morphing into a more instructionally sound conference content-weaver who frames general sessions and overarching issues, connecting threads and the context of pivotal content. This individual asks provocative questions and guides audiences to watch and listen for specific things.
- 10. Meetings with impact.** Hurt says that while many conferences start with a goal of changing attendees’ attitudes, behaviors and skills, they use outdated lecture models that fall short. The only way to change people’s minds is to work with their existing knowledge and experience. The next step is to move beyond facts with stories and visuals that resonate with participants and align with the biology of the brain, followed by strategic conversation exercises that include audience participation.

— KB



Clark Ebbert
Director of Conference
Education Programming
National Apartment Association
Arlington, VA

“Our presenters engage attendees with polling, Q&A and other techniques, right from the start of the session. I see that other associations are using software platforms, and I see NAA moving in that direction within the next 18 months.”

with a webcam and the proctor monitors remotely, and developing innovative item types — exam questions other than standard multiple choice.”

She also shared some of the ways that associations benefit by offering certification programs. “A certification program touches all aspects of an organization. With a commitment to research, program development, policy and procedure establishment, and operations implementation, a certification program can be an extremely valuable asset to an organization by ensuring that members achieve professional status. Certification programs can also be vehicles for recruiting and retaining members, and providing motivation for members to participate in an organization’s educational events.”



Credit: SmithBucklin

Cardiac rehabilitation pros take the inaugural offering of the Certified Cardiac Rehabilitation Professional certification exam during The American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Annual Meeting.

Peck cites some statistics to demonstrate the impact of certification programs. “One of SmithBucklin’s client organizations, National Association of Healthcare Access Management (NAHAM), reports an average 10 percent increase of new certificants year to year (based on data from 2009 to 2012). Another client, National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) reports an increase of 20 percent since 2010. In 2014, we launched a new certification program for the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation, and to date, the enrollment has exceeded the target by 400 percent.”

She stresses, however, that “launching and maintaining successful certification programs is an endeavor that involves many years of commitment, countless volunteer and staff hours, subject-matter expert input and considerable cost.”

WHERE TO BEGIN

Peck shared some helpful advice for association executives who are considering establishing a new certification program. “(They) should conduct careful research of the marketplace to identify whether there is a gap in competency, service or knowledge in the industry that a new certification program can fill, and determine the target market, including determining who would find value in a certification program provided by their organization. In addition, they will need to determine who would pay for the training, certification examination and continuing education. The ‘marketplace’ includes identifying potential competitors. Who else is out there offering similar types of certification? How many of their members are currently certified by other organizations and what are those organizations?”

“Association executives should also keep in mind that the cost of implementing a certification program can extend into the mid-six-figure range,” she adds. “The costs will take time to recoup. The certification program itself is often not the revenue-generating aspect since there are also costs to maintain and manage the program, especially if it involves third-party accreditation. Time is also a consideration. On average, a new certification will take 12–15 months to implement between the time of the end of the research and the launch of the next stages.”

Technology also can play a role in the certification process. “One of the greatest features of our conference survey tool is that it can be used for continuing education,” Doane notes. “People can go in and take a quiz based off of the sessions they attended, receive credits and actually receive certification. The system will build out a certification (program) based on the criteria. People can track their credits over time, and when they’ve reached a certain level they can go in and print their certification.”

NAVIGATING THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

It appears that the days of just sitting in a session, listening to a speaker, are going away in favor of a more interactive and impactful experience that continues long after the session is over. Delivering that kind of optimal experience requires some additional learning on the part of planners, as well. As Jeff Hurt, executive V.P., education and engagement of Velvet Chainsaw Consulting says, “The boundaries between a meeting planner and education professionals are blending. Effective conference education requires a professional who knows, understands, applies and coaches others to apply the current learning research to adult education. Scheduling speakers is no longer enough.”

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The waterfront Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay is adjacent to the Monterey Conference Center.

A Growing Meetings Infrastructure Gives Planners More Reasons to Head Out West

By Patrick Simms

The Western Association of Chamber Executives (W.A.C.E.) had a broad choice of quality cities for its 2015 Annual Conference, given that it represents chamber professionals in 19 Western states and Canada. And with only about 400–450 attendees coming in for the three-day event, W.A.C.E. was not limited to major metropolises that can handle citywides. Danielle Fournier, director of meetings and events, remarks that the February time slot did help narrow down the possibilities to Southern California, where the weather would be pleasant. At that point, Anaheim stood out as a city that was both easy to get to from a major airport (SNA) and had numerous attractions and dining options to occupy delegates' free time. Among the recreational draws was, of course, Disneyland.

Anaheim

The Annual Conference “sold out weeks before the event; I’d love to say that it was our stellar program that allowed us to sell out quicker than ever before,” Fournier says, “but I think that being at Disney may have had something to do with it.” To fully showcase the theme park, the 973-room Disneyland Hotel, featuring 136,000 sf of function space, was selected as the conference site. “What set the Disneyland Hotel above the competition, for us, was that we were not just getting hotel rooms and meeting space, we were getting an environment that sparks the imagination,” she explains. “We wanted our attendees to be in an environment that promoted innovative thinking and creativity, and that is exactly what we got.”

Indeed, when a destination offers a strong selling point such as a renowned theme park, it can be advantageous to stress that ele-



A private dessert party at the World of Color in Disneyland Resort.

ment: “We worked a little Disney magic into all aspects of the event,” Fournier relates, “from our session titles, to Disney characters greeting guests at registration (which was a big hit and energized the attendees from the very start), to our opening general session speaker from the Disney Institute and an evening outing to watch the Fantasmic! Show in the Disneyland Park. At the Fantasmic! Show we had a designated area set aside for our attendees, which allowed us all to be together to watch the show and network.”

While Disneyland Resort offers a multitude of resources for planners, it is but one of the assets that distinguishes California as a convention destination. The rich cultural diversity of cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, the scenic coastal getaways of Long Beach, Monterey and San Diego, and the entrepreneurial spirit of San Jose are among the virtues of the state. Combined with some of the country’s most forward-thinking convention centers (including the Anaheim Convention Center, with a major 200,000-sf expansion due for completion in 2017), California is better positioned today in the association meetings market than ever before.

Long Beach

In terms of popular attractions, Anaheim is arguably in a class by itself among California’s cities thanks to Disneyland. But from a historical perspective, Long Beach is a strong draw due to the Queen Mary, which had its maiden voyage on May 27, 1936, and has been docked in Long Beach since 1967. The ship offers group tours and more than 80,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space in 14 art deco salons; the 70,000-sf Queen Mary Dome also is available. New aboard the Queen Mary is the multimillion-dollar Princess Diana Exhibit, which includes approximately 2,000 items relating to the Windsor family, including nine of her dresses and gowns, and handwritten letters from all the major royals.

The city’s primary meeting facility, the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, has undergone a \$40 million renovation of its public spaces, meeting rooms and the 3,000-seat Terrace Theatre. With more than 400,000 sf of function space, including 224,000 sf

of contiguous exhibit space, the 20,456-sf Grand Ballroom and 34 meeting rooms, the convention center is a formidable option for association groups. Long Beach Arena, featuring the Pacific Room with state-of-the-art AV, is yet another option in the complex.

Several of the city’s hotels also have undergone renovations in recent years, including the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, which features 374 redesigned rooms after an \$8 million renovation completed last year. The hotel offers 21,000 sf of meeting space. In addition, Hotel Maya, a Doubletree Hotel by Hilton, has opened its \$1.4 million “Lagunita” pavilion. Sitting on the water’s edge of Queensway Bay, the 6,400-sf special event space affords panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, the downtown Long Beach skyline and the Queen Mary. Surrounding the Lagunita pavilion is the Vista del Mar plaza, a 10,000-sf outdoor prefunction area featuring towering



The Queen Mary, which offers accommodations and 80,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space, has been docked in Long Beach since 1967.

palm trees, water and fire displays, custom outdoor furniture, a permanent outdoor stage and alfresco bar. The 197-room Hotel Maya offers 30,000 sf of meeting space.

Los Angeles

The \$10 million renovation plan for the Los Angeles Convention Center is making good progress: A city panel recently selected the design by the team of Populous and HMC Architects over two competitors. Design features include a new structure over Pico Boulevard connecting the South Hall and West Hall; multiple floors of meeting spaces lining an open-air courtyard; and a new large outdoor ballroom space complementing the West Hall. The city’s hotel inventory also is developing with 17 new properties under construction and another 22 in final planning stages county-wide; the 39 projects will deliver more than 7,900 new guest rooms. Among the new builds are the 900-room Wilshire Grand Center, opening in 2017, and the 755-room expansion of the JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. Live. When combined with the existing property



“We wanted our attendees to be in an environment that promoted innovative thinking and creativity, and that is exactly what we got (at Disneyland).”

Danielle Fournier
Director of Meetings and Events
Western Association of Chamber Executives
Sacramento, CA

and attached Ritz-Carlton Los Angeles, the L.A. Live entertainment district will offer 1,756 upscale rooms and more than 200,000 sf of function space by 2018. Also, the Los Angeles International Airport is undergoing a multibillion-dollar modernization program projected to last through 2019.

The smaller the convention, the more flexibility it has in terms of site options, and some groups may be able to gather in one of the most famous towns in Los Angeles County and in the state: Beverly Hills, home to the Rodeo Drive shopping district. A fine property choice here is The Beverly Hilton, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in August. The hotel offers 569 rooms and 60,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

Its luxurious ambience was well-suited to the approximately 700 attendees of the Pension Real Estate Association's Institutional Investor Real Estate Conference, which convenes CEOs and senior



Rendering of a redesigned Los Angeles Convention Center.

managers of leading institutional investor firms. “We have continued to partner with the hotel for over two decades because the general management and entire hotel staff are consummate professionals, always willing to go the extra mile to make sure our events are successful,” notes Gail C. Haynes, PREA president. “Their excellence and professionalism extend to the personalized service they offer to our attendees as guests of the hotel. It is a pleasure to see the same familiar faces each time we return and a strong indication of the hotel's retention of talented staff.” The staff showed its competence in supporting former President Bill Clinton's address to the group.

“His advisors and security staff put in last-minute requests for an array of new room assignments and logistical equipment,” Haynes relates. “The hotel accommodated these requests with poise and professionalism.”

She also highlights several of the hotel's function spaces: “The outdoor pool space is uniquely appealing, an outstanding place in which to hold opening receptions. We also love the tiered organization of the International Ballroom. The well-designed and comfortable smaller meeting spaces accommodate our breakout sessions very effectively. And the Stardust Room is perfect for our board meetings and other VIP events.” The Stardust Room features a built-in stage with dance floor, built-in house sound, full-service kitchen and audio-visual capabilities to support a reception of up to 250 and a banquet of 200. The private outdoor terrace can accommodate up to 150 and offers views of the city, including the iconic Hollywood sign.

Monterey County

Great venues can sometimes be attendance boosters, and Monterey County has demonstrated that its aquarium has that ability. When the California Association of Highway Patrolmen meets in the county and hosts its main event at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, attendance well exceeds the usual 450 and approaches 650, notes the organization's office manager/meeting and event planner, Cyndee Keroher. “The first year that we did it we rented a portion of the aquarium; the last two years we rented the entire aquarium. As a venue it just can't be beat. No sooner do I finish that conference than I'm getting requests for us to go back,” Keroher observes. Attendees take in the venue's 35,000 plants and animals while enjoying a strolling dinner, with three different bars set up and tables throughout the aquarium. “I also have little vignettes going on, whether it's a photo vignette, a live band or a guitarist in different parts of the aquarium,” she adds.

The Portola Hotel & Spa has hosted the California Association of Highway Patrolmen for several of the organization's Monterey meetings. The 379-room resort goes the extra mile to logistically assist planners, in Keroher's experience. “For one of our smaller meetings we just had, Portola helped us coordinate (an outing) to the Sardine Factory (an award-winning local restaurant), so they're very willing to help with those types of things,” she says. “Monterey in general is a great draw for our attendees, but equally important is the feeling that at the Portola you're wanted and welcomed by the entire staff, from bellhop to audio-visual to housekeeping, and when I say that I mean it's beyond the sales relationship.” Offsite, the group also has enjoyed shopping along Cannery Row, visiting the Carmel Mission and the Wine Trolley Tour.

The Portola Hotel & Spa's 50,000 sf of meeting space is adjacent to the Monterey Conference Center, which will debut its renovated first floor by late summer 2016, with the grand opening for the \$45 million modernization taking place in early 2017.

San Diego

A phase three expansion of the San Diego Convention Center, which would increase the facility's capacity by 33 percent, is currently under consideration. But the facility is quite sizable as it stands, with a 525,701-sf exhibit hall, 90,000-sf Sails Pavilion, 204,114 sf of meeting rooms and 184,514 sf of outdoor terraces. Planners who are looking for smaller properties to add to their room block will note the August opening of the new Courtyard San Diego Gaslamp/Convention Center. The 90-room hotel is located just four blocks from the convention center and includes The Nolem, a rooftop bar and lounge.

Part of San Diego's charm is its beaches, waterways and bays, and this fall, Paradise Point Resort & Spa, A Destination Hotel, will debut the 16,000-sf Sunset Pavilion overlooking Mission Bay. Accommodating up to 1,800 attendees, the new pavilion brings the 462-room resort's total meeting space to more than 80,000 sf.

Another luxury property that lets groups enjoy San Diego's vistas is Loews Coronado Bay Resort. Perched on its own 15-acre peninsula, the 439-room hotel was the site of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy's 2015 Western Regional Meeting, which brought in about 180 delegates.

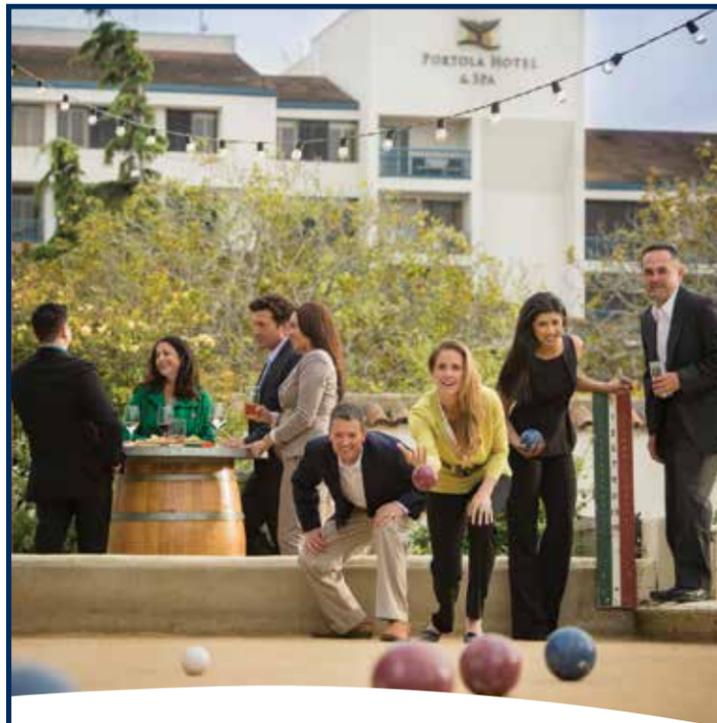
While San Diego is sometimes perceived as a rather expensive destination, Angela Layton, CMP, CMM, senior meeting planner

“Monterey in general is a great draw for our attendees, but equally important is the feeling that at the Portola you're wanted and welcomed by the entire staff.”

Cyndee Keroher, Office Manager/Meeting and Event Planner
California Association of Highway Patrolmen, Sacramento, CA

with the association, notes that the Loews Coronado Bay Resort was very accommodating to the meeting budget. “We are pretty price-conscious as far as our room rates are concerned, and they were able to meet our need for enough space as well as getting within the room rate requirement,” she says. “And then during our contract negotiations they also were willing to work with us to set parameters on F&B, including cost per meal.” In addition, the hotel provided a free shuttle bus to local points of interest such as the Gaslamp Quarter. Another highlight was a dinner on the Coronado Bay beach, catered by the hotel.

The hotel's 65,000 sf of function space features thoughtful design elements. “What I liked about the meeting space was that the lobby area has floor-to-ceiling windows with a beautiful view of the bay. I think it really helped people to feel as though they were connected with the water and surroundings,” she says. “Sometimes we get into spaces that could be Anywhere, USA. The hotel also has some nice pool areas outside where we did our welcome reception for about 220 people, including our guests.”



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Angela Layton, CMP, CMM
Senior Meeting Planner
National Association of State
Boards of Accountancy
Nashville, TN

“What I liked about the meeting space was that the lobby area has floor-to-ceiling windows with a beautiful view of the bay. I think it really helped people to feel as though they were connected with the water and surroundings.”

San Francisco

Further testament to California’s commitment to the convention industry comes from San Francisco, where the Moscone Center expansion broke ground this summer. When it is completed in fall of 2018, the North and South buildings will offer more than 500,000 sf of contiguous space that can be used for exhibitions and/or meetings, almost double the amount of space currently offered in its largest hall. The new and improved Moscone will feature three ballrooms (including a new 50,000-sf, column-free ballroom), more than 80 meeting rooms, 108,000 sf of prefunction space affording panoramic views of the city and the surrounding Yerba Buena Gardens, and more than 20,000 sf of outdoor terraces. In addition, the expanded facility is designed to garner the highest LEED certification possible.

Yerba Buena Gardens, currently commemorating the 15th anniversary season of its festival, is more than a two-block oasis in downtown San Francisco. It is an event space with numerous rentable venues for groups, from the 1,800-sf Carousel Plaza to the 340,000-sf Esplanade, accommodating 5,000 participants standing (1,000 seated). It also is surrounded by many of the city’s cultural institutions, such as the Contemporary Jewish Museum, Museum of the African Diaspora, Children’s Creativity Museum and the California Historical Society.



Credit: Moscone Center

Rendering of the expanded Moscone Center in San Francisco.

San Jose

The capital of Silicon Valley is home to 6,600 technology companies, and as such, the “Wickedly Fast Free Wi-Fi” it offers delegates is no surprise. Billed as the nation’s best free Wi-Fi experience, the service extends from Mineta San Jose International



Credit: San Jose McEnery Convention Center

The recently expanded San Jose McEnery Convention Center houses a total of 367,526 sf of flexible space.

Airport to downtown San Jose and the San Jose McEnery Convention Center. San Jose also is on the forefront of sustainability: Team San Jose-managed facilities are reported to recycle, reuse and repurpose 89 percent of all material waste.

The recently expanded San Jose McEnery Convention Center houses a total of 367,526 sf of flexible space. A new property just steps away from the center is the 171-room Westin San Jose, the second Silicon Valley Hotel from West Hotels & Resorts. Also of note, the 808-room Fairmont San Jose recently completed a sweeping \$524,000 upgrade to the hotel’s main building breakout rooms; the property houses a total of 65,000 sf of function space.

San Jose also offers groups numerous intriguing offsite event venues. New options include the 18,000-seat Avaya Stadium; the 12,000-sf GlassHouse, featuring downtown’s largest outdoor patio; and ThirdSpace Fitness in a historic building, for smaller groups. Culturally attuned attendees have plenty of free-time options in the city, including San Pedro Square Market, Plaza de Cesar Chavez, San Jose Museum of Art and the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum of Art & Planetarium.

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The largest convention center hotel complex from Baltimore to Boston, Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center is a welcome addition to Atlantic City.

Credit: Caesars Entertainment

Atlantic City & New York City

From the Famous NJ Resort Town to the Big Apple, Planners Will Find Something for Everybody

By John Buchanan

No two places in the country are more iconic or famous than New York City and Atlantic City to the south. And given their uniqueness and long commitments to becoming top-tier association meeting and convention destinations, both are enjoying unprecedented success in today's highly competitive marketplace.

Atlantic City

Although New York City reigns as a global brand well known to people from all over the world, Atlantic City is equally iconic to Americans who recall its place atop the list of classic beach destinations on the U.S. Atlantic Seaboard. And no landmark of that time-honored world is more famous than The Boardwalk.

After resuscitating itself as a casino gambling destination three decades ago, Atlantic City today — even though it still boasts eight

Las Vegas-style casino hotels — is returning to its roots as a popular convention city and as a family beach destination. "Atlantic City continues to transform and reposition itself," said Jim Wood, president and CEO of Meet AC. "The convention industry has a tremendous impact on Atlantic City's economy, and Meet AC is committed to growing the convention business in Atlantic City."

Louis Riccio, executive director of the Madison (NJ) Housing Authority also serves as the event coordinator of the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NJNAHRO). Riccio has used Atlantic City every year for the organization's four-night annual meeting for 450 attendees for the last eight years. For the last two years, he has used the 942-room Resorts Atlantic City hotel as his venue, and the association will return next year for a regional conference of 600 attendees from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Washington, DC.

One reason why Riccio is so loyal to Atlantic City is its status as

a historic icon among summer tourists from the East Coast. "The city has done a marvelous job of maintaining The Boardwalk and maintaining the beaches," he says. "They have added hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sand to increase the length of the beach. And that's one reason we find that after our April meeting each year, quite a few of our attendees come back in the summer to have a family beach vacation in a classic American beach town."

The most important thing for meeting planners who are unfamiliar with the 2015 incarnation of Atlantic City to understand, Riccio says, is that "it offers a lot more than just gambling. It has hotels with great meeting space and fantastic restaurants. As a destination, in my experience, Atlantic City also offers excellent service across the board. Everyone I have dealt with there over the years has been very accommodating. They are willing to do just about anything to make sure you have a successful meeting and that you want to come back."

Riccio also stresses the steady course of the evolution of Atlantic City as an association meeting destination.

"Over the past eight years, the facilities in Atlantic City have gotten better and better every year," he says. "Most of the hotels have undergone renovations or expansions that improved on their meeting space. And they have also improved their pricing over that time. Over those eight years, we have used a number of the city's hotels and we have always found them to be very accommodating in terms of our budget. In general, the pricing is always good."

The quality of the local dining scene is another thing that surprises planners who take a look at Atlantic City for the first time, Riccio says. "The city has very, very good restaurants, and the options range from very expensive fine dining restaurants to very inexpensive restaurants that still serve very good food," he says. "Even the food courts in the hotels serve good food. You can go there and have dinner for as little as \$10. And that range of options and price ranges is not just true of the hotels, it's true of the city itself."

His loyalty to the Resorts Atlantic City hotel is primarily based on its level of overall service.

"The thing I like best is their attention to detail," he says. "Their personnel are extremely conscientious. At this point, it's almost like we have become friends, where they can almost read my mind. They anticipate what I need and are very proactive in making sure that everything goes smoothly. They anticipate my needs before I even tell them what I need. And you don't find that level of service in very many hotels anywhere. It's very rare."

The other reason why Riccio and his attendees remain loyal to the hotel is the exceptional value it offers. "The reason we went there in the first place in 2014 and the reason we now keep coming back is the price we get," he says. "In my experience, since I have used a number of the casino hotels there over the last eight years, they have the largest rooms in town for the least expensive price." Room rates for his block are between \$50 and \$79 a night, he says. "And you just can't beat that price."



A rendering of the 200-foot-high observation wheel coming soon to the famous Steel Pier in Atlantic City.

Last year, Riccio's value proposition got even better when he learned of the "Meet in AC" cash incentive program offered by Meet AC, the entity that promotes the city's meeting and convention business. The program is administered on a case-by-case basis, according to Meet AC. The program is available to any new group or convention booked or actualized by 2018. The event must generate at least 500 room nights in Atlantic City and be booked through Meet AC in order to receive the incentive per contracted room night. The incentive is offered over and above hotel commissions. Priority is given to midweek, non-summer meetings. The program is for groups either using the Atlantic City Convention Center or individual properties in Atlantic City.

Until this year, Riccio was unaware of the program. Once he learned of it and participated, he received a \$10,000 incentive reward. "And for our meeting, that's a significant amount of money," he says, adding that he also will be working with Meet AC for next year's larger meeting.

AC NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Atlantic City's hotel inventory currently totals 15,630 rooms. Its eight major casino properties, in addition to Resorts Atlantic City, are the 1,253-room Bally's Atlantic City; 2,000-room Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa; 800-room The Water Club, Borgata; 1,144-room Caesar's Atlantic City; 2,587-room Harrah's Atlantic City; 728-room Golden Nugget Atlantic City; 2,129 Tropicana Hotel & Casino; and 2,032-room Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort.

Major non-gaming properties with at least 10,000 sf of meeting space include the 502-room Sheraton Atlantic City, and 270-room Stockton Seaview Resort.

The 31-acre Atlantic City Convention Center features 500,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space, 45 individual meeting rooms that total 109,100 sf, and 32,000 sf of prefunction space.

Given its evolution as a meeting destination and its ambitions, Atlantic City got a big boost last May when Meeting Professionals International announced that the city will be the site of its 2016 World Education Conference. The new Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center, a Caesars Entertainment property, will serve as its venue.

Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center is the largest convention center hotel complex from Baltimore to Boston with its



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Louis Riccio
Event Coordinator
New Jersey Chapter of the
National Association of Housing
and Redevelopment Officials
Madison, NJ

two 50,000-sf ballrooms. The ballrooms can be divided into 29 individual sections and will offer state-of-the-art, technologically advanced meeting space that can be utilized by up to 5,000 attendees. In addition, Harrah's Atlantic City offers more than 2,500 hotel rooms that will be directly accessible from the meeting space, making it the perfect year-round destination where attendees can eat, sleep and meet all in one location.

The Playground, formerly known as The Pier Shops at Caesars, is a 464,000-sf self-contained entertainment venue jutting out over the Atlantic Ocean. It includes eight live entertainment clubs and restaurants, high-end retail establishments, bowling alley, swimming pool and a sports bar.

Gardner's Basin, located in the marina district, is undergoing an expansion and redevelopment project designed to provide additional restaurants, shops and entertainment venues. Plans also include reconstruction of The Boardwalk from the now-shuttered Revel to Gardner's Basin.

The famous Steel Pier soon will boast a 200-foot-high observation wheel. The \$14 million project will offer riders views of both the ocean and the Atlantic City skyline from inside climate-controlled gondolas.

Borgata Festival Park, the city's newest outdoor entertainment venue, is an outdoor venue featuring a 4,000-person capacity concert space adjacent to the hotel casino. It includes a main stage, bar, ping pong tables and amenities including beer trucks, fire pits and tables.

New York City

New York City is America's most iconic metropolis, more beloved than ever since the events of 9/11. And since the financial crisis of 2008, the Big Apple has regained its status as the country's most prized meeting destination — for associations that can afford it or at least find a way to make it work on the budget they have available.

“New York is a unique destination,” says Phelps R. Hope, CMP, senior vice president, meetings and expositions, at Atlanta-

based association management company Kellen Meetings. “It's a place unto itself.”

Although New York is a perennially popular destination for many association meeting planners because of its global recognition and vast range of singular amenities, from the Empire State Building and Wall Street to tony Fifth Avenue and hip, trendy SoHo, the city also offers a distinct practical advantage when it comes to hosting meetings and events, Hope says.

“One of the things that really makes it unique as a meeting destination is that it has a huge concentration of independent hotels,” he notes. “There are far more independent hotels, as a percentage of total room inventory versus branded hotels, than almost anywhere else. And New York is famous for its wonderful independent, boutique-style properties. The challenge is finding them. Unless you have existing relationships in New York or at least understand the destination, it can be daunting to discover the high-quality independent hotels that would perfectly suit your needs.”

A related challenge for first-time users of the destination, he adds, is the fluctuation in hotel room rates. “The same hotel that might charge you \$250 per night this week might be charging \$650 next week for the same room, depending on what time of year it is and what is going on in the city. As a result of those factors, New York has huge peaks and valleys in their rate structure based on demand.”

And today, in general, he says, New York is getting higher rates



The legendary 1,985-room New York Hilton Midtown boasts more than 150,000 sf of flexible meeting and exhibit space.

at its premium properties than at any time since 2008.

However, Hope says, for many association meeting planners who want to stage a truly spectacular meeting in a place unlike any other, “New York is always part of the conversation, because it has great mystique. It's a vibrant city. That said, there are usually issues of room rates and availability in the context of the association market, which tends to be quite rate-resistant. But for some

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Phelps R. Hope, CMP
Senior Vice President
Meetings and Expositions
Kellen Meetings
Atlanta, GA

“New York has more special event venues and lofts, warehouses and art galleries and courtyards than any other place. There is just an incredible variety of creative options to do something really special. And there is also something for every budget level.”

galleries and courtyards than any other place. There is just an incredible variety of creative options to do something really special. And there is also something for every budget level.”

Hope’s favorite venues include the landmark Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Do an event there and it will never be forgotten,” he says.” He particularly likes the Egyptian-themed Temple of Dander that overlooks Central Park. “We used that not long ago for a black-tie event for 200 people, and it was just spectacular,” he says. In September 2014, the Metropolitan Museum opened yet another spectacular venue, its new David H. Koch Plaza, which includes fountains and 100 newly planted trees, permanent and temporary seating areas, and diffused nighttime lighting.

Another venue he prefers is the world-famous The Rainbow Room atop the 65-story 30 Rockefeller Center and NBC/Universal’s corporate headquarters. “It’s another venue that is just truly spectacular,” he says. Originally opened in 1934, The Rainbow Room reopened in October 2014 after an extensive renovation. It operates as both a restaurant open to the public and a private event space with superb in-house catering.

Among other options at 30 Rock is the building’s famous outdoor terrace, often seen on “The Today Show.” “At the right time of year, generally in spring or fall when it’s not too hot or too cold,” Hope says, “there’s no better place than that to do a reception.”

NEW HOTELS

With a current inventory of 113,000 hotel rooms and another 11,000 in the works, New York has debuted or is opening a wide range of new properties over the next two years.

Although most are smaller properties with insufficient amounts of meeting space for association meetings, some are innovative new properties that are good options for small and medium-sized meetings.

The new, 190-room SLS New York Hotel, designed by hotel superstar Philippe Starck, who rose to fame as the result of his mid-1990s design of the Delano in South Beach Miami, is scheduled to open on Park Avenue in summer 2016.

The 287-room The Beekman — A Thompson Hotel is scheduled to open on Beekman Street in lower Manhattan in winter 2015. Award-winning restaurateurs Keith McNally of famed institutions Balthazar and Pastis and Craft Hospitality chef/owner Tom Colicchio will be operating the highly anticipated restaurants.

New hotels include the 122-room Hyatt Herald Square New York, located on West 31st Street off Fifth Avenue, and the 210-room Park Hyatt New York, located on fashionable West 57th Street.

The New Yorker, a Wyndham Hotel is New York City’s newest reimagined historic hotel. The 912-room property features upmarket amenities, newly redesigned guest rooms, 23,000 sf of meeting space and a location in the very heart and soul of midtown Manhattan.

associations — the right associations, and especially those that are headquartered in New York and others that might be attached to markets like the financial market, which is centered there — then New York works well as a destination. You just have to find the best rates you can.”

At the same time, Hope says, because there is such a vast array of hotel options, particularly among independent properties, planners must pay careful attention to certain sourcing factors that are essential to a successful meeting in The Big Apple.

“You really have to qualify the condition and service level of independent properties,” he advises. “That means you need to know the market. For example, one of the hotels that we really like is The Roosevelt. It has maintained a high standard of service over the years. But we needed to get to know the market and get to know the hotel’s owners and management team before we knew we could count on and recommend The Roosevelt year after year. Other properties have peaks and valleys in terms of condition and service level, especially if they change ownership or management companies. So you have to be very careful about that. You can’t take anything for granted.”

Based on his years of extensive experience of planning meetings in New York, Hope has a short list of preferred hotels. For large meetings, he likes the city’s famous trio of major flag, big box properties: the New York Marriott Marquis, New York Hilton Midtown and Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers. For medium-size groups, the legendary Waldorf Astoria New York is among his favorites. “That hotel just maintains a service level that is awesome.” He also favors the Grand Hyatt New York at Grand Central Station. “That property is also a guaranteed home run every time,” he says. For small groups, his go-to property for years has been The Roosevelt Hotel.

In addition to its stellar hotel product, another factor that makes New York so well-suited to association meetings and events is its unparalleled array of offsite venues.

“That’s one area where New York really shines,” Hope says. “New York has more special event venues and lofts, warehouses and art

JAVITS CENTER

For major association conventions, one of New York’s advantages is its Javits Center convention facility, designed by legendary architect I.M. Pei and originally opened in 1986. The complex contains 840,000 sf of exhibition space on four levels, 28,000 sf of dedicated meeting space and 665,000 sf of prefunction, support and staging areas.

The Javits Center North exposition space, which opened in July 2010, features an 80,000-sf, column-free exhibit hall that is linked to the main building by a 30-foot-wide corridor.

THE BROOKLYN OPTION

Despite the fact that to most Americans New York still means Manhattan, the borough of Brooklyn has slowly but steadily gained recognition and generated enthusiasm as a meeting destination over the past decade. Today, for association meeting planners who want to do a New York meeting and also avoid Manhattan’s high price tag, Brooklyn is a popular alternative.

Meghan Gutierrez, CEO of the Manhattan-based Lymphoma Research Foundation, has used the 665-room Brooklyn Bridge Marriott, with 44,542 sf of meeting space, as her venue for the organization’s annual three-day North American Educational Forum on Lymphoma every other year for the past decade. The conference, which draws more than 500 cancer patients, caregivers, physicians and researchers, alternates each year between the East and West coasts.

Gutierrez and her event will be back in Brooklyn this October. Why such longstanding loyalty to Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Bridge Marriott?

“When you’re planning a national meeting, access to the venue is a critically important piece of your decision-making,” Gutierrez says. “Because we are located in Manhattan, we wanted to identify a place that met all of our needs and was relatively close to our office, but still was highly accessible for our faculty and attendees. And when we began to look at the area, we focused on Brooklyn, because at that time, it was an up-and-coming area of New York City. But it also met all of our needs in terms of access and venue availability.”

Once she toured the Brooklyn Bridge Marriott for the first time 10 years ago, she knew she had found her East Coast home. “We felt it was a wonderful venue that met all of our needs and could perfectly host our conference,” she says. And that has proven to be true over the course of five biannual meetings.

One of the key reasons why Lymphoma Research Foundation keeps coming back is the extraordinary value proposition the Brooklyn Bridge Marriott delivers when compared to Manhattan. “We don’t only think about geographic accessibility for the meeting,” Gutierrez says. “We also think about financial accessibility for our attendees, especially our patients and caregivers. Because of the uniqueness of our program, we know that



The five-block-long Javits Center now boasts the largest green roof in New York City and the second largest in the country.

many people want to attend. So we want to make sure we do everything we can to make it affordable for them. One of the things we’ve done over the years is to work closely with the hotel to make sure that our sleeping rooms are affordable for the average person.”

To maximize the cost-effectiveness of the conference for her budget-minded attendees, Gutierrez also uses the hotel’s catering department for all three of the event’s daily meals.

“The value we get for our food and beverage budget is tremendously high,” Gutierrez says. “In our case, the hotel is serving a population that in many cases has been diagnosed with cancer. So we always want to be very mindful of their nutritional needs and the dietary restrictions a number of them have. The hotel has always worked very well with us in addressing those things. They are also very good about diversifying their offerings, because we also have attendees that are avoiding certain kinds of foods or types of products. So we also work hard to be sensitive to individual requests for meals. And again, we have established a very close relationship and good communication with the culinary staff at the hotel. And that allows us to respond very well to all of the needs that our attendees have.”

In addition, the hotel delivers consistently superb service across the board. “Their team, from the internal meeting planning team we work with, all the way to the onsite support staff during the meeting or culinary staff, is really an extension of our own staff,” Gutierrez says. “They have become so familiar with our meeting and our unique needs that we are really collaborators. And that kind of relationship helps us do a better job of making sure that we produce an excellent meeting.”

Like Manhattan, Brooklyn also offers exceptional offsite venues. The Barclays Center offers seating for 4,000 to 7,700 attendees, in the Cushman & Wakefield Theatre as well as boardrooms, restaurant and club space and private use of the sports arena where the NBA’s Brooklyn Nets play.

Last February, the Kings Theatre, formerly Loew’s Kings Theatre, opened in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn after a \$94 million renovation that restored the original movie palace-type theater, which opened in 1929, to its full historic and architectural splendor.

AC&F



METZLER

Dana Metzler was named convention sales manager for the Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau. She was a sales coordinator for the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown. **Andrea Hamblen** was promoted to national sales manager. She most recently served as a convention sales manager with the bureau.

Turnberry Isle Miami has appointed **Joseph M. DeMille Sr.** as director of sales and marketing. With more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he formerly served as regional direc-



DEMILLE

tor of sales and marketing for Dolce Atlanta-Peachtree.

The Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau has announced **Stacey D. Johnson, CSAE**, as director of sales, mid-Atlantic region. She was director of group sales for the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC.

Visit Orlando has named **Ron Keith** and **Barbara Herod, CMP**, as national account directors based in the Washington, DC, area. Keith was director of strategic accounts,



JOHNSON



DAY

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts in Washington, DC. Herod was previously with Experient Inc. and the San Diego Tourism Authority.

Visit KC (Kansas City, Missouri) has named **Cori Day** as vice president of sales and services. She was tourism director for the Independence Tourism Department in Independence, Missouri.

Christopher Bond was named vice president of sales for The Mirage, Las Vegas. He was vice president of sales for New York – New York Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas. AC&F



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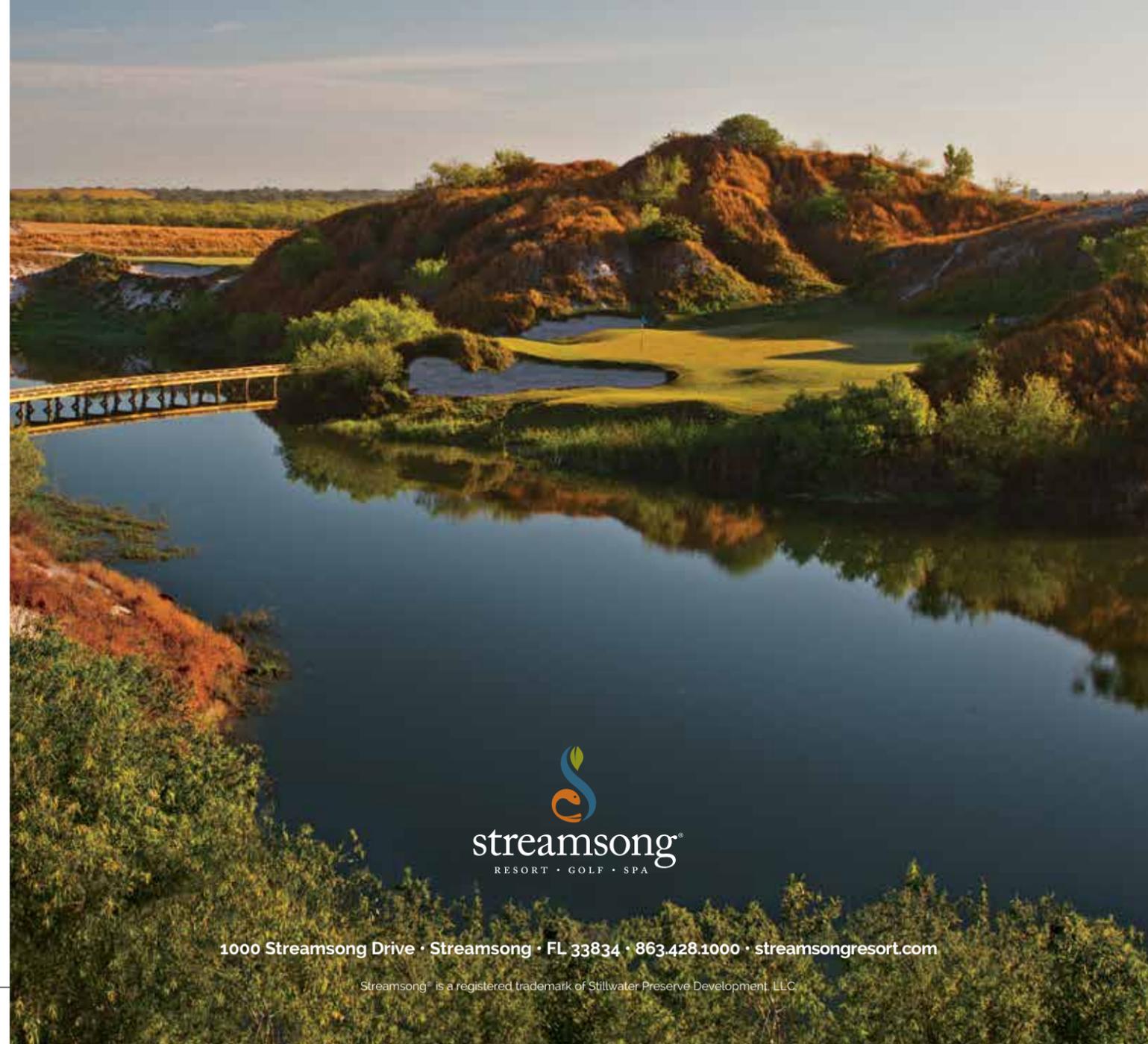
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