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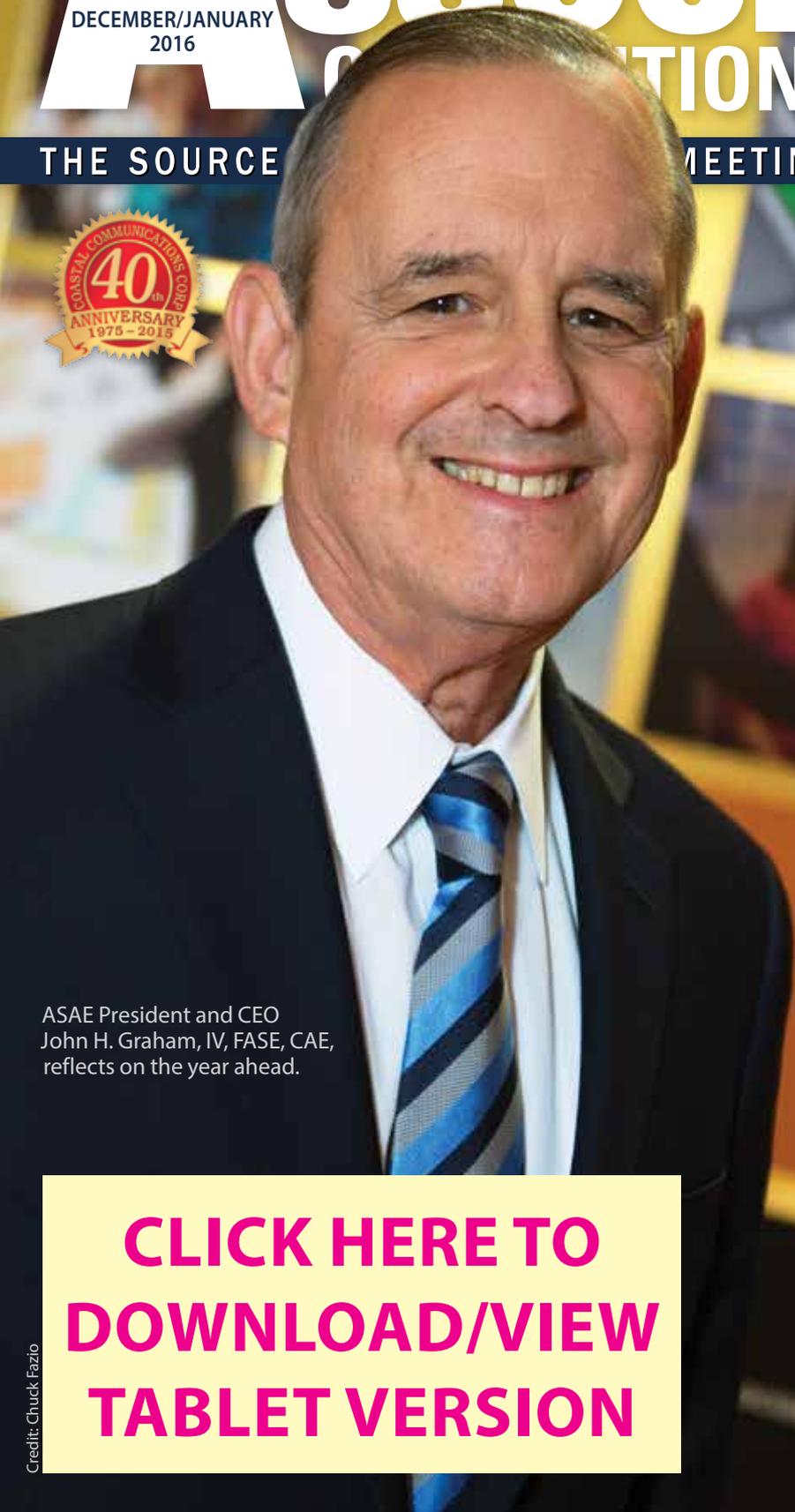
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DECEMBER/JANUARY
2016

ASSOCIATION

CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

THE SOURCE

MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT



ASAE President and CEO
John H. Graham, IV, FASE, CAE,
reflects on the year ahead.

2016 Industry Outlook

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The Okunido Center, Las Vegas. Credit: UCVIA

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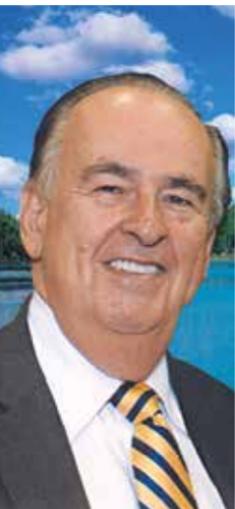
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Dealing With the Disruptors



I think many will agree that the state of the world these days feels very unsettled and uncertain. It seems that we're barraged on a daily basis with apocalyptic predictions from politicians, scientists and economists, not to mention those minute-by-minute notifications of world events popping up on our smartphones 24/7. The ripple effects (sometimes tsunami effects) are felt by the meetings industry, too: For example, climate change/major weather events such as the California drought not only have resulted in higher F&B costs, but, in the case of more frequent natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and wildfires, a solid Plan B for your meeting is more essential than ever. More foreboding, the spectre of terrorism disrupts travel and security, requiring you to add yet another disquieting item to your preparedness checklist.

Not all megatrends are as frightening but can present just as daunting a challenge — the most obvious being fast-evolving technologies that continually change how business is done. Technological innovations enable organizations to collect and analyze more and more complex data, resulting in better, more valuable experiences for attendees and exhibitors. Hand-in-hand with technology, the new generation is also a disruptor, leading the charge into the digital world demanding and embracing change. These millennials are driving innovative change in meeting design, including more social and "organic" learning environments. This group will make up 75 percent of the work force in 10 years, so marketing effectively to them is key to the vitality and viability of every association.

Despite these seismic shifts, there is thankfully one constant: the need to meet face to face, which a recent GBTA survey found is even the preference among millennial changemakers, who highly value networking and mentoring opportunities.

The features in this issue will help you understand and leverage economic, environmental, technological and demographic disruptors. We asked ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, FASE, CAE, to offer his learned perspective on how some of these forces will impact meetings in the year ahead. Companion perspectives from Phelps R. Hope, senior vice president of meetings and expositions for Kellen Company, and Tony Wagner, vice president of CWT Meeting & Events for the Americas, lend more insights. Graham notes, "It's critical for the exhibits and events industry to be aware and keep up with the changing world, so we can meet the needs, wants and desires of our members and exhibitors now and into the future."

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Las Vegas Breaks Tourism Record

LAS VEGAS, NV — Las Vegas surpassed 42 million visitors for the first time, which breaks last year's record of 41.1 million — the first time the destination had topped 40 million. "Las Vegas couldn't have reached this achievement without the support of our resort partners and the dedicated workers who make the Las Vegas experience what it is," said Rossi Ralenkotter, president/CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. "Whether a first-time visitor or a returning Las Vegas enthusiast, the destination continues to astonish travelers from all over the world with luxury resort experiences, world-class dining and exciting entertainment." www.vegasmmeansbusiness.com



Ralenkotter

Orlando Plans for Another Banner Year

ORLANDO, FL — Named by Cvent as the No. 1 meetings destination in the U.S., Orlando continues to evolve by adding more event and meeting space, group dining venues, new teambuilding experiences and state-of-the-art expansions and upgrades. New in 2016: The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel is undergoing a multiphase, multiyear, \$125 million redesign project that will transform all 2,265 guest rooms in both the Swan and Dolphin buildings with a brand new look; Westgate Lakes Resort & Spa, one of Orlando's iconic condominium-style resorts, is expanding its meeting offerings with the development of 20,000 sf of new meeting and banquet space; DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld is undergoing a multimillion-dollar renovation featuring an all-new 20,000-sf ballroom, new pool decks, and 100,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space; Universal Orlando Resort and Loews Hotels & Resorts is building the 1,000-room Loews Sapphire Falls Resort, which is expected to open this summer; Walt Disney World Resort will complete the transformation of Downtown Disney into Disney Springs, which will double the number of shops, restaurants and other venues to more than 150 establishments; Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek commenced a major expansion project set to increase the resort's available meeting space by 7,000 sf by early May 2016. www.orlandomeeting.com

Caesars Entertainment Launches Self Check-In and Key Retrieval Kiosks

LAS VEGAS, NV — The first fully integrated self check-in program in Las Vegas that incorporates email, text, Web, mobile app and kiosks debuts at Caesars Entertainment Las Vegas Resorts. Upon arrival, guests proceed immediately to the check-in kiosk to begin the process, verifying their IDs and taking payment information at the machine, and either receive a printed key if their room is ready, or if it is not set up, receive an alert to return when their room becomes available. Additionally, guests who book their reservation directly through Caesars.com can begin their check-in process at home, either through the Web or through Caesars Entertainment's "play by Total Rewards" mobile application, and receive a notification when their room is ready.

Caesars Entertainment launched kiosks at The Linq Hotel & Casino, Flamingo Las Vegas and Caesars Palace, and in 2016, the kiosks are expected to become available at Paris Las Vegas and Bally's Las Vegas; Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino; Harrah's Las Vegas; and Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. www.caesars.com

Aria Introduces In-Room Technology

LAS VEGAS, NV — Aria Resort & Casino has collaborated with Crave Interactive to create the largest-ever installation of the provider's in-room hotel tablets, which will offer a hyper-tailored guest experience with new amenities such as digital in-room dining orders, one-touch spa service requests and an endless stream of news in multiple languages. Aria's Crave tablets will be offered in all 4,004 guest rooms. The installation will roll out through multiple phases, and future enhancements will include retail ordering, M life status and Tier Credit updates, customized messaging, tablet skins and graphics, social media and much more. www.aria.com

Julie Coker Graham New President and CEO of PHLCVB

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Julie Coker Graham on January 1, 2016, became the new president and CEO of the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) following the retirement of former President and CEO Jack Ferguson on December 31. Coker Graham is the only female African-American president and CEO to lead a major CVB in the top 50 U.S. markets.



Graham

"Julie Coker Graham is a talented, experienced and respected professional, and her hard work and dedication to Philadelphia during her tenure at the PHLCVB has been pivotal to the city's continued recognition as a first-choice destination for all visitors," said Nick DeBenedictis, PHLCVB chairman. www.discoverphl.com



Credits: 1-5 ASAE Sabrina Kikwai, APR, CAE; 6-8 IAAE

1-5 ASAE hosted its 10th Technology Conference & Expo, December 14-16, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center at National Harbor, Maryland. With a total of 1,292 total participants, it was the highest attendance ever. **1** Speaker Rick Smolan, CEO of Against All Odds Productions, and (r) ASAE's CIO Reggie Henry, CAE, discuss the impact of big data. **2** David Jovel and Jacqueline Abunassar from Real Magnet discuss their email marketing software with attendees. **3** Amy Adler and Roseanne Brown, with Community Associations Institute, enjoy the 10th Anniversary Party. **4** (l to r) Wes Trochliil with Effective Database Management LLC, David Gammel with Entomological Society of America, Dave Coriale with DelCor Technology Solutions and Howard Pollock with Abila at the 10th Anniversary Party. **5** Rachel Vogus, with the CFA Institute, at the learning labs. **6** Students from Johnson & Wales University enjoy Expo! Expo! IAAE's Annual Meeting & Exhibition 2015, held December 1-3 in Baltimore. This year's event attracted 2,328 attendees to the Baltimore Convention Center. **7** The gavel passes from 2015 IAAE Chairperson Megan Tanel, CEM, to 2016 IAAE Chairperson Julia Smith, CEM, CTA. **8** (l to r) Una Kilberg, CMP, CEM, Oncology Nursing Society; Kelli Lusk, Experient; and Alexandra D'Imperio, Door & Hardware Institute, pose for the IAAE photographer.

2016

Industry

Outlook

John H. Graham



Credit: Chuck Fazio

Technology, Mobile and Work Force Demographics Will Impact the Meetings Industry

By John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE

Editor's Note: Association Conventions & Facilities asked ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, FASE, CAE, to reflect on the key areas of our rapidly evolving industry that meeting and convention planners should be aware of in order to stay ahead of the curve in 2016. Also weighing in on the following pages are Phelps R. Hope, CMP, senior vice president of meetings and expositions for association management firm Kellen Company, and Tony Wagner, vice president of CWT Meetings & Events.

On a continual basis, associations need to examine their environment/markets to better understand how various trends may impact or even disrupt the industry. As we enter 2016, the following are some of the major trends that will influence data capture, planning and interacting with attendees.

ONSITE DATA CAPTURE — BEACONS

There is an ongoing need for associations to capture data about their members pertaining to marketing emails, sessions they attend during a meeting, and how they travel and interact on the exhibit hall floor. All of this data helps organizations understand their target audience, and it allows them to better plan meetings and education sessions.

One way for meeting planners to capture data is using beacons. There are two ways to use them: traditional and wearables. The traditional method involves integration between your beacon provider and your app provider. Beacons are placed throughout the venue (in session rooms, exhibit hall, etc.) and communicate with your attendees' smartphones to capture and aggregate data on their activity.

At the 2014 Technology Conference & Expo, ASAE worked with a company called TurnoutNow to deploy beacons. We tracked how attendees moved throughout the expo hall, education sessions and their visits to sponsored areas. After looking at the data from the first day, we made changes onsite to enhance attendee and exhibitor experiences. During our Marketing, Membership, & Communications Conference, we used beacons to track sessions attendees participated in to understand patterns as well as track hours for certifications.

With wearable beacons, the model is flipped. Beacons are placed in attendee badges, and transponders are in the session rooms and booths. Attendees don't need the app or smartphone to participate and can opt in or out fully when they register for the conference. ASAE tested this model during our 2015 Technology

Conference & Expo, December 15-16. We are considering using this technology for future shows in 2016.

Here are some benefits of using beacons:

ROI from organization's perspective:

- Understanding onsite attendee patterns, traffic, and consumption.
- Allows organizations to make real-time changes to enhance the attendee and exhibitor experience.
- Gives organizations the opportunity to provide better ROI to exhibitors and sponsors.
- Create accurate data on how attendees are utilizing the space, which will help book future events.
- Utilize gamification and motivate attendees to explore parts of the show they normally could not access.
- Opportunity to develop custom messaging and information based on attendees' location.

ROI from the exhibitor and sponsor side:

- Receive detailed traffic and visitor reports for each area of their booth.
- More accurate lead collection without having to scan an attendee badge.
- Provide booth traffic dashboards, including visitor demographics, that allow comparison to similar companies throughout the show floor.



ASAE staff place beacons on badges designed to capture data on attendee activity at ASAE's 2015 Technology Conference & Expo in December.

- Qualify leads as hot, warm or cold based on demographics, booths visited and sessions attended.

Attendees will gain:

- Event activity reports to include sessions attended, booths visited and hours for certifications.
- Recommend sessions, exhibitors and other attendees based on pre-show demographic data and real-time adjustments.
- Displays custom messaging based on location and provides an opportunity to participate in gamification activities.

MOBILE COMPUTING TREND WITH MEETINGS

The continuing, rapid increase in smartphone capabilities and their penetration within the U.S. and global population have resulted in a shift in demographics of mobile computing to what is called the connected generation. Simply, smartphones/mobile access and usage is rising across all demographic and ethnic segments.



The 2015 ASAE Great Ideas Conference in Orlando featured varied opportunities for engaging with fellow attendees face-to-face.

This has led to an increase in app usage deployed across our everyday lives as well as around meetings and events. During every meeting, attendees are tweeting, sharing content and blogging about their experience. Smartphones allow attendees to determine how they want to engage with the meeting, and they offer exhibitors and show organizers increased opportunities to communicate as well as interact.

In looking at how ASAE could enhance the attendee experience, ASAE's Meetings & Exposition Council developed an idea of creating a journey map designed to track attendees' experience in real time. ASAE worked with software developer *Conferences.io* to create Experience Guru, a tool that allows attendees to give immediate feedback through quick surveys.

Attendees at ASAE meetings opt-in and receive text messages throughout the conference. It's a simple survey via text, and attendees answer the questions by clicking on a smile or straight or frowning face. They also can make comments, which are then di-

rected to the appropriate staff member to respond. ASAE strives to exceed members' expectations, and this immediate feedback provides a chance to avoid having a negative experience turn into a lasting impression. In 2015, ASAE implemented this tool at our five major meetings. During the 2015 ASAE Annual Meeting and Exposition, we had just over 1,000 people participate, which is about 25 percent of our attendees including exhibitors.

EXPERIENTIAL TRADE SHOWS

Technology has and will continue to add participation around meetings, but it's important for associations not to lose sight of an exhibition as an "experience." The meetings and events industry needs to find new ways to keep in-person, face-to-face trade show experiences dynamic and engaging at a high level relative to other media experiences.

Here are some questions organizations should ask:

- Will "gamification" be a necessity for all show configurations?
- Will "apps" become the engagement tool that drives the onsite experience?
- Will knowing an exhibition is a green event increase engagement?

In the past, ASAE has incorporated different activities to enhance the in-person experience including: a Jumbotron on the show floor showing live tweets, pictures, video of attendees as well as capturing live activities. During our 2014 Annual Meeting & Exposition, we created a scratch-off card that attendees took to a designated partner booth to be entered into a drawing for a grand prize. Throughout the expo hall and convention center, we created areas that encourage community such as Food Markets where attendees can eat and socialize. We also incorporated elements of technology where people can take pictures and tweet about the event.

SOCIETAL AND GENERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to the 2014 CEIR Index Report, accounting firm Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) expects millennials to constitute 80 percent of its global work force by 2016. Hartford Financial Services Group estimates this demographic will make up 75 percent of the entire U.S. work force by 2025. Some work force experts believe this rapid demographic change will have a tsunami effect in terms of organizational composition, technology use expectations and cross-generational employee issues.

Over the next few years, associations have to consider how to reach and engage all generations around their meetings and educational programs. How are we going to communicate the value of face-to-face meetings to people under 30, the "online generation"? We need to focus on developing customized communication and content that effectively reaches each audience segment. We also need to customize the show experience to ensure they are attractive to multigenerational audiences. Lastly, associations

need to consider the digital and print materials mix, tailored marketing and education offerings.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

As we move through 2016, it's possible some or even all of these trends may disrupt the meetings industry. Technology may be part of the disruption, but it can also be part of the solution. It's critical for the exhibits and events industry to be aware and keep up with the changing world, so we can meet the needs, wants, and desires of our members and exhibitors now and into the future.

AC&F

John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE, became the President and Chief Executive Officer of ASAE August 1, 2003. During the first year of his tenure, ASAE and GWSAE completed a historic merger resulting in a new, unified organization. Before ASAE, he served the American Diabetes Association (ADA) in Alexandria, Virginia for 24 years, the last 13 as Chief Executive Officer. Prior to ADA, John served the Boy Scouts of America for nine years. He serves on the Association Committee of 100, US Chamber of Commerce; Chairman of the Better Business Bureau Mobile Giving Foundation Board of Directors; and the boards of directors of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and the National Capital Area Boy Scouts of America.



3 Factors That Will Impact Your 2016 F&B Budget From Drought to Service Charges, Brace for Higher Costs

By Phelps R. Hope

Event attendees have to eat. That will never change. But what is constantly changing is the cost to feed them. Global supply chains are always in flux, and even slight upward and downward economical ticks can reverberate across the food and beverage industry, and upend your event plan. Sometimes it even feels like we're fighting the very forces of nature to get reasonably priced hors d'oeuvres.

The next year isn't shaping up to be the easiest in terms of reining in your food budget. But the good news is that there are

creative ways to shore up overhead costs while keeping your event attendees intrigued and satisfied. Here are a few ways the 2016 food and beverage landscape is expected to change and how you can make the most of it.

1 MOTHER NATURE IS DRYING UP YOUR OPTIONS

The last year saw serious weather-related catastrophes ranging from flooding to drought — none of it good for crops. And when the crops take a hit, you can expect the consequences to eventually trickle down to you. In short, base your 2016

food and beverage budget on 2015's headlines. For the purposes of this article, let's focus on California's, now in its fourth year of extreme drought conditions and with no signs of letting up in 2016.

Depending on whom you ask, the effects of the drought on consumer food prices range from minimal to severe. Canadian consumers, for example, have reported fruit and vegetable prices up between 4 percent and 9 percent between 2014 and 2015, compared with an overall inflation rate of just over 2 percent. The price of lettuce — an events menu staple — was up as much as 40 percent. Others are more optimistic about the lasting effect of drought on food prices, at least as it is specific to California. *The Wall Street Journal* suggests that diversified food sources and an impressively drought-resistant farming infrastructure in that region have so far spared us from skyrocketing food costs and might continue to do so into 2016.

Regardless, events planners know that they have to brace for the worst. At the very least, the drought has illustrated that finicky weather patterns can have unexpected effects on food prices. And should droughts spread beyond areas with the right infrastructures to minimize consequences, you have to have the flexibility to deflect the rising costs of specific crops.

2 MORE OF YOUR F&B BUDGET WILL GO TOWARD WAGES

A public outcry for higher wages is taking hold and could gain steam in 2016. Of course, there are consequences to higher wages — namely, the money has to come from somewhere, and it could be coming directly out of your F&B budget.

When you look at whose wages are likeliest to increase, it doesn't paint a pretty picture for events planners. The Pew Research Center reports that the impact of minimum wage increases are enormously skewed toward the food service industry. In fact, it's the "single biggest employer of near-minimum-wage workers," according to Pew, with actual occupations ranging from cooks and waiters to janitors and building cleaners. As it happens, those are exactly the people you need to pull off a successful event that includes food service.

Aside from reducing services, there isn't a whole lot you as an events planner can do to mitigate the anticipated increase in overhead, as it relates to compensating for hourly wages. Rather, it is important that you brace for the higher costs in 2016 with a higher or reorganized events budget.

3 HOTELS AND FACILITIES WILL INSIST YOU SHARE THE COST

The last year was a banner one in terms of hotels and facilities cashing in on service charges. In part, it helps them mitigate their own increasing expenses, but it has evolved to be a key money-maker that increases their overall profits. It's a trend that's not fading away in 2016; if anything, expect service charg-

es to continue to inch up, with some hotels charging upwards of 24 percent.

In simpler times, an optional gratuity of sorts would suffice, and only if a venue exceeded your expectations. Let's say a venue made out-of-the-ordinary changes in their own protocol to accommodate your event's main dinner, so you would reward them in-kind with the assumption that your service tip would be distributed to staff and workers on the ground who made it possible. But as you now know, service charges have morphed so that they are no longer optional and no longer based on quality of service. Rather, hotels and facilities are tacking on exorbitant service charges to cover their own rising expenses. In other words, you're paying more for the same.

Revenues from hotel service charges are reaching record highs, and the hotels themselves have absolutely no reason to deviate from the course. As an industry, it's forcing us to be more creative to mitigate these previously flexible overhead costs.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We've covered the key obstacles anticipated for 2016. Now for some solutions. Here are just a few ways you can change up your routine and negotiating styles in order to keep your events fun, well stocked with food and within budget.

- **Shake up your menu.** You're used to the same menu options, and so are your attendees. But that doesn't mean they won't appreciate a little variety. Pay close attention to produce that is seeing higher-than-normal inflations (lettuce for example) and opt for interesting options that are often overlooked.
- **Theme your event.** Smoke and mirrors can do wonders in terms of shoring up your F&B budget. Themed meals (like international cuisine) are an excellent way to phase in affordable food options without sacrificing the overall dining experience.
- **Don't waste budget on fancy prep work.** Presentation of food takes time, and time is money. You have plenty of fine-looking food options that require little or no prep work. Expenses like food prep really add up, so going simple is a great way to cut costs.
- **Go local and seasonal.** Work with the chef on lower cost local foods that are in season to help keep the costs down and add the local flavor into the event.

In summary, 2016 will be a year of challenges and creativity. It will test your imagination, but ultimately, it could improve your overall process and how you plan events. AC&F

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

Tony Wagner



Tips & Tools to Plan a Better Year

From Meetings Management Strategies to Technology Solutions

By Tony Wagner

Wondering what 2016 will bring for the meetings and events industry? In partnership with the GBTA Foundation, CWT Meetings & Events recently released its annual 2016 Meetings and Events Forecast, which outlines what we expect the coming year to look like for the industry, including tighter hotel cancellation policies, growing food and beverage (F&B) costs and an increased focus on compliance. This forecast explores price projection for hotels, provides details on what's coming in terms of supply and demand, emerging trends and recommendations to succeed in 2016.

A SELLER'S MARKET

Strong performance for suppliers is expected as demand continues to grow this year, particularly in North America. With demand outweighing supply, 2016 will be a year of stronger supplier power that will cause challenges for meeting planners. Notable changes coming to the industry in 2016 include: global adaptation of Strategic Meetings Management, increasing food and beverage costs, and higher price and lower flexibility in hotel bookings.

Strategic Meetings Management

With this environment, it's important to find ways to bring meetings under more management to find efficiencies and cut

costs. North America is still the most mature market for SMM; however, regions like Latin America and Asia Pacific are beginning to see an increased interest in it, which could lead to higher momentum across the industry globally.

Food and Beverage

F&B remains to be a significant force behind per-attendee costs at events. A strong focus on providing locally grown, sustainable and organic menus for event catering will continue into 2016. Planners must adjust the F&B patterns to manage budgets and accommodate the usually higher prices of these menu items, while also continuing to promote healthy alternatives.

Hotels

As demand continues to exceed supply in North America, hotel prices will increase globally in 2016. While Europe sees slow but steady growth, economic challenges in Asia and Latin America are causing uncertainty in supply that will likely linger in the coming year. As a result, hotels are reducing flexibility when it comes to key clauses related to cancellation and attrition policies in both rooms and F&B. Hotels are limiting re-booking for future dates and making it harder to resell unneeded rooms. Finally, when responding to availability requests, hotels in high-demand markets are no longer holding space.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Considering these trends, we've created the top five tips for success when it comes to negotiating with suppliers and planning for 2016:

1 Consolidate for control and savings.

Efficiency should remain a crucial point of focus for companies as they work to control spending and increase savings on M&E processes. Using an enterprisewide SMM program can help realize these cost savings while streamlining and consolidating hotel strategies. In turn, cost-saving opportunities within travel patterns, and key and emerging markets can be more easily recognized.

2 Plan ahead.

By getting ahead of the curve, negotiation power for large events can increase substantially and bring more savings for the event. Lead time for registration and venue contracts continues to decrease, so it's important to boost negotiation power whenever possible by planning far in advance for larger events.

3 Look at F&B costs.

The U.S. has seen an increase of 2.9 percent year-over-year for F&B, and that pressure continues to have a substantial impact on cost-per-attendee. Consider trading down on menu items that don't largely influence attendees, such as moving from bottled water to tap water, to slightly relieve the cost. Also consider reducing the number of breaks during an event to further manage F&B.

4 Limit your risk with hotels.

As cancellation clauses experience increased pressure and attrition remains relatively stable, it's important to understand your options when negotiating. Consider establishing an addendum for desired cancellation terms with preferred suppliers. Not only will this establish best terms, it also will mitigate the risk of additional charges.

5 Engage in strategic contract management.

Look at a broader, more connected view of all meeting-related agreements. Streamlining the management process will ensure alignment with legal and demonstrate clear efficiency and cost-savings benefits. Organizations can use this foundation to negotiate master service agreements with key sellers and find opportunities to develop customized negotiation strategies for high-volume markets.

INNOVATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

As technology solutions continually improve efficiency, create clarity and enable reporting, these same solutions also help you better manage the cost of meetings. CWT Meeting & Events' dedicated meetings and events app, Meet by CWT M&E, provides attendees at meetings or events of any size with tools and functionality that address the overall experience. By

using technology to gain visibility and collect the right data for event needs, these capabilities can make meeting management more efficient and easier.

1 Online registration tools.

Online adoption, tracking and monitoring will grow as more organizations activate small meeting strategies. Using online registration tools will help increase savings and give organizations greater visibility and transparency.

2 Social media and meetings apps.

Social media use will continue to grow, as the younger generations appreciate the immediate connection that is available through digital channels and mobile apps. Clients will look to implement apps throughout the planning, onsite and post-event stages of a meeting or event. New technology will create an innovative experience that can allow companies to measure effectiveness and return-on-investment.

3 Tools to address unmanaged spend and small meetings.

Even managing the smallest meeting can make a difference toward savings and budget goals for an organization's M&E program. By implementing a small meetings solution, organizations can take control of current unmanaged spend through self-service tools that are available. However, it's important to choose intuitive tools and educate planners on how to use them properly and effectively. Otherwise, the goal of increasing efficiency will be missed entirely.

4 Virtual and hybrid meetings.

Though it's not a new tool, it's important to consider whether or not a virtual meeting is the right solution for an event. Ask the question: Would the organization's culture support a virtual meeting for this need? Is a more personal, in-person approach necessary? Local offices or lower-cost markets are also options when an organization requires additional cost savings for a meeting but can't incorporate a hybrid option.

As we move into 2016, planners must bring meetings under more management to boost the leverage and negotiation power with suppliers. Additionally, this increased management can create better efficiency for meetings and events planning, and drive stronger interest in SMM and consolidation. In order to stay atop of the upcoming year, organizations must adapt to the changing meetings and events landscape and get ahead of the curve by leveraging meetings in the most efficient way to help drive a smart and innovative business. AC&E

Tony Wagner is the vice president of CWT Meetings & Events for the Americas. He leads an expanding line of business which has doubled in growth since 2009. His team of 400-plus employees across nine countries in North America and Latin America support more than 10,000 meetings and events annually. Wagner is also a member of the CWT Americas leadership team.



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Marketing to Millennials

Event Engagement Strategies to Win Over the Next Generation of Membership

By Patrick Simms

The vitality of a trade association and its meetings requires a fully engaged membership, including professionals of all ages. But the long-term vitality of the organization requires a particular focus on millennials, aka Generation Y. If these young professionals and college students do not see sufficient value in membership and meeting attendance, they will not likely become the lifelong participants the association needs in order to maintain its numbers decades from now. That calls for marketing targeted to that demographic segment, even if the segment is relatively small.



The National Association of Home Builders, for example, has approximately 140,000 members, about 75 percent of whom are senior-level professionals. But “just like every organization, we have recognized the need to increase the marketing to young professionals to try to get them to participate in NAHB,” notes Lakisha A. Woods, CAE, senior vice president and chief marketing officer.

The marketing initiative will be supported by a new young professionals committee launching just after the 2016 International Builders Show, January 19–21 in Las Vegas. “Many of our local organizations have had young professionals groups, and now it will extend to our national organization as well. We actually have a full list of people who have requested to become a part of it,” says Woods. “Right now the committee is for the organization, not necessarily for the show, but we are hoping that they will provide feedback on the best way to reach this audience, the needs of that group, and maybe (lead us to make) adjustments in how we market the organization itself.”

Thus, the need to engage the younger contingent sometimes calls for structural changes in an association, such as a new committee or a new staff position. Monica Groh is director of emerging professionals at the American Planning Association (APA), which represents urban and regional planners with a total membership of about 38,000. “I think that a big turning point for us was probably a couple years ago we realized that over 90 percent of all of our new members were students. We enroll about 2,500 students in planning programs and then another 300 or so that are in nonplanning programs, but usually in allied fields,” Groh says. “So that led to the creation of my position within the organization and focusing a ton of energy and resources on our next generation.”

A similar focus is in place at the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), whose New Teacher Conference is geared toward teachers with one to six years of experience. A representative session from the 2011 installment at Mohegan Sun Conference Center was titled: “You’ve Landed Your First Teaching Job, Now Learn How to Stay Employed.” While some of these teachers are entering the profession as a second career and thus older, “for the most part they are recent college graduates,” says Elizabeth D. Antonopoulos, CMP, CMM, meeting and events planner for the CEA. “Especially with baby boomers retiring, who tend to make up a majority of our active members, it’s becoming more important to engage our newer members.”

Similar to the young professionals committee that the NAHB is starting, the CEA has a committee of new teachers. Committee members are often former participants in the CEA’s student program, which is an effective outreach to that demographic. “We’re touching kids in their college years, and a lot of them become active in the union as a result of being involved,” Antonopoulos comments.

The APA also seeks to develop new members and meeting attendees at the student level, and takes a multifaceted approach

“Many of our local organizations have had young professionals groups, and now it will extend to our national organization as well. ...We are hoping that they will provide feedback on the best way to reach this audience.”



Lakisha A. Woods, CAE
Senior V.P. and CMO
National Association of Home Builders
Washington, DC

that includes discounted registration for its National Planning Conference, student volunteer programs and e-marketing. “We have e-toolkits for universities to help us promote the conference,” Groh says. “They’re kind of a combination of messaging, (including) e-flyers that they can print out and put in their student lobbies, and prepackaged messages that program chairs can put into their student listservs or have teachers announce during class.”

PEER TESTIMONIALS

A common way to market to any segment is to feature testimonials from members in that segment, and those on the CEA’s new teacher committee are effective ambassadors for what the union offers teachers in the early stages of the profession. “The 15–20 members who sit on that committee do a lot of the testimonials and a lot of the recruiting,” says Antonopoulos. “They make personal phone calls, and we put them into our publications and our marketing materials.”

Peer testimonials also are a powerful way to market the annual meeting, and may resonate especially with millennials, a generation that thrives on peer reviews of products and services on media such as Yelp and YouTube. “What really helps is testimonials about good face-to-face experiences,” says Groh. “I think we’re learning that millennials don’t just want electronic networking; face to face is still of a very high value to them, and the conference is a really good place to do that. They can meet new peers, mentors and employers. So we highlight those things in our testimonials; for example, ‘I got hired because I did the mentor match program.’”

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media outlets are clearly especially important when trying to engage millennials, and as the category of “emerging professionals” has increased at NACE, The National Association of Colleges & Employers, “we are increasing our social media presence and we are on Twitter a lot, much more than in the past,” notes Megan Ogden, CMP, director, meetings and events. In general, direct mail marketing is deemphasized for younger members and potential members. “We don’t do as much direct mailing for our



“We don’t do as much direct mailing for our younger members, but a lot of email marketing and social media marketing.”

Elizabeth D. Antonopoulos CMP, CMM, Meeting & Events Planner
Connecticut Education Association, Hartford, CT

younger members, but a lot of email marketing and social media marketing,” says Antonopoulos, who advises marketers to “keep it short: ‘click here and you’re registered for the conference.’” The APA recently has been conducting a “countdown to the convention” campaign with images on Facebook that illustrate what members can do in the host city, Groh relates. However, “we still send out postcards; I think those have continued to be successful as you can put them on your refrigerator and not forget about (the convention). But we’ve gotten away from printed programs.” Younger members tend to be more attuned to the “green” initiatives, and some may not look favorably on the unnecessary use of printed conference materials.

In contrast, promotion to older members often deemphasizes social media and e-marketing. “We also have a retirement division,” says Antonopoulos, “and it’s a whole different set of marketing; the e-marketing for the retirees doesn’t go as well, so they have more direct mail. With our younger members we send out a weekly blog; to our older members we still send a quarterly newspaper.” There are nearly always exceptions to generalizations based on age, however. The CEA’s older members “do respond well on Facebook, which was surprising — a larger number than we thought,” she adds.

CAREER-FOCUSED CONTENT

Relatively safe assumptions can be made about the kind of meeting content that will engage younger and older members based on their career levels. The NAHB, for example, has recently launched a Master Sessions program at the International Builders Show that will primarily attract high-level business

owners. “They are three hours of in-depth knowledge on specific areas of growing your business,” Woods explains. Based on member feedback, “we started the program this past year, and it has been very successful.”

At the other end of the spectrum, younger professionals and students are of course focused on getting their career off to a promising start, and the APA runs an all-day workshop called the Emerging Professionals Institute “that’s all about ‘how do I get the right job and how do I get hired,’” says Groh. “The Institute is successful because it’s small: 40 participants interacting with six seasoned professionals.” The informal setting “gets away from listening passively to the three-person panel and features more interaction and discussion.”

New to the National Planning Conference is the Career Zone, which is “intended to provide emerging professionals with different types of experiences related to your career,” says Groh. “So, for example, we have onsite resume reviewers, mock interview workshops, information on exploring different career paths, like public sector, private sector and international experiences. We know this group is all about careers.”



NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Networking opportunities are a major piece of the engagement puzzle, and the APA offers its Young Planners Group both informal scenarios such as a pub crawl or scavenger hunt and formal ones that are still fun. “We do speed networking,” says Groh. “We have 10 seasoned professionals at a table, and for 20

minutes at a time, you and seven other emerging professionals can sit at that table, shoot off questions and then rotate to a handful of other people. It’s a good way of testing out different professionals.”

Similarly, the NAHB offers a variety of networking scenarios for its younger members, including the Young Professionals After Hours Party, which this year will be held at the Foxtail Nightclub at SLS in Las Vegas. “And that is really promoted heavily on social media,” Woods says. In addition, members can mingle at the House Party, to be held again at Brooklyn Bowl at the Linq, and the Under 40 Builders — Panel Discussion & Mixer. The latter is promoted with an inviting, casual tone on the Builders Show site: “Grab a beer, listen to the panel discuss their challenges and accomplishments, and enjoy a great conversation with the under-40 crowd!” The show’s headlining entertainment — Jay Leno and Hall & Oates — naturally appeals to the Gen X and older segment that is the NAHB’s largest. But the parties at Brooklyn Bowl and Foxtail Nightclub will doubtless feature the trendiest musical entertainment.

AVOIDING AGE SEGREGATION

While these events tend to attract the Gen Y set, “there are no age restrictions,” Woods says. “If you want to attend you can. But when you’ve got young professionals promoting the fact that they’re going to this event, then others attend.” Groh observes that classifying events based on specific age ranges is not a good idea. “I think it is a challenge for associations: If you have an age cutoff some people get frustrated. So the way that we categorize is basically students and those that are new to a professional career, and we let people self-define whether or not they think they should be in this group. So you don’t have to qualify to be an emerging professional to take advantage of these offerings. We say these are activities for emerging professionals, and you decide whether you think this is relevant to your career.”

NONTRADITIONAL MEETING DESIGN

As illustrated by the APA’s Emerging Professionals Institute and speed networking sessions, designing events for younger members is an opportunity for planners to experiment with nontraditional formats that such attendees are generally more open to.

The CEA has done an “unconference” (a highly interactive meeting where the attendees drive the agenda) for its new teachers in the past. “During online registration, they can put down some-



thing they need to learn as a new teacher, or something they’d like to know more about,” Antonopoulos explains. “They also have the opportunity of putting in something that they feel they could have a discussion on and possibly lead that discussion.” NACE is currently developing its young professionals event for 2016, and

“Face to face is still of a very high value to (millennials), and the conference is a really good place to do that. They can meet new peers, mentors and employers. So we highlight those things in our testimonials.”

Monica Groh
Director of Emerging Professionals
American Planning Association
Washington, DC

Ogden is “thinking about a nontraditional format to engage the audience in not just networking but also content learning. From our data we know that networking is one of the key reasons that our audience attends the conference. It kills two birds with one stone if you incorporate learning into networking,” she explains. Young professionals, she says, “want to use intermediate and advanced level professionals as mentors and network with them, but also they certainly want (to connect with) audience members who are in their peer category.”



MENTORSHIP

Mentorship programs actually serve to engage both ends of the generational spectrum: Younger members want the knowledge, and senior-level members often enjoy the opportunity to impart their knowledge. The CEA is in the process of creating a new mentorship program for teachers who are in years 7–15 to mentor new teachers, notes Antonopoulos.

As far as meeting content that engages its retired teachers, the CEA offers a variety of sessions on topics such as learning new technology and retirement pensions. “We have also brought in educational travel program (representatives) to speak to our retired attendees on how to continue their education through travel. One is called Roads Scholars,” she says. When it comes to networking events for this generational segment, “they prefer the sit-down lunch, (while the younger set prefers) the reception ‘mix and mingle,’” Antonopoulos observes.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Diverse generations such as millennials and baby boomers also can sometimes find a common ground apart from their involvement in the association itself. When that is the case, planners can design a special event around that commonality. For example, at the CEA “we do an event every year with the retired and the students combined. They usually do a community project together like fixing up a school library or a book drive, something that gives back to the community and gets the two generations to work together. They both enjoy community service,” Antonopoulos says. Such events foster a camaraderie that transcends generations and creates a stronger sense of unity among the entire membership. When integrated into the annual convention, they also strengthen the event’s value proposition for members of all ages and professionals levels.

“Young professionals want to use intermediate and advanced level professionals as mentors and network with them, but also they certainly want (to connect with) audience members who are in their peer category.”

Megan Ogden, CMP
 Director, Meetings & Events
 NACE, The National Association of Colleges & Employers
 Bethlehem, PA

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Playing It Smart With Risk Management



A Game Plan Is Essential to Keep People Safe and Secure

By Mark Rowh

Any meeting holds inherent risk. But for association planners, the challenges may be complicated by the independent nature of membership. Unlike in the corporate world, where employees must adhere to company policies and procedures, association planners may have little control over their attendees, who in many ways are on their own. While corporate planners can take advantage of everything from company travel policies and communication channels to in-house employee training in traveling safely, those charged with planning meetings for associations have fewer such options at their disposal.

At the same time, the importance of managing risk is no less an imperative for associations than for any other type of meeting.

"With everything going on in the world, you need to keep your folks safe," says Karen Bilak, CMP, director, convention and conferences for the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry in Falls Church, Virginia. "It's important to have a game plan. There are a lot of things you might deal with that you never thought would happen."

Bilak and other experienced meeting planners know that preparedness is the key when it comes to managing all levels of risk, from threats to physical security and safety, to venue snafus.

"Things happen, and we need to be prepared to handle anything that might come our way," says Addy M. Kujawa, CAE,

the CEO of the American Association of Orthopaedic Executives in Indianapolis. "Most of us have not been through a Hurricane Katrina or other event that caused us to cancel a meeting, but if it happens, a disaster manual is essential."

She cites developing such a manual as a basic key to managing risk. "Being able to grab our manual should something happen and be able to follow the procedures that were written when we were not in crisis will be extremely beneficial to us and to all our attendees, vendors, guests and speakers," she says.

Sometimes people dwell on the more dramatic possibilities such as a venue getting hit by a tornado or a hurricane, Kujawa says. "But far smaller things happen more often and can really negatively affect your meeting." She points to keynote cancellations as a typical such problem.

"Keynoters are usually a big draw and replacing them last minute can be tough," she says. "So we always have a few contacts at the ready, just in case."

Kujawa also recommends having a plan or protocol for dealing with people whose emotions have gotten the best of them.

"We've had more than one occasion of a member, vendor or speaker just becoming overwrought about some issue, whether it was something we could even address or not," she says. "Knowing what to do in those situations, including where to go and who to call, is really important."

Kujawa adds that losing information can be a crisis of a different sort.

"For info such as bios, presentations, speeches, scripts and awards, a backup and a backup of the backup are critical," she says. She and her staff duplicate several sets of key information on flash drives that different staff members carry, and they also use SharePoint. "We want to be sure we never have to recreate something while we're at the meeting."

In the event that the unexpected occurs, staying calm and



falling back on previous preparations are vital steps, according to Kujawa. “Stay calm, get support and follow your manual. Being prepared is your best asset, along with knowing who to surround yourself with for the support and clear heads you’ll need.”

GOING BEYOND THE MUNDANE

With the many details involved in planning meetings, dwelling on security may seem like one more mundane task. But its importance should never be underestimated.

“Though event managers have a seemingly infinite number of things to worry about when planning a conference or meeting, risk management is an extremely important part of the event planning process and should not be taken lightly,” says Christopher Tarantino, CEO of Epicenter Media & Training in Rochester, New York, and an expert on crisis communications.

He notes that failing to plan for security, natural hazards or



Christopher Tarantino
CEO
Epicenter Media & Training
Rochester, NY

“Though event managers have a seemingly infinite number of things to worry about when planning a meeting, risk management is an extremely important part of the process and should not be taken lightly.”

any interruption to a meeting will directly affect future attendance, ROI and sponsorship. Event managers need to take into consideration natural disasters, potential terrorist and criminal threats, as well as public relations and crisis communications implications that could arise during their event, he says.

“Further, event organizers should understand that even the risk of such events could dissuade participants and sponsors from supporting or attending the meeting,” he adds.

And of course the ultimate emphasis should be placed on the safety of attendees.

“Unless people and property are safe, nothing else matters,” says Joan L. Eisenstodt, a Washington, DC, meetings and hospitality consultant who provides training in security issues. “A group can plan the best content, have superb entertainment and food and beverage, and if one thing — like food poisoning, assault, fire or anything else happens — that will mean that the meeting or event stops or continues under very different circumstances.”

She notes that too often planners say that nothing has hap-

pened before so they fail to prepare, or they believe that the facility is responsible for security. “They are only part of the equation,” she says. “We have to play an active role.”

When planners think of emergencies or crises, they tend to think of weather, which is actually easier to deal with than many other situations because of the availability of predictions, Eisenstodt says.

“There is nothing safe about asking people to travel and be in a crowd,” Eisenstodt says. “Our jobs are to ensure that we have thought of as much as we can to keep people and property safe.”

Eisenstodt recalls situations ranging from deaths and severe illnesses at meetings to her own accident where her hand was caught in a hotel door. The result was a deep gash requiring a trip to the emergency room, which turned out to be 35 minutes away.

She also cites an incident at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Vegas where the fake palm trees caught fire, as well as a situation where another hotel had a shooter in the lobby but the facility lacked an active shooter plan.

“I look at the shootings and knifings and how easy it would be for anyone to get into a meeting facility, since they are almost all public and anyone can walk in, and how there are few shelter-in-place or active shooter plans,” she says.

Eisenstodt says a good starting point with any event is destination and site inspection. This can include research about destination infrastructure, the availability of AEDs, the number of people trained in CPR, and evacuation and shelter-in-place plans.

She also recommends writing a crisis plan that is integrated with the destination and sites.

“Understand what local authorities can and can’t do, what your hotel or convention center is prepared to do, and how you will communicate with all of them and with those attending the meeting,” she says.

Tarantino says that convention centers, hotels and other conference venues may be seen as “soft targets” since they usually feature both limited security and high visibility for those interested in causing harm or instilling fear. If risk management isn’t a priority of the event manager, it may be overlooked.

While a laundry list of possible crises can be a long one, potential problems can be grouped into several priority areas. Tarantino advises preparing first for natural hazards such as tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding or earthquakes, and then evaluating other hazards or threats that could have a negative impact on events. These might range from public relations crises to criminal or terrorist threats. And for some, a fairly simple avoidance strategy can make sense. For example, meeting managers might want to avoid scheduling major events in “Tornado Alley” from April through July or during the Atlantic hurricane season from June 1–November 30.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Michael Julian, president of National Business Investigations and Minders Protective Services in Murrita, California, says that security should be considered at some level by everyone involved in the meeting process, not just the chief planner.

“It doesn’t have to be the first priority in some instances based on the risk or threat level,” he says. “But everyone should learn to have a security mindset and make planning from a security-minded position the standard.”

In the event that the unexpected occurs, planners and those working with them must be able to move from possibility thinking to action.

“If there’s a plan in place, implement it,” Eisenstodt says. If a plan has not been developed, don’t panic. Instead, contact the facility’s security first before calling 911. “The venue will know who to call, what to tell them and how to get help most quickly,” she says.

When issues arise, a number of steps must be taken to mitigate potential negative outcomes, according to Mazda Miles, CMM, president of Perfection Events, a Philadelphia event planning firm. They include communicating with staff, stakeholders

“There is generally limited time to address issues when they surface, so it is key to have risk and security plans in place, or to at least have a plan for how the team will approach making critical decisions in this area.”



Mazda Miles, CMM
President
Perfection Events
Philadelphia, PA

and meeting attendees, collaborating with partners or vendors, and reshaping execution logistics and needs.

“There is generally limited time to address issues when they surface, so it is key to have risk and security plans in place, or to at least have a plan for how the team will approach making critical decisions in this area,” Miles says. “Being prepared and equipped with a way forward gives the planner a leg up in successfully navigating the crisis.”

Sometimes, an incident or even a close call can bring focus to the need for solid procedures or validate those already in place.

Acting Quickly

Perfection Events president Mazda Miles, CMM, offers these action steps in the event of a potential emergency:

- Step 1** Assess whether the situation requires emergency evacuation or security breach protocols. If so, immediately activate those protocols to keep everyone safe and secure.
- Step 2** If the situation is not an emergency, start with a brief conversation with the key stakeholder (meeting host) to discuss the situation and the intended solution.
- Step 3** Once a path forward is agreed upon, convene the key stakeholders from the venue, vendors and your team to communicate the plan and discuss communication/messaging to attendees, plan time lines, and checkpoints along the way. For instance, meet again in the staff office in two hours to reassess plans.
- Step 4** Activate the plan, and continue keeping key stakeholders informed so they are equipped and empowered to provide updates to other executives or the public if necessary.

— MR



“With everything going on in the world, you need to keep your folks safe. It’s important to have a game plan. There are a lot of things you might deal with that you never thought would happen.”

Karen Bilak, CMP
Director, Convention & Conferences, Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry
Falls Church, VA

That was the experience for Miles at a large association conference when a projector valued at about \$10,000 was reported to be missing from a room.

“We immediately connected with the loss prevention department of the venue and also brought in the security firm that we had hired for the event,” she recalls. “As the lead meeting planner for the conference, I had painstakingly designed the security support shifts and post locations, and it was particularly confusing that a piece of equipment that large could have been taken out of the building unnoticed.”

Fortunately, the projector was soon found in a service hallway that led to an exit. Apparently, the would-be thief found that an overnight guard was posted in a prime position on the exit path and abandoned the attempted theft.

“We were disappointed about the attempted theft but elated that our security plans prevented it,” she says. “This incident validated our belief that risk planning is necessary in our work.”

Some simple strategies, such as gathering information and anticipating possible problems, can be undertaken with little difficulty.

“Meeting planners are not expected to be experts at safety and security regulations, but we can equip ourselves with information to be prepared to react to crisis,” Miles says. “One simple step any planner can take is to request that meeting attendees list emergency contact information and medical conditions when they register.”

She adds that every planner should obtain a copy of the emergency and evacuation procedures for a venue and review key components.

“Even if a formal plan is not necessary, thinking about contingencies in advance will give a planner an advantage when faced with a safety or security concern,” she says.

Miles also recommends using previous experience to inform risk planning. In her case, an incident at an association conference provided just an example. During the event, the host hotel, which was also the site of a major conference gala, suffered an electrical fire that displaced almost 700 guests and rendered the hotel ballroom unfit for use for the gala.

“We had only a few hours to figure out contingencies for rerouting current and arriving guests, and to determine how and where to hold the gala given that our production, décor, and partially prepared food were irretrievable,” she says. “We worked closely with our partners and vendors to successfully develop and execute a contingency plan.”

The experience proved beneficial in dealing with a similar event the following year. An outdoor pitched tent being used as an annex for overflow meals had an air conditioning unit short out, causing a fire just before breakfast. Miles and her staff promptly changed the course of the setup and operations for the meal, and seamlessly rerouted thousands of attendees to an alternate location for breakfast.

“These experiences ingrained key preparation lessons in my mind and taught me to always think about displacement, emergency and evacuation scenarios in advance,” Miles says. “I leave room for if/then considerations because I now know that anything is possible.”

Regardless of the type or level of threat, taking initiative in both planning and implementation is vital.

“Most of us have not been through a Hurricane Katrina or other event that caused us to cancel a meeting, but if it happens, a disaster manual is essential!”



Addy M. Kujawa, CAE
CEO

American Association of Orthopaedic Executives
Indianapolis, IN

“The biggest sin in risk management is not being proactive,” Tarantino says. “Event managers should do their homework and understand the natural hazards and man-made threats that could impact their event.” He notes that it’s also important for meeting planners to understand the diversity inherent in attempting to manage risk. At one end of the spectrum, efforts might include checkpoints and access control measures to reduce petty theft. At the other, they might address how the event will operate under a large-scale disaster or emergency requiring immediate evacuations of the event space.

Creative anticipation of possible problems is a key part of the process, according to Julian. “Try to have imagined every scenario — such as active shooter, natural disaster or hostile attendee — and know how to react before it happens. It can be unexpected but it doesn’t have to be unprepared for.”

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The 2016 Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting was held in March at the Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

Medical Meccas

More Cities Build Health Care Hubs to Attract Medical Meetings

By Maura Keller

When the Hinman Dental Society orchestrates its annual Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting, they set their sights on Atlanta. Not only does the HDS call Atlanta “home,” but they are always looking for a city that is medically and health care-focused at its core. And the HDS is not alone. Many medical and health care associations and organizations hold their conventions, meetings, and gatherings in leading-edge cities that are becoming medical meccas for the health care community.

FINDING A PERFECT FIT IN ATLANTA

As Sylvia Ratchford, executive director of the Hinman Dental Society explains, her association has always met in Atlanta, and the 2016 meeting will mark their 104th gathering. For the March 17–19, 2016 meeting, they are offering 290 educational courses and

special events, and an exhibit hall with more than 800 booths featuring 400-plus companies. They also use about 5,000 sleeping rooms on the peak night.

“We started small, with 120 attendees, and have grown to 23,000 attendees,” Ratchford says. “Atlanta accommodates all sizes and styles of meetings — whether in one hotel or conference center or in many. We produce about 55 meetings a year, ranging in size from 12 to 23,000 so we have a variety of needs.”

Atlanta serves as a hub for medical conventions in part because it is home to industry leaders such as the Centers for Disease Control and Emory University.

“One of the unique aspects about hosting medical meetings in our city is that attendees, exhibitors and speakers are easy to come by because Atlanta is saturated with some of the best health care professionals and companies in the world,” says Mark Vaughan, ex-

ecutive vice president and chief sales officer, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Atlanta will continue to have educational opportunities for the health care community through the numerous research institutes that call this city home. From a visitor perspective, our hospitality community will open \$2.5 billion in new development over the next four years including new attractions, restaurants, hotels and retail offerings, keeping the destination new and exciting for repeat visits.”

HOW CITIES COMPETE FOR A GROWING MARKET

Atlanta is a perfect example of the ways many cities are modifying their infrastructures to meet the needs of the growing medical meeting industry. According to Renée-Marie Stephano, J.D., president of the Palm Beach Gardens, Florida-based Medical Tourism Association, many cities believe initiatives that capitalize on the strengths of the medical community can raise not only the destination’s global profile, but also draw particular attention as a convention stop for America’s health care trade associations and professional societies.

The Medical Tourism Association provides financial, legal and marketing consultation to health care providers and the purchasers of their services, government organizations and hospitality interests that they partner with to host workshops and conferences at sites around the world, from local road shows in Florida to international conventions in China.

“Some cities, such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington, DC, do not have to exert as much effort as others,” Stephano says. “Nashville and Houston have been working hard to become ‘medical meccas’ and Orlando, which is already a popular destination for conventions and events, has been specifically targeting health care.”

Obviously destinations that feature a large medical infrastructure — hospitals and clinics, university medical centers and research opportunities — are natural draws because they provide attendees with an avenue to network — establish new relationships with peers or build on existing ones.

“Health care professionals are also considered high-end clientele and are likely to have more disposable income, meaning cosmopolitan locations are that much more attractive,” Stephano says. “Weather, convention space, hotel accommodations or committable rooms and transportation — including rail and air — are always important considerations.”

For example, Visit Florida, the state’s tourism arm, awarded 25 medical tourism grants totaling \$3.1 million. Grants were awarded in two categories: nine for medical tourism destination promotion and 16 for medical meetings and training promotion. The grants aim to help grow awareness of existing medical tourism products and services in the state, as well as strengthen Florida as a preferred destination to host medical conferences, meetings and training programs. Not surprisingly, the Medical Tourism Association held

“We started small, with 120 attendees, and have grown to 23,000 attendees. Atlanta accommodates all sizes and styles of meetings — whether in one hotel or conference center or in many.”



Sylvia Ratchford
Executive Director
Hinman Dental Society
Atlanta, GA

their annual congress last year at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando.

WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS...

Las Vegas has long been known globally as the “Entertainment Capital of the World,” attracting a record-breaking 41 million visitors in 2014 for both business and leisure. As part of their efforts to attract more visitors, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) has turned its sights on becoming the top destination for a growing niche market: health and wellness travel.

As Cheryl Smith, specialty markets manager at the LVCVA, explains, three years ago the LVCVA dedicated resources to marketing medical meetings and health and wellness travel options in Southern Nevada.

“It’s a collaborative effort with stakeholders in the local medical and wellness community who work with the LVCVA to promote this emerging market globally,” Smith says. Las Vegas is one of the few destinations in the world to develop a regional strategic plan for medical and wellness travel.”

In recent months, the LVCVA has actively participated in efforts to increase Las Vegas’ capacity to host medical meetings. This includes participating in industry trade exhibitions and working more closely with the meetings booked in Las Vegas and assisting them with attendance promotion, among other services, to the local health care industry. This is a value-added service unique to Las Vegas.

In 2011, Las Vegas was ranked No. 1 on the “Top Healthcare Meeting Locations” list produced by the Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association. Since that time, the destination has been home to high-profile medical meetings and conventions including HIMMS, American Academy of Anti-Aging, Institute for Healthcare Consumerism, MD Expo and OR Today, among hundreds of others. Las Vegas also is home to several of the busiest bio-skills medical training facilities in the United States including the Oquendo Center and the Medical Education Research Institute of Nevada (MERIN).

“Las Vegas offers unique medical laboratory meeting facilities for hands-on bio-skills labs and surgical training; a clinical simulation center and specialized continuing medical and dental education

training facilities in addition to traditional convention space,” Smith says. “These venues offer dedicated lab managers and lab technicians; complete diagnostic and pathology equipment; surgical lighting; C-Arms and endoscopy towers; general instrumentation; autoclaves; high-definition video equipment; auditoriums; onsite catering; and trained staff to assist with the unique needs of medical meeting planners including anatomical procurement services.”

For Las Vegas, meetings, conferences and trade shows are a critical part of its local economy, supporting nearly 57,000 local jobs with a \$6.7 billion economic impact. “The medical meetings market provides great potential to attract more visitors to our destination, and the LVCVA is already experiencing steady success in attracting more health and wellness meetings to the destination,” Smith says. “The LVCVA is currently working with key community stakeholders to encourage conversations, partnerships and initiatives aimed to enhance the quality of medical care in Southern Nevada and lay the foundation for expanding medical tourism even further.”

Many medical meetings and conventions also are opting to add training days to their schedule to take advantage of the innovative facilities found in Las Vegas, including the Oquendo Center, MERIN, the Medical Innovations and Training Institute, the MedCure Nevada Surgical Training Center and the Center for Advanced Professional Education.

From the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, to internationally renowned Cenegenics, to Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican and St. Rose Stanford Clinics for Neurosurgery and Cardiology, and Comprehensive Cancer Center’s affiliation with UCLA and US Oncology Clinical Research, Las Vegas offers a remarkable array of renowned medical experts.

As Smith explains, Las Vegas also is one of the few places in the United States building new medical schools. The University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Medicine and Roseman University Medical School will soon join Touro University and the University of Nevada School of Medicine in educating new physicians in Las Vegas and the State of Nevada.

“These educational institutions also recognize the value of being located in a city that offers medical professionals numerous op-



The Nicholson Center for Surgical Advancement in Orlando is a center for hands-on surgical instruction and robotic surgery training.

portunities for continuing medical education through the health-related conferences and meetings held in Las Vegas annually,” Smith says. “Simply put, rapidly evolving treatment expertise combined with medical education facilities and a world-class hospitality infrastructure makes Las Vegas a serious player in the medical meetings space, as well as health and wellness travel.”

PHILADELPHIA EMBRACES A GROWING INDUSTRY

Given its prime location, it is no surprise that life sciences-related conventions total more than 50 percent of all meetings held in Philadelphia each year.

The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) hosted its annual meeting in Philadelphia in April 2015, its first time back to Philadelphia since 1999. AACR boasted the best annual meeting attendance to date with more than 19,000 attendees and generated more press than any other year.

Philadelphia also welcomed the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) in June, the largest, most influential biotech meeting in the world. Attendance was 15,858 (higher than 2014), and the record-breaking number of partnering meetings totaled more than 29,000. BIO announced last month that it would be returning to Philadelphia in 2019.

“Philadelphia has many medical and science attractions and a variety of venues to hold medical meetings and conventions that both educate and entertain attendees,” says Bonnie Grant, executive director of PHLLife, the division of Philadelphia’s CVB. “In addition to being great places to visit, venues like The Franklin Institute, the newly relocated Barnes Foundation, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Philadelphia College of Physicians and the Mütter Museum, the Physick House and the Chemical Heritage Foundation make ideal spots to host offsite tours and events.”

PHLLife also connects medical/health care conventions with experts and leaders of academic institutions, hospital systems, biotechnology companies, nursing programs and pharmaceutical firms in the tri-state region to help enhance meeting program content.

Earlier this year, PHLLife signed on to support Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and its Health Care Meeting Compliance Certificate (HMCC) course. The program, which is accredited through Saint Louis University, teaches participants critical information on compliance regulations, laws and techniques for managing health care meetings.

“The partnership offers both meeting planners and suppliers

professional recognition of expertise in a highly regulated field, while giving Philadelphia great visibility as a city with a robust medical community and a vast array of institutions and attractions that help planners achieve the requirements for compliant meetings,” Grant says.

HEALTHY HEALTH CARE ECONOMY IN NASHVILLE

Health care also is the No. 1 industry in Nashville, contributing an overall economic benefit of \$38.8 billion and more than 250,000 jobs to the local economy annually. Nearly 400 health care companies have operations in Nashville including HCA Holdings, Community Health Systems, LifePoint Hospitals, Healthways, Iasis Healthcare, Ardent Health Services, Vanderbilt Medical Group and TriStar Medical Group.

“In health care business climate, the Nashville MSA ranks second among the 13 MSAs,” says Heather Middleton, vice president of public relations for Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation. “To engage medical associations nationwide, we employ sales professionals in key markets where major medical associations are located including New York, Chicago and Washington DC.”

In addition, the Nashville CVC is working in partnership with Nashville Healthcare Council and local health care companies to bring more health care association conventions and events to the area.

According to Middleton, within the last year, the following associations have held conventions or events in Nashville: American Heart Association, American Occupational Therapy, American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, American Dental Hygienists, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Health Insurance Plan, National Association for Homecare and Hospice, and the American College of Veterinarian Surgeons.

DENVER DOES THE HEAVY LIFTING

Like Nashville, Denver also is making significant strides to woo the medical community to host conventions and meetings in their locale. According to Rachel Benedick, vice president of sales and services at Visit Denver, their Ambassador Program connects Visit Denver with leaders in a variety of medical specialties who are themselves in national leadership positions and in a position to influence meeting locations.

“We have held several receptions with prominent members of national medical associations to ask them to help bring their national conventions to Denver,” Benedick says. “At these meetings, we explain Visit Denver’s role and that we will do all the ‘heavy lifting’ to bring the group to Denver. We also explain the national prestige that comes to Denver with these types of meetings, as well as the economic benefit to the region. And we educate them on Denver as a convention destination since oftentimes, our own locals are so busy traveling to other locations that aren’t as familiar with their ‘home city’ and all that it has to offer from a convention perspective.”

“Nashville and Houston have been working hard to become ‘medical meccas’ and Orlando, which is already a popular destination for conventions and events, has been specifically targeting health care.”



Renée-Marie Stephano, JD
President
Medical Tourism Association
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

In the last year Denver has hosted the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer, The American Thoracic Society, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, American Association of Diabetes Educators, Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association, Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, to name a few.

To accommodate the growing demand from the medical community, Denver is celebrating the largest city rail initiative in American history adding 125 miles of rail lines. In addition to the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center, Denver recently opened three world-class boutique hotels, and there are seven new hotels with an additional 1,500 rooms under construction. Although currently plagued with some financial problems, the VA Hospital will eventually open next to the 1.4-million-sf Children’s Hospital and next to the Anschutz Medical Campus, forming one of the largest contiguous medical centers in the U.S.

SETTING SIGHTS ON FLORIDA

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners held their 27th National Conference at the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) in Orlando in June 2012. Now called the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Debra D. Parr, CMP, conference program manager at the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, says they chose Orlando’s convention center because they had the dates they needed as well as the space.

“We held over 300 sessions comprised of clinical presentations, seminars, hands-on workshops, poster presentations and general sessions,” Parr says. “Additionally, we held 12 industry-sponsored/supported meal symposia and product theaters during our conference dates. Our conference also uses a lot of public space, and we had over 230 exhibitors.”

For Parr and her team, Orlando is seen as a great destination for health care/medical-focused conferences, conventions and meetings. “The OCCC is central to quite a number of nearby hotels, some of which are connected by walkways. There defi-



Debra D. Parr, CMP
Conference Program Manager
American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Austin, TX

“The OCCC is central to quite a number of nearby hotels, some of which are connected by walkways. There definitely is enough shopping, restaurants, theme parks and other attractions for free time.”



Credit: MacBethPhoto.com

Lake Nona Medical City, a 650-acre health and life sciences park in Orlando, is a premier location for medical care, research and education in Central Florida.

nately is enough shopping, restaurants, theme parks and other attractions for free time," Parr says.

Although the AANP's attendees seemed to enjoy Orlando, their attendance did not exceed the preceding year and following year which surprised Parr.

"We thought that many attendees would extend their time in Orlando for a family vacation," Parr says. "Perhaps the lower number that year was attributed to the national economy."

Orlando also plays host to almost half of the top 50 largest medical meetings including such events as ASH 2015, The American Society of Hematology; HIMSS, Healthcare Information & Management Systems, one of the largest and most important health care IT conferences in the United States; and the Emergency Nurses Association.

Boasting the second-largest convention center in the United States means that Orlando offers exceptional retail, dining and entertainment districts close to the convention center, easy access to medical facilities for tours and for medical demonstrations. Meeting professionals also have access to local medical speakers from many of Orlando's noted medical facilities, including Nemours Children's Hospital, the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute at Lake Nona and the Nicholson Center for Surgical Advancement, where more than 50,000 physicians have trained in leading-edge surgical techniques.

"We estimate that between 2015 and 2017 almost 300,000 attendees are projected to attend medical meetings in Orlando," says George Aguel, president and CEO, Visit Orlando. "Needless to say, the health care industry is important to Visit Orlando and the entire Orlando community. We plan to continue our efforts to ensure our leading position in this key segment of the meetings industry."

Few cities in the U.S. have as many top medical facilities as Jacksonville, Florida, including the Mayo Clinic, UF Health Jacksonville, UF Proton Therapy Institute, Wolfson's Children Hospital, Nemours Children's Clinic and the Ackerman Cancer Center.

Recently the Vasculitis Foundation, Society of Trauma Nurses and the Florida Council of the Blind and other associations held

events — from intimate board meetings to large-scale conventions — in Jacksonville.

"Jacksonville's health industry is leading the way in cancer research and cardiac health as well as key medical research and biotechnology, making the city a draw for medical experts from across the globe, an ideal destination to host many medical meetings and conventions," says Patty Jimenez, communications specialist at Visit Jacksonville. Visit Jacksonville's convention services team works with hundreds of groups annually to fulfill their needs during their meetings and events in Jacksonville — everything from recommending offsite venues, to arranging special speakers, setting up transportation and organizing tours of local attraction and facilities.

"Our team has deep connections to the local medical industry and a wide network of regional medical experts and often connects visiting medical groups to the local experts in their specific fields," Jimenez says.

And that's not all: The health and medical infrastructure is supported by a thriving city with unique meeting venues, modern convention hotels, active arts and culture scene, unlimited dining options, fun nightlife and endless opportunities to explore the outdoors in some of Florida's best parks and beaches.

When the American Academy of Dermatologists held their 68th annual convention in 2010 for the first time in Miami, they actually shattered attendance records. More than 19,000 attendees, reflecting a 30 percent spike in attendance, resulted in a historic milestone for the association.

"Miami continues courting the industry," says Jennifer Diaz with the Greater Miami CVB. "The medical industry thrives down here for specialty services." In fact, there are a wealth of renowned medical establishments including the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami - Diabetes Research Institute, Mount Sinai's new state-of-the-art Surgical Tower, University of Miami Life Science and Technology Park, and The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.

In a continued effort to meet the needs of the growing medical community and entice visitors to Miami, the to-be-completed Miami Beach Convention Center will be a state-of-the-art building geared toward medical conventions. "We met with the top medical associations to find out what their needs are in order to have MBCC tailor-made for them," Diaz says. In addition to the new facility, an adjacent venue, the New World Center, features an amphitheater that provides a space for high-end meetings, with capabilities to do projected surgeries live.

It's evident that the educational opportunities for the health care community throughout large U.S. cities continues to grow and develop. Combine that with the expansive development over the next few years of new conventional centers, meeting spaces, attractions, restaurants, hotels and retail offerings, and you've got a wealth of new and exciting destinations ideal for repeat visitors from the medical sector.

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Omni Hotels & Resorts has promoted **Ryan O'Byrne** to corporate director, global sales in the Dallas, Texas, corporate office. He most recently served as global director, sales in the New York global sales office.

Wyndham Hotel Group has promoted **Kathy Maher** to senior vice president, global sales and revenue management. Most recently, she served as senior vice president of revenue management.

Hyatt Regency Atlanta has named **Christopher Watson** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served as director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Dallas.

Hyatt Regency Dallas has appointed **Bryan King** as director of sales and mar-



KING

keting. He most recently served as the director of sales and marketing for the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, has named **Isa Lee** as account director responsible for the Southeast market. She previously served as the senior sales manager at the Hilton Orlando.

The Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront hotel in Jacksonville, Florida, has promoted **Danny Downes** to associate director of sales. He previously served as sales manager at Hyatt Regency DFW International Airport in Dallas.

The Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau has named **Matt Heck** as national



LEE



HECK

sales manager and **Mackenzie Coleman** as a sales manager. Heck was the hotels solution manager for Sojern, a travel engagement platform. Coleman graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in hospitality, restaurant and tourism management.

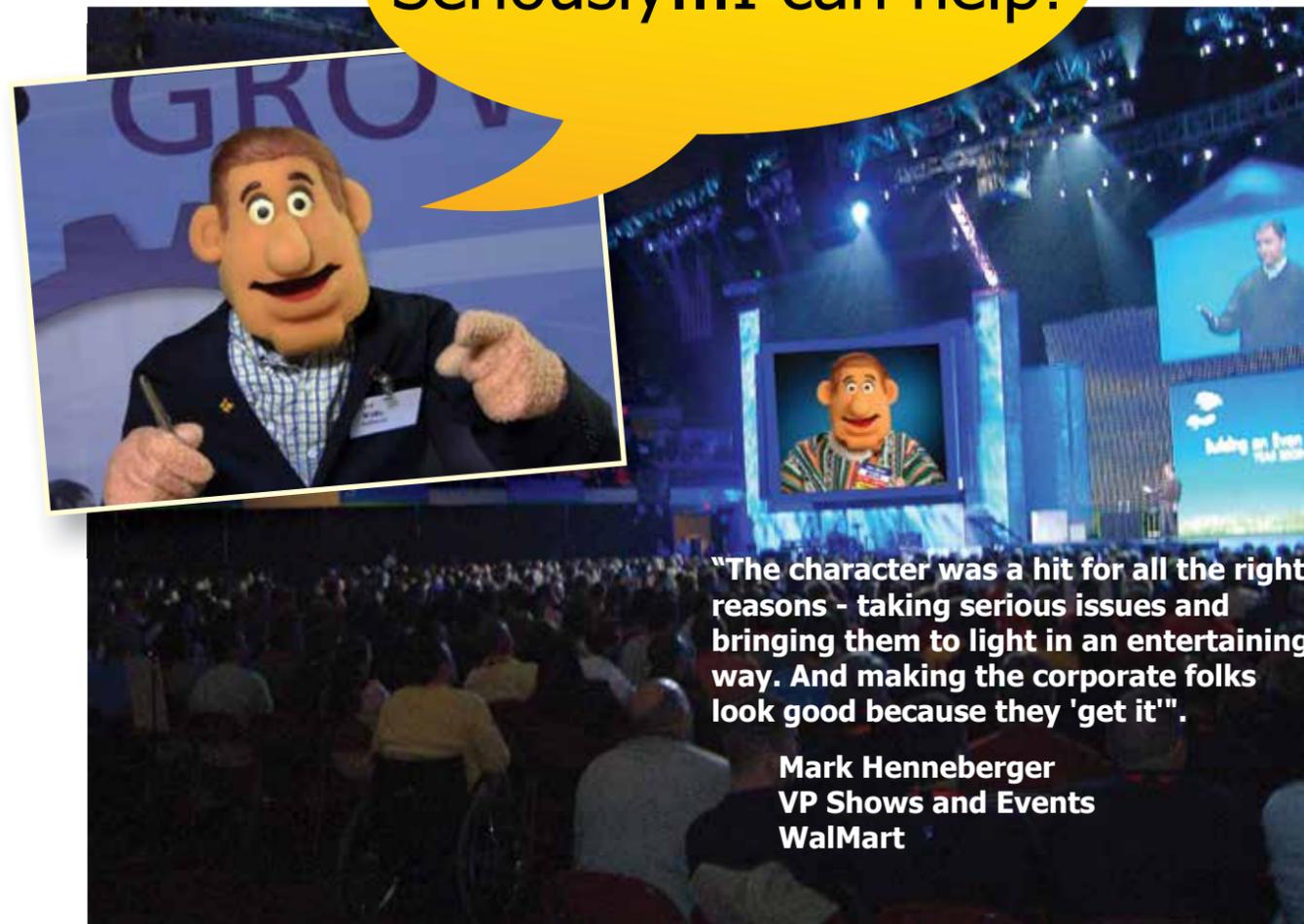
The Chattanooga, a Benchmark Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has promoted **Adriane Elrod Long** to senior sales manager. She most recently served as a group sales manager.

The Renaissance World Golf Village Resort and Convention Center in Jacksonville/St. Augustine, Florida, has named **Cathy Jones** as national sales manager. She was director of sales and marketing for the Lajitas Golf Resort in west Texas. AC&F



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